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INTRODUCTION

Johan Hagemeyer's photographic studio was a gathering place for the great, the talented, and the bon vivants of legendary Carmel. Brooding Robinson Jeffers and wild George Sterling were equally his friends. Interpreting swiftly and intuitively, following the Stieglitz tradition of using only natural light, Hagemeyer made portraits which were more than merely photographs. Physicist Albert Einstein, philosopher Constan Zarin, astronomer Edwin Hubble, artist Salvadore Dalí, singer Roland Hayes and others came to him to be photographed.

Repelled by its postwar atmosphere of tearooms and gift shoppes, Hagemeyer left Carmel and eventually set up his studio south of the campus in Berkeley in what had been, at the turn of the century, a farmhouse.

The following interview was tape-recorded there, in May and again in July, 1955, in his parlor-studio—a large well-lit, sparsely but elegantly furnished room with Oriental scatter rugs on the bare floors and a grand piano which was sold not long after to help pay medical bills.
White haired now, Hagemeyer was frail and ill, somewhat lonely, still with a fierce pride in his art.

There is something about Hagemeyer that reminds one of Rembrandt—something beyond their common national origin and certain parallels in their life stories. Perhaps it is because Hagemeyer has certain qualities which are universal among artists.

At any rate, this interview was recorded as part of a series documenting, through a study of individual lives, the cultural history of this region.

Corinne L. Gilb

Regional Cultural History Project
University of California Library at Berkeley
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Early Life in Holland, 1884-1911

Gilb: I've noticed in your press clippings and in all the information about you, you never mention your birthdate. Are you reticent about that?

Hagemeyer: No, not I personally. I feel the same way about dating my pictures. People go by dates. I don't. I don't think Socrates was born in B.C. or otherwise. He was born for me today.

But I was born on the first of June on Whitsunday in 1884. That's a religious holiday, the eighth Sunday after Easter. Perhaps it is celebrated more consciously in Europe, but I heard it mentioned the other day here.

Gilb: When you say you were born on a religious holiday, does that imply that you were aware of religious...

Hagemeyer: I am religiously inclined and I have occasionally thought that that might have something to do with it, but I am not an astrologer. I was born in June, which is a very bad month, the Gemini month, a duality nature, so-called.

Gilb: Is that a key to your personality?

Hagemeyer: It seems to be, decidedly. Perhaps the word "ambivalent" describes it better.

Gilb: Weren't you born in Holland?

Hagemeyer: Amsterdam, Holland.
Gilb: What was your father's occupation?
Hagemeyer: He was engaged in some work in a sugar refinery in Amsterdam.
Gilb: How would you describe your family? Middle-class?
Hagemeyer: Middle-class, decidedly.
Gilb: Were there other brothers and sisters?
Hagemeyer: I was one of four brothers and I had one sister. My sister was the oldest and then came a boy, and then there was another boy who drowned; I was born before he drowned.
Gilb: Were you a close-knit family?
Hagemeyer: I think the family was, but I never was very close.
Gilb: When you came to the United States, did you come alone?
Hagemeyer: No, no. I was very close when I became mature to another brother, who was the youngest. We were more than congenial and did a great many things together later on in our more mature years.
Gilb: You describe yourself as an intellectual and I wondered if you got those leanings from your family. Were there books and art at home?
Hagemeyer: No. I don't think I got it from anyone. It was just a natural, instinctive thing with me. I was always a black sheep.
Gilb: You were regarded so by your family?
Hagemeyer: Yes, kind of. They always thought me kind of queer, going after things they weren't used to and sometimes I was really criticized for it.

Gilb: What were the values for a middle-class Dutch family of that time, specifically your family? Did they believe in hard work? Were they Protestants?
Hagemeyer: Yes, they were Protestants.

Gilb: Was thrift one of their values?
Hagemeyer: Hard working, very thrifty. It is not easy for me to find a reason for certain things. Like a sport in plants, I was just different from any of them, except maybe I was much closer to my mother. She was also a religious person, very undogmatic, very intelligent, very sensitive.

I had always trouble in school. I was never well; I was very sickly and always have been.

Gilb: Did you do well in your studies?
Hagemeyer: In some studies, decidedly well.

Gilb: Which studies?
Hagemeyer: I suppose literature, reading, and drawing. Things like that. Not arithmetic. Not anything that is in the line....I never studied mathematics, but I never was very good at those things.
What do you call it when you are not promoted from one grade to another...flunked.

Gilb: You flunked.

Hagemeyer: Flunked, oh yes. I was almost proud of it. That was grammar school. And of course, in my later years at school I was quite a revolutionary already. For that I was punished many times.

Gilb: What would you be revolutionary against?

Hagemeyer: Against anything that is accepted, the conformity of my own family perhaps. Hence, I left home.

Gilb: How far did you go in school before you quit?

Hagemeyer: Only through grammar school. Up to about fifteen or so, which in Holland almost includes high school. It was more intensive. We were more literate, really, than some of the youngsters I find here in high school.

Gilb: When you were a boy, did you have any ideas about what you wanted to become when you grew up?

Hagemeyer: No, I had nothing to say about it, and, of course, that I resented too. I was just pushed into business. That is more because of my mother, who had certain aspirations and didn't want any of her boys to follow my father's career. She wanted to have us go on, up. To
associate with a different kind of people, to get into really another class. There is less now, but of course there was, like anywhere else, a great deal of class distinction. There was a time in my business career life when I would almost rather not mention what my father was doing, because it might be held more or less against me. Not today and less when I left.

Naturally I believe in evolution. Something must evolve and not stand still, so I always sought places, people who gave me that satisfaction. Whether it was that I was already interested in philosophy, music, art...

*Gilb:* Even at fifteen?

*Hagemeyer:* Right. I sought always people who knew more and who were older than I was. Not consciously, but instinctively, naturally. I do that yet, except now I go back to youth. Also, I was rather a regular boy and not a nice boy.

*Gilb:* Are you speaking of wine, women and song?

*Hagemeyer:* No, no; I rather neglected women in my early youth because I studied. I had ideals and ideas and I had to study three languages. We had no time.
Gilb: Were you a juvenile delinquent?
Hagemeyer: No, I was not. I was a street urchin. I was a rebel and a fighter. I would take a certain side and I would fight for it. I was young. Not strong but very quick, and a good talker.

Gilb: Then, when you say you were not a nice boy, you mean your badness was linked with your idealism?
Hagemeyer: In a way.

Gilb: What business did your family have you go into?
Hagemeyer: Insurance brokerage. It was wonderful. Of course, you need arithmetic and there I picked up more than in school, because it was my living and I had to. And I was very, very good.

Gilb: You were good!

Hagemeyer: My trouble was, whatever career I would go into, I was always tops, against my own desire or inclination.

Gilb: Were you interested in horticulture at that time?
Hagemeyer: Only interested in flowers and life, natural life, and hiking and watching plants as a hobby, always. But then I became, not much later, a vegetarian because I got interested in Tolstoi and some people, Edward Carpenter in England, and of course, some of the Dutch poets and
philosophers. That was the time of vegetarianism. That was being a radical.

Gilb: Were you familiar with Fabian Socialism?
Hagemeyer: Oh, very much.
Gilb: Was that sort of like your ideas?
Hagemeyer: No. Socialism in general, yes. Fabian Socialism, perhaps. Socialism interested me as an idea, as it was always called then even, a Utopia, but organized socialism did not interest me. That's why I became an intellectual anarchist. And on a religious basis, a Christian anarchist. I know now what it means, but I didn't know then. I was young and grabbed at anything.

Gilb: I remember passing through a stage when I thought anarchism was the ideal state...
Hagemeyer: To me it is yet, but I could explain it differently from the way it is explained by all of the people I know, from Kropotkin up and down.

Gilb: You say you were religious. Did you attend services?
Hagemeyer: I had to go to Sunday School, but I gave it up. Lutheran. But I was so against anything that was organized and dogmatized...as a youngster, of course, I was baptised a Lutheran and went through Sunday School and my mother took me to church occasionally, but I resented it so much that I actually had my membership cancelled,
another reason for them to think that I was no good. To have the nerve to repudiate a church in which I was supposed to belong. I couldn't belong because I was also interested in mysticism, the Chinese philosophy and things like that, or Catholicism. I couldn't.

**Gilb:** In all this time, were you thinking of coming to the United States?

**Hagemeyer:** No, not at all.

**Gilb:** What finally made you decide to come?

**Hagemeyer:** So much happened between, when I didn't know, when I was going through my business career. I got to quite a comfortable position. I think it was my idealism that made me go into horticulture.

**Gilb:** In Holland?

**Hagemeyer:** In Holland. I studied. I left my business. After being in the army, I still went back to my brokerage. I had to go into the army, more or less compulsory, not for all, but for every other boy. You had to draw a lot; my older brother drew a lucky number and he was free, so I had to go in.

**Gilb:** Were you unhappy in the army?

**Hagemeyer:** Oh, I don't know. I had a nice time. I don't think I've ever been very happy. I had a very good time.
Gilb: You're such an individualist. Wouldn't the regimented life bother you?

Hagemeyer: Frightful, yes, and I wasn't very well, but I always had a great deal of luck. In the first place, I had to study to become an officer and then I played an instrument and instead of having to carry my knapsack and walk for miles and miles, I played on a flute and marched, all by myself. I would play with the drummer who marched in front. A musical talent has always come out in me. I should have been a musician in the first place, not a photographer.

Gilb: Had you studied music?

Hagemeyer: No, never; I only had a love for it. I hadn't studied because there was no opportunity.

Gilb: I notice you have a piano. You must play it.

Hagemeyer: No, I don't play it. I always had friends who played the piano. I don't play the piano because I would never be good enough at it. I'm good enough with the clarinet, but even then, I'm not as good as some people think I am.

Gilb: When you got out of the Army, what did you do?

Hagemeyer: I went on with my career. I got back in the same place which I left. For a year and a half I was in the army.
Then certain things happened to me. I became, never rabid, but a rational, intellectual politician...not politician, idealist, you might say, but politics entered into it.

Gilb: Not in any organized sense.

Hagemeyer: Oh no.

And then of course, being a vegetarian, I felt that I had to change my career. I was very, very unhappy and I knew a doctor who knew somebody in the country, in the beautiful country of Holland. I went away and went to horticultural college for about two years. I have a diploma of that.

During that time, I planned with my brothers to go to California, about which we had read a great deal of what I call now bally-hoo.

Gilb: What phases of the bally-hoo attracted you most?

Hagemeyer: It was beautiful and apparently everything was so easy, and of course, it was the West and not uncivilized, though this was long ago, 1908 and before. Something new and young, something to explore and exploit.
TO THE UNITED STATES AND CALIFORNIA, 1911;
WORK IN HORTICULTURE

Hagemeyer: I kept studying horticulture, mostly pomology, the art of fruit growing. One of my brothers went to America, two years or so before I did, and I sent him all the lectures and things I learned in college on horticulture. However, in spite of his being on a farm in the East.... Then another brother went before I did and then I went.

Gilb: You were saving your money all this time to go?

Hagemeyer: Right.

Gilb: Did you expect to do as they had, go to work on a farm or go to work in horticulture?

Hagemeyer: We intended to start what we called naively a fruit plantation of dwarf fruit trees, intense cultivation, in California. That was our goal.

Of course, I worked for a little while in the East in nurseries.

Gilb: You came over in 1911. When did you come to California?

Hagemeyer: The same year. In the fall of 1911 I came to San Francisco.

And my brother who went to America first had already gone to California. You see, it was all my planning. That sounds very pedantic
but I did all the planning, the initiative, kind of seeing how it should be done; and it worked out that way very well. He always was very efficient, very practical, different from myself. He spoke already quite good English, but I was shy and afraid to speak English.

So he was working at the Hayes ranch and I went out there too. (Ranch owned by E.A. and J.O. Hayes.)

Gilb: You went out to Edenvale.

Hagemeyer: Yes. Both my other brother and myself went to California together in 1911 and we went to Edenvale, in the Santa Clara valley.

Gilb: Were you disillusioned? You had all these dreams about California. Did it look the way you expected it to?

Hagemeyer: Only professionally, in fruit growing, I was disillusioned. The way they did it here, butchery. And I still tell the people I know who have ranches, particularly fruit ranches, that they don't know how to grow trees and what to do to them. They put a tree upside down.

I told Mr. Hayes, who was a senator. He said, "Don't you think Santa Clara prunes are the best in the world?" "I don't know. I don't know the world. I am talking about your trees."
Prunes, of course they're good. No wonder. What climate, what soil. Virgin soil. That is nothing to rave over. You don't do anything really yourself. If it were something you were doing, then you might be proud, but that is nature; that's the earth, that's California. As an American, you don't have reason to be proud of the Niagara Falls; that was there before you came. What have you done, Mr. Hayes?"

Gilb: How did he take this from a ranch hand?

Hagemeyer: I was then a photographer. I was a guest of honor, as a San Francisco artist.

Gilb: Oh, you said this later then.

Hagemeyer: Oh, as a ranch hand you could never get near Mr. Hayes except in his church. That's where I went to every Sunday, not because I liked his religion. Not at all. I wanted to learn the English language.

Gilb: I notice from your press clippings that that was a True Life Church. What kind of church was that?

Hagemeyer: That's a new thought church, really. Kind of a mystical Emersonian....

Gilb: It's odd that the owner of a prune ranch would be interested in that kind of religion.
Hagemeyer: They were not just owners of a prune ranch. They had a large estate. They were very wealthy. One was a senator, maybe both. The Hayes people were very well known in the Santa Clara valley. Exceptional people. They were the old, old school, the old, old gentlemen. They had an estate; oh, I don't know how many workers were on there. I was ranch boy for a large kitchen. That alone made me ill. Too big. I didn't like the size of things.

Gilbi: Did you feel exploited?

Hagemeyer: No, I don't think I felt exploited. I felt that they didn't use my ability. I think I felt always, everywhere, in the East too in horticulture, I felt that Americans were stupid. There comes a European who has studied...I knew what I was doing, like many Europeans, the French, the Scotsmen, who know plant life. But they just ignored that, until they found out in some peculiar way that I could do certain things that nobody in the whole nursery in the East could do, grafting a certain plant.

I understood English but I hardly talked it. I was sensitive about the way I spoke.

Gilbi: Why did you leave the Hayes Ranch?

Hagemeyer: I was not satisfied. In the first place, I had no communion with any people there except
for a few intellectuals in San Jose, where I
used to go. I don't want to mention who or
what they were.

Gilb: Why not?
Hagemeyer: They were a group of anarchists. In 1911 and
1912.

Gilb: Were they connected with the I.W.W. movement?
Hagemeyer: I suppose some of the members would be. I
wouldn't know, but at least they were alive,
according to me at that particular time. They
might be very dull to me now, the very same
people. I also went there because I wanted to
know how much they knew about anarchism and
how they spoke. Some of them were very, very
advanced in their knowledge about philosophical
anarchy.

Gilb: Were many of them foreign born or were they
native Americans?
Hagemeyer: No, no, we had a teacher, I forget his name,
an American who was the top American anarchist.
One of his books was written in the early days.

I'm not making a point of being a part of
it. I wanted to find out. It's that everlasting
curiosity of me. If I start something, build up
something, I would also destroy it if I see that
it gets too complex and organized, too tight
and crystallized, I destroy it like in Carmel.

Gilb: You like your life to be continually moving.

Hagemeyer: Flowing. Externally, yes, it should be, but essentially something is living there. Of course, that is very likely where my mysticism comes in, the soul was unsatisfied, or my mind, which is a part of it. There are two different kinds of minds, in the first place.

Gilb: It wasn't the strenuousness of the work at the ranch that bothered you?

Hagemeyer: Not entirely because I always had a snap. They gave me a snap in the East, where I had to do propagating—easy, wonderful and interesting to me. Out here I had to keep the bees, wonderful, and do some pruning of young trees because the foreman, an Englishman, finally realized that I knew more about it than he did.

In those days Americans took great advantage of foreigners, exploited them.

Gilb: They still do.

Hagemeyer: Yes, but I don't notice it so much. There is really more enlightenment, more democracy. That is thanks to the unions, which I am also against in principle. I am for and against unions. They are a good and necessary evil, but they are also very dangerous, like too big a thing, they become too powerful, like
America is today in the world, dangerous for America.

I shouldn't really want that recorded.

Gilb: No, I think it reflects a legitimate point of view.

Hagemeyer: I am really a patriot. The growth of a country anywhere is what counts to me. I am like Stevenson, Adlai Stevenson. Wonderful.

Gilb: Then you left the Hayes ranch and went back to the East Coast?

Hagemeyer: I was engaged on the campus in the botanical garden...

After I left the ranch I was through with ranching. I wanted to do something so as to see something interesting or get in contact with some interesting people, with the students.

Gilb: On this campus, you mean, the University of California?

Hagemeyer: Yes. I had been back to Europe in the meantime, but in 1912 or '13 I was working on the campus when the botanical garden was down below where all the new buildings are now. I had charge of the propagating houses and instructed the students how to propagate.

Gilb: Why did you leave that job?

Hagemeyer: I never stayed at one job very long. I wanted to go on. I wanted to be on my own.

I don't know what I did right after that.
I went South, I'm sure. I was engaged in
sub-tropical and tropical horticulture in
Altadena for a long time. Southern California.
I pioneered in the avocado culture. I went
through that whole stage, and also date growing
culture in the Imperial Valley. I was there;
in fact, I had charge of setting out date farms.
I thought dates didn't become important until
after the development of Boulder Dam and the
irrigating system.

Gilb: Well, there's no irrigation in the Sahara desert
or in Egypt. I don't think that dam project
was started when I was in the desert planting
date farms. Those date farms are there now.
They were all imported from North Africa by
the sons of the man for whom I worked. The
Popenoes, very famous. They were explorers of
South America. I had charge of that particular
garden in Altadena where all of the plants from
the explorers from all over the world were sent
for me to experiment with. I had a marvelous
time. It was really wonderful, stimulating.
New products, avocados and dates, always
something on.

But even that I left with the idea to
become an explorer, because of my knowledge
of botany.

Gilb: Literally an explorer?

Hagemeyer: Yes, literally an explorer. In China, South America, Africa, Tibet, anywhere. I knew one man, a Dutchman, who was very well known; he was an assistant of the great botanist in Amsterdam, Hugo De Vries, the great world figure in botany. My friend, Frank Meyer, who was also a poet, an intellectual, cultured...not just doing a job, but he loved it. It was a devotion, a priesthood. That was always my idea of anything you do.

Gilb: When you no longer feel that way, you leave it?

Hagemeyer: Yes, and go on.

So I went to Washington, D.C., then, sent by the Popes, where I met everyone in the horticultural department.

Gilb: What was to be your function? Research?

Hagemeyer: Research. But I would have to study and be there for awhile. Get acquainted with the top man in the department, I can't think of his name.

But I worked my way all the time. I had to eat and live and I lived in a very beautiful section of Washington. I worked in some
greenhouses, some private estate in Virginia, taking care and growing gardenias. Making money and waiting for an opening for me to go to explore.

Hagemeyer: As I told you before, I've never been strong and at that time I got very, very ill, pneumonia. I couldn't stand the climate. And I was still not quite satisfied. There was always something else brewing inside of me, which was really the arts.

I didn't know anybody there except the people in the department. I didn't know the people where I was employed.

Gilb: Did the war have any repercussions on your mind?

Hagemeyer: Yes. That was in 1914. I went to Washington about 1915 or 1916 and then I got very ill and spent most of my time in the Library of Congress, looking at pictures and books.

Gilb: And you never did become an explorer?

Hagemeyer: No, no. I was sick. I was supposed not to go on with it. I really went beyond my physical capacity. I was driving myself with ambition. But I was told to give that up and go back to California. That frightened me.
Hagemeyer: The first thing I did was to go to New York and meet the people I had gotten acquainted with by reading books and seeing art. That was primarily Stieglitz, because I was interested and I did photography as an amateur.

Gilb: You said that this feeling for the arts had been brewing in you.

Hagemeyer: Oh, always.

Gilb: And you had been following photography?

Hagemeyer: Not seriously.

Gilb: Just casually?

Hagemeyer: Well, I did serious things, but not to be a photographer, as an amateur. I did it before I left for America, when I was very young.

Gilb: And you were an amateur of the arts also?

Hagemeyer: Right. That is, I was an amateur of photography, but I was pretty well initiated in the arts: music, literature, the plastic arts, painting.

Gilb: How did Stieglitz come to your attention?

Hagemeyer: Through the Library of Congress, through his camera work. All those people like Steichen and the rest of them. I don't know if Steichen was in Paris or where.

Anyway, I went to "291," the famous place where Stieglitz lived, or had his studio. Of
course, I was very fortunate because he was a difficult man to get along with and never let anyone in, but we clicked right away. I sat for hours with him. We talked.

And he practically, by way of speaking, made me follow photography. I had already gone overboard for it.

Gilb: Just from that one contact?

Hagemeyer: Yes, that one contact. I very likely wanted some kind of a lift and he encouraged me. He was much older than I was. He encouraged me very much. I had always had that feeling that I never could be a pianist or a musician or a painter because I was already too old. I was not old, but that is a peculiar feeling, I suppose, of a European, at least some Europeans of that particular time.

I met Marin, Walkowitz, Dove and all the rest of those people at his studio, all painters.

Gilb: Georgia O'Keefe?

Hagemeyer: No, Georgia O'Keefe wasn't there then; he met her years after.

I was around New York for awhile, seeing things, and then I went back to California to study photography.

Gilb: By this time you had made up your mind?
Hagemeyer: Yes, I was going to go into photography.

Gilb: In thinking about going into photography, did you have a plan in mind as to how you were going to become a photographer?

Hagemeyer: No, but only the very best art. Only art.

Gilb: You didn't want to commercialize?

Hagemeyer: No, I never have. I have commercialized, if you want to really pinpoint it. I do sell. But I must be behind my work, not the dollar. I must be behind it and care for it. And I did.

I met a great many outstanding photographers through Stieglitz. He told me who to see, like Ann Brigman, an old timer here in Berkeley, Imogene Cunningham, people like that, and some people in San Francisco. People I would run into anyway. I have a nose for that kind of thing. I didn't have to be introduced. Well, of course, I always needed an introduction to do big men and people in photography; I don't just go up like an Examiner photographer and say, "Hey, you sit. I'm going to make a shot of you."

Gilb: Did you expect to be a portraitist when you started?
Hagemeyer: No, I didn't expect to be anything. Except that I was immediately with a portrait photographer because that was a way of making a living. I did a great many things in the early days here, when I knew a little bit about photography, which were mostly industrial. Some landscapes, but mostly industrial and very, very radical, very modern. I was then known as the radical of photography. One of the beginners of shooting up and shooting down and the most crazy angles, they appealed to me.

Gilb: And taking pictures of things that people considered not lovely in themselves.

Hagemeyer: Not lovely in themselves. I took pictures of garbage cans. Soon I had exhibits in Europe and here and they couldn't figure out that I saw beauty in steam shovels or something like that.

Gilb: Who was your teacher originally?

Hagemeyer: I never had a teacher. I worked for a man here in Berkeley as an apprentice. His name was McCullagh, a commercial portrait photographer. He was very, very good, an old timer, and he knew his game, and I was just simply in there to learn the game.
Gilb: I know Stieglitz studied in Germany, studied chemistry and mechanics. You had none of that scientific background?

Hagemeyer: Not photographically, no, but I had chemistry in school, particularly in the horticulture college.

Gilb: Were you very interested in the mechanics?

Hagemeyer: No, never very much.

Gilb: Your camera was just a device.

Hagemeyer: Yes, it was just a medium, like your pen or your speech. I have a box with a lens, or no lens, and a sensitive plate and that's all there is to it. The rest that is important is the person who is holding that camera or holding the brush, for that matter. My whole judgment of everything is based on that, whether it's music or...

Gilb: You didn't devote much time then to trying to find out what kinds of paper to use, or trying to buy new cameras or setting up fancy darkrooms?

Hagemeyer: No. When I was working for this man as an apprentice, I wasn't doing overmuch. Here and there I used my camera; there was plenty of time. He was a very nice man but of the old
school and he never knew that I was different from what he thought I was. He didn't know me. If he had known me, very likely he would have thrown me out. He was very nice, and I was very nice too. I didn't speak my mind. I just wanted to learn photography. Politics or philosophy had nothing to do with it; I wanted to get something out of it.

I never was paid. I washed dishes in the meantime and did some landscaping in the morning or the evening so as to pay for my room, here in Berkeley. I never had it easy; I never had money, but I got by and I always had a lot of books. I had a wonderful time. I knew friends. Like when I was in Washington, I had other kinds of friends. I dressed up. Being at that time particularly European, I wore a coat and always carried a cane. Not any more because people would laugh. I never wore spats. I was a dandy at one time, according to the French style, as a youngster, but I thought spats were silly.

When I left this place in Berkeley, I beat my way down to Los Angeles on a freighter. I hired myself out as a cook, which of course I wasn't. I was almost murdered, really,
because the cooks were drunk and fighting each other and they made me do the cooking and I didn't know the first thing about it, except I knew how to chop parsley and break an egg. I was almost murdered by the cooks. They had knives and they were drunk enough so they could smell that I would just beat it when I got into Los Angeles, which of course I did. But I didn't have a very easy time. I had a little bit of an old suitcase in which I must have had something. I think I just managed to jump off the boat and take my suitcase along.

I had some friends in Pasadena and Los Angeles because I had lived there.
And in Los Angeles I met, through other outstanding photographers, Edward Weston, in 1917 or so. I remember that Stieglitz gave me an autographed book in 1916 and soon after that, 1917 or 1918, I met Edward Weston, and I've known him ever since. I also clicked with him right away.

He was very well known by then.

Not so very well known as he is now. He was known locally as a very outstanding portrait photographer. I never had done much portraiture, but he had, and I liked his work very much. I liked his setting.

He liked me because I had something else. I was one of those European 'Dago's,' travelers. I brought things to him. He already had a family and I had never had a family. I was free and I could move around. It was during the war years, the war we were in. There's where the trouble came in for me, really, because I was a pacifist.

Everyone was hot against the Germans and I wasn't, not because I'm pro-German but I can't see that any nation as a whole can be wrong. I rationalized that, you see.
Gilb: When you say you got into trouble as a pacifist, what do you mean?

Hagemeyer: The government followed me up. They wondered who I was. They must have noticed, or heard, or were told... The government was after certain people and I knew those people. They were I.W.W. members. I never was, but they were poets and I like poets; I don't care what kind of religion they have. And I had to get out of my boarding house many times. That is, I had to move to another place.

There was nothing wrong with me except that I had different ideas.

Gilb: Of course there had been a lot of violence, like the bombing of the Los Angeles Times in 1912.

Hagemeyer: That never interested me. I was absolutely against violence.

I knew Emma Goldman very well. A wonderful woman. She knew all about drama, in which I was also very interested.

I knew many of the people she was with. Bill Haywood. He was, of course, a so-called "bomb-throwing" anarchist. I may condemn it, but they are there and they have a right. They
can always be checked; they were very much in the minority. They very likely thought I was a sissy, some of those anarchists, because I was very mystical and religious about it, like a Tolstoi. But I associated with them because they had something to say. And somehow I feel that it is good, like Gide writes, to disturb, to arouse. Not to make you feel nice and purring.

Gilb: Like Socrates.

Hagemeyer: Of course, like Socrates, the whole business, and then take your poison.

Of course I didn't want to go to jail. Many of my friends went to jail who weren't as radical as I was; they were just pacifists. Although I was against the war, I had enough sense not to call myself a pacifist. Actually I didn't believe completely in pacifism. I believe there must be a constant stirring. That's why as soon as those people began to organize, I fell out. That has been in a way my weakness. It is much better to belong to something, you feel more comfortable and secure.

Gilb: Sometimes you are more effective than as an individual.
Gilb: It is a weakness because you are out of everything; you are alone. It is hard to stand to be so in a minority that you are alone. That is why I say it would be easier and more comfortable if I could have joined the Y.M.C.A., take my dip every morning and see the boys and talk God knows what. But I could never do it—I would start a revolution.

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Gilb: Were you trying to earn a living by photography at this time?

Hagemeyer: No, not with Edward Weston. I lived with him right away. He asked me to come and live with him and I did some cleaning of the studio, housekeeping at the house, and they fed me. At the same time I just played around and worked some with him in the studio, mostly making trouble.

We had very much in common and we did a great deal of going out on the road, beating our way up to San Francisco.

Gilb: Hitch hiking?

Hagemeyer: In those days. I hadn't even heard of Carmel then.

At one stage of the game, during the war,
Gilb: Weston asked me as a friend to leave his house. He said, "I have a family." He didn't want to be involved, for fear they might pick me up. We all quoted Woodrow Wilson and I can still quote him. It was all right for the President to say those things, but not us. I could quote Lincoln to you now, without mentioning his name, and that would be subversive.

I play with people quite often. I say a certain thing that Jefferson said and they say, "You mean you're a Communist? You want to overthrow the government?" I say, "Yes."

Gilb: Jefferson said you must have a revolution every twenty years.

Hagemeyer: Right. If you don't like it, it must be changed. That is the flexibility of a democracy. But some people, the Puritans, who think they have it all...

Gilb: When the war was over, did that make a change in your pattern of living? Were you no longer bothered by this persecution? After 1918. I was wondering at what point you started to make portraits.

Hagemeyer: No, no, I was still with Edward Weston, doing my own landscapes. I let him do the portraits.
I was a little bit shy about it. I photographed him and a few people, but I never had a studio of my own. But when I was out of money I had to get a job in a photographic studio, which I got right away because I had been working with Edward Weston. I hardly ever did any work except talk, talk anti-war. I never worked. We had a wonderful time and played music. He never was overbusy.

Gilb: You probably earned your keep!

Hagemeyer: Oh, I'm sure I earned my keep.

Then I worked for a man in Los Angeles and I did some specialized work, which I had really learned by myself. Specialized work like carbon printing, and I did most of the enlarging work. Portraits. I can put a certain quality into a print that is very personal. They say that now. When I was ill recently, I got a good photographer to do my printing and my fans started telling me not to do it because he could never from my own negative make a print like I do.

Gilb: And you could take somebody else's negative and make a better print than the other person could?
Hagemeyer: I imagine so, if I could select the negative. There are certain negatives that I know I can't make a good print of. If you think of Ansel Adams, he is more of a scientist than anything else. He is so much perfection that that kind of print I wouldn't even be overmuch interested in, because he is more like a machine that is so mechanical that he is not human anymore. You can always tell a print that I make. I don't know how to put that, but it hasn't the perfection like a machine has. It has the same imperfection that a human being has. In other words, Adams has become too much machine-like and that I don't like. It must be personalized.

Gilb: You say that you first started photographing industrial subjects and then you made the transition gradually to a concentration upon people.

Hagemeyer: Right.

Gilb: That suggests a change in philosophy.

Hagemeyer: When I started to do industrial things and landscapes, I almost started some kind of trend, a certain kind of point of view. Then others began to do it and it was easier in that line, because it was not mobile. The
human being is mobile. He has something to say all the time; you never know what and when. And Edward Weston did it, but he was a little bit too much of an arranger for me. Those were all very beautiful but all arranged, like Whistler. Very clever, very good.

Gilb: That's why he was supposed to be so good, because he reminded people of Whistler.

Hagemeyer: Yes, he was very slick and beautiful. But I did landscapes then. Afterwards, when I began to do portraits, he did nothing else but stills and landscapes, some of them crackerjacks. He hardly does a portrait.

Gilb: What do you mean, crackerjacks?

Hagemeyer: His landscapes, his work is marvelous. His portraits are not so vital. They lack that something. (He knows me as a portrait man.) They lack something personal. It's an impersonal approach, while my approach is personal, see. Even now my approach is very personal as I'm talking to you.

Are you satisfied with the interview?

Gilb: Yes, I'm satisfied, but it's never going to seem to you like it's really what you would have said
if you could really have said what you wanted to.

Hagemeyer: Yes, because I still have that feeling of being recorded and perhaps holding back. Not very much as long as you talk about photography and art, photographers and artists. But the thing we ought to come to sometime is my bumbling around and finding my niche.
SAN FRANCISCO AND CARMEL, THE 1920's

Gilb: I wanted to ask you how you happened to come up to San Francisco again. Why didn't you stay in Los Angeles?

Hagemeyer: Oh, that's an easy one to answer. I don't like the South. I don't like Los Angeles, first of all, and then I don't like the entire South. It is too hot for me, unpleasant. Too nice, too much sunshine. Maybe not now because there's smog. That might have been interesting to me. I am a San Franciscan, really. I feel as though I was born in San Francisco. It's near the water. It's cosmopolitan like Amsterdam. It's provincial, in a sense, but always tremendously cosmopolitan.

Today I don't like San Francisco, but then, yes. There were not too many people then; they were still building it up. They were closely knitted.

I am inconsistent now, you see. They told me that before. But I say with my favorite American poet, Walt Whitman, well then, I will be inconsistent. It is the most natural thing to be illogical.
Gilb: When did you finally make up your mind to open a studio of your own? What made you begin to feel that kind of confidence?

Hagemeyer: It took me a long time to have confidence, particularly in this new medium. I started a little studio in San Francisco. I did so many things. It took me a long time to have confidence, I'd like to repeat, because I couldn't see myself opening a studio. For that I felt I had to know more than I did. So I did other things. I worked in a bookshop selling books for a long time, at the same time making little pictures. I was making money. It takes money to start a studio. I worked for many things to make money so I could buy materials and keep on photographing. I was also a judge for many photographic exhibitions.

Gilb: Did you like the close-knit group to which you belonged?

Hagemeyer: Yes, I felt it was not too big. It was like in Paris, where you could get into a group with variety, diversity, but yet small. Otherwise I get confused and too much all over the place. Like it is today, there are too many artists.
They are swarming all over the place like bees, but they are not really artists.

Gilb: Were your friends around the time of the first world war artists?

Hagemeyer: Artists, yes.

Gilb: Were you connected with the Art Association?

Hagemeyer: Oh no. I was a member of the San Francisco Museum and the DeYoung Museum, just a member so that I could take in the different privileges.

Gilb: Who were your friends among the artists?

Hagemeyer: Piazzoni, Stackpole...

Gilb: Gertrude Albright?

Hagemeyer: No.

John Winkler, the etcher. There were so darned many, in the commercial arts, in the fine arts and also the photographers, of course. Like Dorothea Lange. She was married to Maynard Dixon whom I knew very well. And I knew the lady of the City of Paris, Beatrice Ryan, who started some kind of "Beaux Arts." I was interested in the arts and I always gave them the impression that I knew all about it. I didn't set out to give them the impression...

Gilb: But you had already exhibited, hadn't you?

Hagemeyer: Let's see, I was in San Francisco after I left Edward Weston. I don't remember.
Gilb: But when you came up here you were in this world of the artists?

Hagemeyer: Only. Musicians, artists...

Gilb: Gradually you decided to go to Carmel. How did you hear of Carmel?

Hagemeyer: I wish I had that more itemized in my mind, but it is so mixed up and so from day to day living, marvelous and wonderful, but hard... I went to Carmel to have a show. I had a show here in Oakland before that, maybe thirty-five years ago, that was even mentioned in the Oakland Tribune.

Yes, I knew everybody. Through someone I met a Dutch woman coming from Java, the Dutch East Indies in those days, and she was going to live in Carmel and have a little tea room. She was quite an artist type, cultured. In those days, a cultured European like my brother, who was a wealthy broker, knew much about music and the arts and was interested in literature. The businessmen are cultured over there, not here. Women know more about art here. Men are grinders here; they must bring home the bacon. And they love it; they love the success of their business, but they have no time for anybody else.
They can't talk. That's why I sit and talk to Sam Hume about anything, Europe, books--a marvelous person.

Gilb: What was the name of this woman from Java?

Hagemeyer: Tillie Pollack. She had a tea room there. I had already done something, in portraiture, some children but mostly landscapes. And she asked me to give her a show there, so I did. I stayed with someone, I don't know who. They were all very nice and hospitable in Carmel in those days. I had a show and I also had to give a lecture on it, which of course was a total flop because I cannot lecture. I maybe stood there for, it seems five or ten hours, before I could utter a word. I had asked Tillie Pollack beforehand, "For heaven's sake, if I can't get anything out, start asking questions." So she did. She felt I was perspiring and going nuts. I couldn't get anything out. I didn't know where to start.

Gilb: Were all the great people of Carmel there?

Hagemeyer: They were all there, all the greats.

Gilb: This was your debut.

Hagemeyer: She began to ask me questions and then I got to rolling. It was very easy. I rubbed it into
all the painters that they should take a look at some of the photographers' work.

Then, it looked so much like Holland. Not that I am so patriotic, but Holland is a very beautiful place, particularly where I used to live when I left my business. Many artists live there, musicians, philosophers. And Carmel and the dunes and the ocean and the pine trees, Dutch. So I said, I think this will be a good place for me.

There was nobody there yet, four or five hundred people. So I looked around for a place to buy and twenty-five or thirty years later it turned out to be the best place in Carmel. I didn't realize. It was away out in the woods. I had a little cottage built and I slept there, I cooked there, I photographed there, I developed and finished. I mostly photographed the wealthy discriminating people from the East. I say discriminating purposely, because I always found them more discriminating.

Gilb: The Eastern people?

Hagemeyer: Yes, particularly when they come from the New England states. I did most of them. They were always gathering in Carmel in the summer and I knew them all.
Gilb: And you had no trouble getting people to come to be photographed?

Hagemeyer: None at all. I still have some of those pictures.

Gilb: Carmel had gained fame through literary people like George Sterling. Did you know them?

Hagemeyer: Oh yes. I knew George Sterling very well, but only in San Francisco, in cafes. Cafe life, you know. And also in Carmel, I photographed him. And Lincoln Steffens. I photographed him. And Robinson Jeffers—I knew him before...he was always a poet, a born poet. He was always sitting around dining with friends of his where I was always present.

Gilb: He has a reputation now of hating people and wanting to be isolated.

Hagemeyer: Ah. I always have a quarrel. I don't think he hates people. Do I hate people because I'm most of the time alone? It is because you can't find the right people. And he's always brooding; he is a poet. He is a so-called isolationist, but he isn't, because he knows more than the people in the world. He is much more observant. They all tell me that he hates people and everything, that he is angry.
No. Anyway, I never found him that way, but he is a very strange person, maybe like some of the old Greeks. Very timid, very shy. He could hardly look at anyone.

Gilb: Jeffers is very different from Sterling.

Hagemeyer: Oh, very different. The raving Sterling did at my studio--walking, shouting about things! Dropping me notes about what I was doing.

Certain photography was very, very new. Even Ansel Adams was raving about us. Now we rave about him. Ansel Adams was nobody. He was just fooling around with Bender.

I knew Bender very well. Don't ask me about him; I don't want it on the record. It is more than sarcasm with me.

Gilb: I talked to Spencer Macky about Bender, and Macky told the tale that Bender got other people's money and gave it...

Hagemeyer: I knew Spencer Macky very well. Bender was a sponger, and he always got the credit. He got my pictures. You give them to him and he gives you a tie and then he donates them to Mills College or to a museum, but by his name. That's Bender.
Gilb: Or in the name of Ann Bremer.

Hagemeyer: Yes, but Bender even beyond Bremer. He was the most frightful egoist and the most frightful egotist. He had nothing, except money. He didn't even know very much about art, but he picked on the people who were talked about and far known. He had the works of many of them.

Gilb: Sara Bard Field has told me that he used to come to her house and bring fifty people to lunch. He used his connections...

Hagemeyer: Oh, very generous.

Gilb: With other people's hospitality?

Hagemeyer: With other people's work too. He was awful. I did actually commercially make a picture of him and he tried even then...my prices were not then what they are now because of the value of money....but he tried to jow me down the. An artist, and a man with money. Oh yes, I should have done it for nothing! We don't have to live! I don't like to say it because it sounds rather nasty, but it is not sarcasm.

Gilb: Were there any true patrons of the arts in the area? I know Colonel Wood bought paintings.

Hagemeyer: Yes, but I don't think really true patrons, and if there were, I certainly don't know them.
There were a lot of people, especially among the Jews, who bought things. I had a tremendous clientele among the wealthy Jews in the early days.

Gilb: But they weren't exactly patrons.

Hagemeyer: At least they patronized, they appreciated the arts and they bought. You could be a patron, but if you think of a patron as just a collector...

But I wouldn't call Bender even a collector. He was something like a collector, but he just grabbed, begged things. That's not collecting. He would take things away from the artist, and the artist, like Bufano and the rest of them, apparently thought it would be good for Bender to own some of our things. When I did Einstein, then he wanted to have the portraits. Instead of how much is it... oh, don't talk Bender to me. I really despise a person like that.

Gilb: I wanted to ask you something about your life in Carmel. You said you knew Sterling and Jeffers and Lincoln Steffens.

Hagemeyer: Van Wyck Brooks lived there. He lived there for a couple of years while he was writing a book. I knew him very well. Really a group. We came
together every Saturday at a restaurant. We sat around a table eating and talking at the same time, the artists and the writers, and scientists.

Yes, it was a very esoteric sort of an affair.

Gilb: This has been called the "jazz age." Was it a "jazz age" in Carmel?

Hagemeyer: I don't know what that is.

Gilb: I think it is associated with lots of drinking, iconoclasm, a move away from conventional morality.

Hagemeyer: They were very advanced in their ideas, immoral. Not immoral. From my point of view, I think it is immoral to be moral.

Gilb: And they thought so too?

Hagemeyer: Yes, they were really the intelligentsia.

Gilb: It must have been a very exciting place to live.

Hagemeyer: Then, yes. That is more or less gone now.

There was a place, the Blackman's. He came from St. Louis and had a lot of money, had a very big home and once a week we all gathered there. Sometimes we had recitals or something, music, or a poem was being read or we had the Italian kind of theater that you do spontaneously,
I can't think of the name now. You are only told that you are supposed to be so-and-so. Commedia dell'arte. Marvelous. All those people who lived there then, in their private homes. It was very exciting, very stimulating. Even then it didn't quite suit me because I left that place many times. I just went to San Francisco.

Gilb: Macky mentioned that Armin Hansen was down there, in the Stevenson house, wasn't it?

Hagemeyer: No, what I remember of Armin Hansen...No, Price and Gus Gay, but they were more of that modern bunch, the younger ones; they lived at the Stevenson house. Mr. Armin Hansen was a well-known and established painter and made quite a bit of money and had a very nice home. Of course Hansen's etchings had a great deal to do with it, and others.

But it is very hard for me to remember certain names. I lived there so long and I knew so many people there. And again, so many people knew me. Those few people who were living there and doing things and stirring things up...Even today I am surprised when I go into a restaurant or someplace and someone
comes up to me and says "Aren't you Mr. Hagemeyer?"
"Yes, why?" "Well, you were in Carmel. Are you
still living in Carmel?"

No, no, but that's happened so very often.

Gilb: Did you know Effie Fortune down there?
Hagemeyer: Oh yes, very well. A lovely person.
Gilb: I'd like to know something about her. I've
heard that she was a "character."
Hagemeyer: Yes, a character, but I wish there were more
characters like she. She was very outspoken,
very direct, an enfant terrible, straight from
the shoulder, like an artist.
Gilb: What kind of things did she do?
Hagemeyer: Kind of decorative, murals. And portraits.
I don't think I could quite rave about her work.
Gilb: You liked her as a personality.
Hagemeyer: Yes, I liked her. I remember her better than
I would remember her work. But I do that with
so many people who were there.
Gilb: Were the people who were in Carmel more
interesting because of their personalities or
because of their work? Does their work
entitle them to be remembered, or what they
were?
Hagemeyer: Their personalities were linked with their work.
They were known for doing a certain kind of work. But most of them were not like Jeffers; you never saw him around a place when there was a group.

Gilb: He was always isolated.

Hagemeyer: Right. He was only in a close group of four or five, of which I was almost every time a member.

Gilb: You belonged to both types.

Hagemeyer: Oh, very much. Gemini. I liked most of the people as persons, not so much because of their work...Like the short story writer, Jimmie Hopper. And the Bruton girls I knew very well.

Gilb: What did you think of Jimmie Hopper?

Hagemeyer: I never could get close to him. I daresay, I don't think very much of his writing and I don't like him personally, but it is because some people are allergic to me. I don't know on what basis. He felt quite that he was somebody and I don't like anybody overmuch when they begin to present themselves as being somebody that you have to accept without giving you a chance to find out for yourself.
I was told so many times when I was photographing that some people liked my work very much but they didn't want to be photographed by me because they always felt when I looked at them... A doctor said to me once, "What do you do with those blue eyes, you see all the way through me."

I said, "Yes, I do." I don't, but now that you mention it, a person came in the other day; he's a Dutchman. He said something and I said, "I think I can guess what you're doing." And I guessed his occupation exactly. By the way he talked and his mannerisms.

Some people, when they see that and realize that you're really getting their number, like Jimmie Hopper, might not like it because they already have an established self-estimation. They think I might see too much.

I've been known as being quite a critical critic.

Gilb: I understand that you not only exhibited your own work but that you had a little gallery down in Carmel and exhibited the work of other people.

Hagemeyer: Oh, I had musicals and exhibitions there almost every month.
Gilb: So you were an encourager of the arts in your own way.

Hagemeyer: I was then the "it." I started galleries, activities. People from the outside could come in and see other people's work, local or visiting artists. I picked them up and I had exhibitions. I opened my studio for it in the afternoon, and in the morning I did most of my work. I always had some sittings.

This was when I had my large studio, because I built that only later. A very marvelous studio, wonderful garden.

Gilb: Did you continue gardening or had you lost interest by that time?

Hagemeyer: Not by that time. Now I have. I don't think I've lost interest, but the actual doing is beyond me. Oh, I would never lose interest in flowers, even wilted. To me it means fruition, the final beautiful stage of surrender. I've thought of it many times.

No, my interest in gardening is not less, just as much. I couldn't help it because it is part of me, but I don't do it. I don't do gardening, but in Carmel I had a very beautiful garden, all enclosed.
Gilb: Of all these artists you met in Carmel, which do you think were really great?

Hagemeyer: I don't think any. Great. No. Price, but he was never great then. He went back to Seattle or Portland. He was really "it." There's nobody I could really think of here or in Carmel who would compare with the creative, devoted works of art. That is, even Price's work would almost seem primitive and childish by comparison. Even then when he did those horses, I could have had plenty of them, those sketches. I don't diminish or condemn or cancel out Armin Hansen; that would be pretty arrogant and pedant. Although someone like Henri Malraux, the French critic, wouldn't think of looking at him, I don't think. But very good.

In other words, I make a distinction between a painter and an artist, and a photographer and an artist. Like Ansel Adams is primarily a photographer, even more so than Edward Weston. I am not. I am not a photographer's photographer.

Of those painters, Price stood out. He will live. He was the artist, for me.

This is what I would like to say. The world can very well do without them and many others I could mention, but not without
da Vinci and Tintoretto or Michelangelo or Rembrandt and El Greco.

You might say, do you have to go so far back, but it isn't going so far back. No.

Gilb: Do you think these people might have been greater artists if they had not lived so gregarious a life, if they had isolated themselves and worked harder?

Hagemeyer: You answer your own question. Why should Jeffers...he will live as a poet.

Gilb: The two people you mention, Jeffers and Price, broke away.

Hagemeyer: I know others. Van Wyck Brooks just keeps on writing; he's a literary man. He wasn't only from Carmel. Creativity is just something innate in a person. You see, to segregate or isolate yourself really, in the last analysis, doesn't require isolation, because you are really doing something with yourself. To integrate, to find out what you really are, not to be selfish, but to do what you must do, from the inside. The great ones all did it.

We can do very well without the others. They were very nice to know and it's very nice that they had a good time doing it, like people
had in the time of Mozart; they had a good time.

Gilb: In other words, what you're saying is that if they had had it in them....

Hagemeyer: To me there is no question about it, nothing can hold you back, in spite of everything.

Gilb: In spite of your environment.

Hagemeyer: Regardless. Right. Now, it takes guts perhaps, it takes something. You can't help but know the true artist. They are the ones like Van Gogh. Never sold a thing, always rebelling, always a frightful struggle. Always writing and painting all the time. Always thinking of Rembrandt, of his perfection. But there he is, always, in a way, secluded. Because of his isolating himself, he went "off," perhaps!

Maybe a lot of people would call Robinson Jeffers "off" because he seems to hate humanity. I can read you a poem right now by Robinson Jeffers that is just the opposite of what they say of him. He goes deeper, he is steeped in the Greek legends and philosophies. He is almost a reincarnation of the Greeks, if there is such a thing, which I doubt.

Gilb: Did you find during your years at Carmel that your own style or your outlook toward your own work was changing?
Hagemeyer: Carmel had nothing to do with it, that I know.
Gilb: You were just growing of your own accord.
Hagemeyer: Yes.
Gilb: Were you growing in any discernible direction?
Hagemeyer: The discernible direction is that I began to find myself more and more, let myself be. I know it when I can be myself in my portraits, or in anything. I'm not trying to do anything. I just can't help it. I don't do much. That is the difference between me and a man like Edward Weston or Ansel Adams; they are producing all the time like they are grinding peanuts. I have nothing against it if they feel that urge and have that necessity. I know a painter who does four oils, finished, in one afternoon. It would take me a week to get one finished product. And I'm only a photographer, or so they say. They don't say it, but they think it just the same, that there is no thought back of photography.
A SHORT STAY IN PASADENA AND HOLLYWOOD, 1929

Gilb: Why did you leave Carmel in 1929?

Hagemeyer: I didn't leave in 1929. I went to Hollywood and Pasadena, yes, but I was always at Carmel too.

Gilb: Oh, you kept your studio at Carmel.

Hagemeyer: Edward Weston used my studio for some time.

Gilb: He had come up here.

Hagemeyer: Oh yes, he was in Mexico and he tried it in the South. He saw me again in San Francisco and he found out I had a studio in San Francisco also. In the winter in San Francisco and Carmel in the summer. There were people in Carmel. All I had to do was to show up in Carmel and photograph people, mostly people from outside of Carmel, hardly anybody from around there.

I left Carmel about a thousand times, sometimes for two or three years. But I actually left Carmel, sold my place, in 1947.

In 1929 I left my San Francisco studio also and went to Pasadena and Hollywood.

Gilb: Why did you go down there?

Hagemeyer: I was told that I could pick up some money there. A lot of wealthy people who wouldn't
come to San Francisco or Carmel--I always knew many wealthy people and they were very keen about my work--I think they liked me as a person. Like the actor John Carradine said, "The way you do it, it doesn't seem like anything."

But I see so rapidly, so intuitively, that immediately I'm set. I see composition--lighting is almost instinctive, a part of me. I never have to think of it, except to think of the person, of what I'm doing.

Gilb: Did the lure of the movies have anything to do with your going to Hollywood?

Hagemeyer: No, no. The movie people are cheapskates; they are spongers. They have a lot of money, but they are photographed, so why should they pay me. They were keen about my work; they were once trying to make me the still photographer for one of the movie outfits, which for a moment appealed to me, but I knew inside that I could never do that. I would just be knocked around and told what to do.

Gilb: It certainly would be contrary to your style.

Hagemeyer: Yes, so many people like my style and what I'm doing at exhibitions, but they are not photographed by me. They are afraid.
Gilb: You went to Hollywood in search of clients but not movie people clients.

Hagemeyer: No, I happened to really be lured to Pasadena by wealthy people, but it was just exactly in 1929 when the market collapsed, so I collapsed with it. I couldn't make it in Pasadena and I hate that place, so smug, so Puritanical. I lived there before when I was a horticulturist. I knew many people from Hollywood, painters, actors; I thought I'd go to Hollywood. I didn't do very much there either. During the depression I actually couldn't make it so I had to move back to Carmel, where I immediately made it.

I even had to ask Edward Weston to find another place because naturally I was just going bankrupt. He was having a good time there. My studio with practically no rent.

Gilb: People came to you in Carmel, even during the depression.

Hagemeyer: Oh, yes. I had made quite a reputation. Not in Carmel, but about. They might come from Los Angeles to Carmel to be photographed.

Gilb: But they didn't come to you in Los Angeles. Isn't that odd.

Hagemeyer: No, it isn't so odd. At that time Carmel was
the place to go to for vacation or a honeymoon. Carmel is that kind of place. And Pebble Beach and Del Monte. Hagemeyer had a studio and I was the only one. For a long time I was the only photographer.

Gilib: Until Weston came.

Hagemeyer: Weston never did very much in portraiture, not even in my own studio. He did some, but he did landscapes and they sold. Naturally he did some portraits.
THE 1930's AND '40's

Gilb: I remember that in 1932 in Carmel a group, f64, was formed around Weston. You didn't belong to that?

Hagemeyer: No, no.

Gilb: Why not?

Hagemeyer: Why f64? Why not f128, or f nil? Open lens?

I thought it was silly. They were all the same, always doing the same thing. It was all a la Stieglitz, no, he was in New York. It was all a la Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. As much admiration as I have for Edward Weston, and he is an old, old friend of mine and I have respect for his work, a great deal, and for Ansel Adams, why should I be a copy, a second or third or fifth rate Edward Weston? They know that. I just go my own way. I could never join anything like that.

They may have invited me, but it didn't appeal to me; it was too one-sided. f 64. They were just photographer youngsters, little squirts.

Gilb: But Dorothea Lange belonged?

Hagemeyer: Yes, and Edward Weston too, but Weston wasn't whole hearted about it either. That's probably what he got from me. In that sense, he was quite
a bit influenced by me. In that sense, when it comes to theorizing, I'm perhaps a bit of a dynamic personality. I speak my mind; it isn't absolute, but it is mine.

Gilb: What was your relationship to Ansel Adams?
Hagemeyer: Very little, hardly any relationship.
Gilb: I had heard that he was a protegé of yours.
Hagemeyer: No, never was. I never had a protegé. No, no. I like certain photographers very much. I have a young man here in Berkeley; he's not a protegé. I am in favor of his work. But I don't like any of the 64 people's work. Dorothea Lange? Yes, that's all right for her. I don't want to get personal. I don't even like Ansel Adams at all. He is an exhibitionist. He's frightfully gushy. Edward Weston is different. Of course, he used to be my friend.

Ansel Adams, never personally. His work appeals to me. It is beautiful. I'm talking about him as a person. His work is beautiful.

Gilb: Did you take an interest in the documentary photography?
Hagemeyer: No. Well, I have done some documentary work. I don't know what documentary means. I think all my work is documentary or super-documentary. I make a document of you.
Gilb: You started out your early life with strong convictions, social convictions. I think that people who do documentary photographs often have a sense of social injustice and use their photographs in that context.

Hagemeyer: Propaganda? No, that doesn't interest me. I may do a street scene, but not for propaganda or political reasons. Just as a human being.

Gilb: Did you gradually abandon your anarchism?

Hagemeyer: I've transcended it, not abandoned it. Never. I still believe in anarchy and absolutism. A Christian philosophy, or Chinese or Hindu, it's all the same thing and I'm interested in all of those. But those things are all so frightfully personal, like art is also.

Gilb: You belonged to anarchist groups when you first came to California. In the 1930's did you belong to any political groups?

Hagemeyer: No. I followed the different political parties, not only here but everywhere else. I would read anarchistic tracts, for instance. You get plenty of anarchy if you read Dostoevsky.

No, I have finally found someone, the great teaching, that included...an extension, a more liberal, human extension of intellectual...
anarchy. There are certain teachings that cannot be intellectualized. As much as Emerson talks about the intellect, he means more than what we call the intellect. He means the Kantian intellect, which is pure reason, which is above the ordinary mind you use right now. That is transcendental and mystical. I don't call myself a mystic.

In fact, I might as well state that I don't call myself anything. What I think is necessary is to be. To be. To be or not to be. You are or you aren't. If you're a beast, be.

Human nature, it is something you can't change. You are a human, you do certain things an animal doesn't do and a saint doesn't do. Like Gandhi; he transcended a human. He was like a super-human human, a Nietzsche super-human.

Gilb: You say that all the events of your life influence you. Music, ideas...

Hagemeyer: Yes, all those.

Gilb: I wonder then if social events had an influence on you. You lived through the great depression and the poverty and misery of all that, and the second World War. Did those
great public events affect you in any way?

Hagemeyer: Of course; they affect anyone.

Gilb: I might be more specific. You apparently did well yourself, economically speaking, during the depression? When you got back to Carmel, did you have trouble making a living there?

Hagemeyer: It was in 1930, '31. No, it was much easier for me because I was some kind of a fixture there and had been for so many years, from 1918 or 1922 on. I never was very flush, but I was popular. I photographed people from the East mainly, when they came to Carmel, or even from San Francisco or Los Angeles. I was always doing enough and I was making a very good living.

Gilb: The poverty of the '30's spawned a lot of social ideas. There were a lot of Communists during that period and other ideas.

Hagemeyer: Do you mean the second World War?

Gilb: And before that. Did you go along with any of those ideas, or were you just isolated as a person?

Hagemeyer: No, I was very much involved during the first World War and also the second, very involved.

Gilb: During the Second World War how were you involved?
Hagemeyer: Well, I was more interested in the war and justified it because of the Fascist-Nazi domination in the world, everywhere. In fact, I wanted to fight. Of course, I couldn't because of my age. I was against the first World War; I was a pacifist because I thought it was foolish. The government thought I was a pro-German. I was not. Neither was I pro-British or pro-American. I was anti-war.

Gilb: But in the second World War you were definitely anti-German, anti-Axis?

Hagemeyer: Anti-Axis, anti-Fascist, oh, very much. And I would say to any young man, "Now, this time it is worthwhile fighting. You are really fighting to make the world free, safe for democracy." We Americans are pretty strong in the use of slogans; when we have a slogan we think we have already done it. That is very bad.

But ideologically, naturally, I was pro-democracy.

Gilb: Pro-freedom.

Hagemeyer: Pro-freedom, yes, for all people. Not only for us.

Gilb: Were you still living in Carmel during the Second World War?
Hagemeyer: Yes.

Gilb: You couldn't fight. Did you try to do anything else for the war?

Hagemeyer: Yes, I don't even like to mention it, but I photographed a great many soldiers and purposely cut my price in half because otherwise they might not have been photographed. I advertised it practically. So that was my contribution. It was about all I could do.

I couldn't go and be a paratrooper or anything; I wasn't young enough. That was only several years ago.

Gilb: How was life in Carmel during the war years?

Hagemeyer: Well, hectic on account of the war because Fort Ord was so near. I didn't like it, but I was already getting ready then to move away.

Carmel was being cheapened by commercial enterprises. People were coming in, greedy for real estate and so forth, and all those little shoppes featuring a town which was at one time very lovely and beautiful with few people. Featuring, commercializing, butchering it, ruining it like they do everywhere.

Gilb: So you moved right after the war, didn't you?

Hagemeyer: Yes, I moved in '47.
Gilb: Where did you move to?
Hagemeyer: San Francisco.
Gilb: Did you have a studio there?
Hagemeyer: Well, I wanted to have a studio there, which I finally did get. I got a very wonderful place on Telegraph Hill, on top of the hill, but I couldn't make it. There were other difficulties involved, because I wasn't alone, you see.
ABOUT LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Gilb: I wanted to ask you about your marriages. You said you had been married three times, but never legally.

Hagemeyer: Is that what I said? It's not recorded?

Gilb: Not yet because I wanted to expand on it and clarify it with you.

Hagemeyer: Those things are so personal that I very rarely talk about them and I take them for granted. I take a great many things for granted because of the way I live, the way I think. I try to put my philosophy into practice and it has worked.

I have had three important and long relationships, but the last one was the most important, the most beautiful, and the longest.

We were married for 18 or 20 years. She died only recently. She was a writer, a patrician, a great and marvelous person. If you live with a person for five years, it becomes a marriage by law, common law, but I never so-called made it legally.

I am really rather naive about such things; they don't interest me. I don't like to record that, but if you have a relationship, you don't have to have it sanctioned by anybody. I used to say satirically that you only do that with your dog, go for a license.
Those things don't come back to me anymore. I was young and in a way aggressive with my ideas. Ideals too. I didn't believe in "legal" marriage, and I lived that way for many years. Sometimes it was broken up naturally, just like so many things break up. Like at one time, I was through with Beethoven.

**Gilb:** You didn't want children?

**Hagemeyer:** No, because I had enough to do to take care of myself that I thought it wasn't fair, either to the children or to myself— and I may also reverse that, myself goes first. I wanted to carry on my work. I think a great many artists would do both, but then they also take a chance.
I have a friend now who is suffering because he wants everything. He wants a wife, he wants children, and also he wants to paint, but he can't. He has to have a job and now he is suffering. He doesn't like the job.

I did pretty well, in a way, and I suffered too because I couldn't always make it. But I did pretty well what I wanted to, and after all, I had that relationship and it was always very inspiring.

Gilb: What made you move to Berkeley eventually?

Hagemeyer: Well, I gave up San Francisco and then I moved to the Peninsula, Burlingame, and I started a studio to help a young photographer, put him on his feet. It didn't work out.

I also was taking care of this woman. I don't know how to put those things because I very rarely talk about them. For instance, this woman, my wife...Mrs. Hagemeyer she was called by the tradesmen but not by her own friends and I never introduced her as such to my friends. She was herself quite somebody, a patrician, a writer, beautiful, not beautiful physically but a beautiful person and she always went by her own name. Her name was Jane Bouse.
Gilb: Was she an artist?
Hagemeyer: In a way. She was very much interested in the things I am interested in, music, literature, poetry. When I met her so many years ago...in fact, I met her as I have met so many people, I photographed her and we happened to click. I don't think you can describe how two people get together. They have something pretty much in common and it is simply already cemented; it has already happened. It isn't just falling in love, you know.

Gilb: When I first came in, before we started to record, I remarked that a lot of your approach to life must be very painful for you and I should think it would apply to emotional relationships too. The institutionalization of emotional relationships provides a kind of stability or frame-work so that you don't have to think; it sort of perpetuates your life on a formula. You try to live so intensely and individually, it must be hard.

Hagemeyer: Individually, yes. No, it wasn't hard. Sometimes it is hard, yes. It isn't hard for me. In a conventional society, they all knew me, and everything that I did; I didn't hear
any criticism. My actions were taken for granted because I was all right. They believed in me, you see. Friends, all kinds of people, they accepted it. They also said many times that I had a great deal of courage, dared to live, and a great many of them envied me.

I was not promiscuous, you see. There was a marvelous relationship, loyalty.

Gilb: But wasn't the end painful?

Hagemeyer: Well, there are no happy ends, only in books and motion pictures.

   Well, I could modify that too; there are and there are not, but generally not. The end of things is always sad and difficult. To cut off anything involves a certain amount of pain but that pain is not for nothing either. If you are aware...that is what I mean by living. You grow, you mature.

Gilb: As you said you loved the flowers, even when they were wilted.

Hagemeyer: Oh yes, because they have completed the whole cycle.

Gilb: You still haven't answered the question of why you came to Berkeley?

Hagemeyer: I came to Berkeley because I didn't know where else to go. On account of circumstances, I
couldn't go East or to Europe, which I had been wanting to do.

Gilb: Financially, you mean?

Hagemeyer: Not only financially, but this friend of mine was very ill, had been for a long time. (She was a veteran of the first World War; she had been a nurse.) So I was more or less inhibited in my movements.

Gilb: You had to stay because she was ill?

Hagemeyer: Yes. She was in many sanitariums and I didn't care to go alone. She was full of life, sick as she was. She was tremendous. She died about a year and a half ago in a hospital.
IN BERKELEY AGAIN; FRIENDS

Hagemeyer: Why I stayed in Berkeley? Well, I knew a great many of the faculty members, that is, people of the University, scientists mostly, the art department, and I knew that there were all kinds of activities in Berkeley on the campus. Music, lectures...

Gilb: You've expressed admiration for people in the East, that you really preferred them, that they were more discerning. I should think that would make you want to go back to the East?

Hagemeyer: Yes. Well, I still feel that I would like to for that reason, but I also hesitate doing so. I don't think that I can withstand the climatical conditions, either the heat or the extreme cold. I have never been very keen about it. I lived in Washington, D.C., for more than a year. The climate is frightful. That was just before I went into photography.

I like California. I was back in Europe a couple of times.

Gilb: But you didn't want to stay?

Hagemeyer: There was a time when I wanted to stay. I have been wanting to go again, and I really feel yet that I want to be somewhere in Europe,
but I am split. I feel out of it and I feel very much in it.

Gilb: Back to Holland? Paris?

Hagemeyer: No, no. I would just as soon travel through Holland. There are things I would like to see, what they have done with themselves, but very likely I would prefer to live in France or in England.

Gilb: In England?

Hagemeyer: Yes, because after all I have lost a great deal of my French, my languages, just neglected them. It might be a bit more difficult now to pick them up again. One doesn't know. I am not over-optimistic about it.

        And of course, I am somewhat rooted here. Not entirely, I purposely say somewhat. I am not rooted; I am very much uprooted. I don't fit in anywhere anymore.

        But mostly California, and especially San Francisco is the only place in the United States that I like very much, because of its climate and because it is romantic and picturesque. Real cosmopolitan, like New York and New Orleans.
You described your life as isolated. Are you occasionally gregarious? Do you go to parties?

Oh, very much. I just voluntarily isolate myself. Although lately, here in Berkeley, because I don't know so very many people I just sit here and feel very alone.

You are a close friend of Louis Siegriest who lives near here.

A friend, not a close friend.

You are very different.

Yes, very different. I see a great deal of him, but he doesn't entirely fill my needs and neither do I fill his. I think I demand more than he would.

He is a gregarious type.

Very gregarious. He has many, many friends, all kinds, from the bartender up.

You are more a patrician, I think.

No, I'm a snob.

I was putting it nicely.

No, I would never say I was a patrician. Maybe in my mind. But the gregarious types are also snobs, in a sense. I know it because they call me an "egg head." They have a certain antipathy to intellectuality.
Gilb: Even among artists?
Hagemeyer: Even among some of the artists, yes. They feel that some of the artists are too intellectual. I think it is necessary to have ideas, not necessary to be intellectual, but ideas make you intellectual. They filter through the intellect, that's all. Those things are not easy for me to talk about just off-hand, very difficult.

I have some friends here who stimulate me. I must be stimulated, and I must stimulate.

Gilb: What friends? I am interested in who your friends are.

Hagemeyer: Not very many. I know Sam Hume very well.

Gilb: Can you characterize him for the record?

Hagemeyer: He is a tremendous person, a scholar in the field of literature and the drama, the stage. He was with the University of California drama department, the faculty, at one time. For some reason he quit; they very likely didn't cooperate with him enough and he is a tremendous individual. That is what I like. He has a tremendous knowledge and is also quite a traveler. He lived in Europe much of his life.
Gilb: You mentioned that you knew a lot of the scientists over here. How did you get acquainted with them?

Hagemeyer: You know, all that has to happen is that you meet one and then you meet the rest, particularly in my profession.

Gilb: They come to be photographed?

Hagemeyer: Yes, I photograph so many, and I got it primarily through a physicist whose name was Loeb, Professor Loeb. That's the way I met Einstein and all the others. Gilbert Lewis and so many atom-smasher men.

Gilb: You like to photograph scientists?

Hagemeyer: I like to photograph a certain kind of people who are doing something. They don't have to be scientists.

Gilb: Do you have social relations with them?

Hagemeyer: Yes, with a great many of them. In the South and here.

Gilb: You are more an artist than a scientist.

Hagemeyer: I am not a scientist at all.

Gilb: You feel an empathy with them just the same?

Hagemeyer: I have met a great many of them, mostly Nobel people. But they can be very dull and dry
and uninformed about a great many things. Many scientists, just like many musicians, are very one-sided. Now, if you know somebody who is really rounded out, who reads something else, who goes to theaters, who listens to music...that means everything to me.

I like people, but it is not easy for me to get along. It is very difficult for me to talk small talk. I want to know what they have to say so as to discuss that for awhile, something worthwhile, some idea. I don't mean to be solemn. It is not a matter of trying to be serious, but there is so much going on in life, let's talk flowers instead of talking about automobiles. A lot of people just talk about their cars and their television sets. That doesn't interest me at all.

**Gilb:** This raises another question. Do you get angry personally at evil or ugly people? Or do you tolerate them too as part of living?

**Hagemeyer:** I don't say that in my life I have been so tolerant. I wouldn't say that. It would be very nice to say. After all, it is also being recorded. But I can't say that. I am too critical.
Gilb: If you love the flowers in their decay, perhaps you ought to love humanity in all its aspects. To be consistent.

Hagemeyer: Yes, well, I am intolerant, even about tolerance sometimes. With Negroes, it is not a matter of tolerating them all indiscriminately. To me they are either interesting or equal...I don't throw that word "equality" around too much either because there is no such thing, and there is. Again, it is a paradox. Sure, we are born equal, but we are not equal. We haven't got equal interests and likes and dislikes.

I am very intolerant about certain things that are going on in the world. And also about people and what they say.

Gilb: What makes you feel particularly intolerant? What sorts of things anger you? Mediocrity?

Hagemeyer: Mediocrity, yes. People who conform, who just fall into a rut. That is a sort of stupidity, mediocrity.

That sounds very superior. I don't mean to sound superior. It doesn't matter whether I like a nasturtium better than a geranium; they all have their place; but I am intolerant
of exploitation, for instance. I don't tolerate it; I fight, whatever I can. Talk about it anyway.

And I am intolerant of people who patronize me, or anybody else, who are so nice to people just as a design.

**Gilb:** You would not go along with class snobbery?

**Hagemeyer:** No, on the contrary. And I would say so too. I am frank about it when it is necessary. I wouldn't tolerate it.

**Gilb:** Something I've noticed, and maybe it's not recent, but at the art museums there has grown up a tremendous social life; previews are social events. And so many of those people who go to the previews don't even look at the paintings; they almost don't care.

**Hagemeyer:** They go there for a drink and a social rendezvous.

**Gilb:** Does this alienate you?

**Hagemeyer:** It is boring, but at least, when you haven't seen certain people, you find them there. Like in Paris, you go to a certain cafe and sit on the sidewalk and your friends pass or they come in and have a drink with you, not to drink but just to visit. Here, you have to drink.
Another thing here in America, when you go to a place the waiter is watching you all the time. As soon as your glass is empty, he takes it away. That doesn't happen in Paris and other places I have been. You can sit all evening on one cognac, in a sidewalk cafe.

But they go to previews to see one another and to be seen, just like some other people go to church or to a club. Everybody is lonely. It is a matter of degree, but every person is lonely. They are always with themselves and they are alone. With some it is more than with others. Sensitive people are more aware of it. When you are hungry for some contact and you are not aggressive, you hold back, you don't simply barge in to anybody. I don't, even to my friends.

Gilb: It is awful to be hungry and discerning at the same time so that your hunger is not easily satisfied.

Hagemeyer: Yes, that of course means lonesomeness.

Gilb: Do you think you would find a more congenial environment in Europe?

Hagemeyer: Yes, but still I would miss America because there is a certain something here. I think
D. H. Lawrence once tried to describe that. There is something here that they haven't got there and vice versa. But I am really still much closer to Europe.

Gilb: Would you find the environment there, in general, more congenial for artists?

Hagemeyer: That is not easy to answer. I don't know. It would be for me, and I think for artists. Of course, they talk about that a good deal lately, that artists don't have to go to Paris anymore. I don't think that it is necessary to go to Paris to be a great artist in America, or to become one, but there is a nucleus there. New York is the only real art center in America, certainly not San Francisco. Here it is very provincial, very small scale, very nice. But if you have it in you, it isn't necessary to be any special place to be a great artist.
HOW HAGEMEYER MAKES A PORTRAIT

Gilb: Let us talk about your photography for awhile. After you started doing portraits, didn't you gradually stop doing everything else?

Hagemeyer: Not necessarily, though lately I haven't done very many stills. Very few. I've been trying to do this thing (shows object) because it means something abstract to me. I can make an abstraction out of it, like a Paul Klee, but I'm conscious of that and consequently I hardly touch it. I know in a way what I can do with it. But I'd rather do a living thing.

I know that while I photograph people, they change all the time. We converse. I don't always have a camera around, or in front of them. Never, in fact, except when I see something. Something happens inside of them. That's where portraiture comes in. Otherwise they're dead, they're still lifes, and I don't make still lifes, or if I make them, I know that they are still lifes. Then I condemn them. I tell my customers, if they want them, all right. I get a check; I'm commercial enough. I'm not so pure, oh no, but I admit I'm not pure. I'm impure enough to want my check and
if they're stupid enough not to take the ones
I know are the best...and I know. They always
want to be something that they are not.

Then I say, "You ought to go to a
photographer, but don't come to Hagemeyer. I'm
interested in you but not just in making a
photograph of you. If it were just a
photograph, the camera would be doing it,
not I."

It is the identification that counts, with
the thing, the subject, the person, the moment.
That is why you can't just wind yourself up
and say, now I'm going to photograph. I'm
going to paint. It is more than just a hunger,
then being hungry for a good steak. It is a
drive that is final, and also rare. You can't
just turn that on and off at the moment. That
is perfectly silly. That would be making
something, but not creating something.

One time a friend came in. He had never
seen my work. "Gee, I'd like to have a
portrait of myself. Could you do it now?"

No. I said, "No, I have to sit and talk
with you awhile." I liked him; he was rather
a good talker; he talks about art and literature.
"No, no, I couldn't do anything. I'm not in
the mood." Now, if he talked long enough you might see me go to my camera and do him, but not right away.

When I have an appointment, yes, but I have a very difficult time when I have an appointment, to break in. You laugh at me. For many years now, I have walked the floor here before they come and hoped to God that they come on time because I don't want to walk too long. I want to get it over with.

Like with you. You are so darned punctual, you make me feel better, because I was in torture. It is torture for me even when I have to do a portrait, looking forward to it and at the same time feeling very much of an antagonism. I don't know what I'm going to do, whether I'm in tune, whether I can get in tune with the person.

I had a very beautiful call this morning, somebody's son, a Fleishhacker. First I made a mess of it, his fault, not mine. Then I made him over, and he called me up early this morning--nobody calls me early when they know me--and he was so happy. I did a beautiful portrait of that boy. I know it myself. I got him, and that is important. That is
Gilb: I wondered why you have done so many famous people? Is this by choice, or by accident?

Hagemeyer: Choice and accident. Because I meet them, I know them, I get in contact with them. Of course, they have something to say; they have done something. That doesn't mean that I wouldn't do a portrait of someone else. I've just done a portrait of my colored housekeeper, the most stunning thing. I did a portrait for herself, and later on, a portrait for myself. Naturally, she doesn't want to show that; she doesn't like it. She likes it now because she was influenced by me. It is up in my exhibition now at the Oakland Art Museum. Not the one I did before for her. No, no.

Well, aren't you interested in knowing a man like Abramowitz, who is a very fine pianist? And a strange person. Aren't you interested in knowing Robinson Jeffers? Well, so am I. And incidentally, I am also a portrait man. Why shouldn't I be interested in doing their portraits?

I do more unfamous people too. I'd like to do Senator McCarthy too, and not make a caricature which I could do. I'd get him. I
don't do it in three or five minutes. I may take an hour or two. I sit; I'm photographing now. I don't always use my camera. It is so simple, that is all there is to it. I have something that makes me do it, no particular reason.

I can't express myself the way I want to. I read the Letters to a Young Poet by Rilke and that is almost the way I would write. I would have written the same kind of letters exactly, only I don't have the language. Maybe I could have in my own language, but not anymore either, because I never use it and that is a conflict too. They all say to me, "Why don't you write?" I say, "I can't write. I can't even write a decent letter." Well, I can, but it's a frightful struggle, because I want to put it just so, because it is being put down.

Just like my portraits. I can shoot, shoot, shoot, but that is nothing. Any damned fool can do that. And when I am waiting, they ask, "What are you waiting for?" I don't know. Something happens. And of course with a great many people that I photograph nothing happens.
Then I do just a blank thing, there they are.

But the people that I have photographed, the scientists, artists, painters, musicians... well, I can talk to them about almost anything. Of course, take Einstein's relativity; I know of that philosophically but not scientifically.

Gilb: What kind of man was Einstein?

Hagemeyer: Simple. The humility of that man, always trying to give other scientists the credit! He said, "We just build up on others' work." We all do that. That's why when you ask me if I was influenced by so-and-so...the whole thing is. I'm building on all the experience of the things I'm attached to and that I am hungry for.

Gilb: People and music...

Hagemeyer: Yes, music, literature, philosophy, religion, everything. And that is why it is easy for me to photograph a person. I find out what they are interested in and then I identify myself with it and I can talk about it. I enjoy that, and that is when I have really done it. They begin to feel that they are not being photographed, that it is just a visit and I happen to have quite unobtrusively a little camera there. It is not even in front of you, only a little while--
and it goes so rapidly, just a moment. I never have to think of light because that is instinctive and composition is also instinctive with me.

Gilb: Do all your subjects come to you now, or do you go out seeking people?

Hagemeyer: No, I never did that in my life, though I ought to do it now.

Gilb: I don't mean commercially, but do you go out seeking subjects for the pure pleasure of photographing them?

Hagemeyer: Yes, if I meet a person, for instance, a pianist or a scientist...I am not aggressive that way, but if I am introduced, I say, "I would like to make a portrait of you." It is, of course, complimentary and that is my greatest pleasure because then I can do what I want to do, not what the subject wants me to do.

I tell my subjects so often, "I don't try to please your wife, your children, your uncle, your grandfather...I have got to be pleased myself."
INFLUENCES

Psychology and Philosophy

Gilb: You say that this process is entirely intuitive. I wondered if you used some conscious philosophy, such as the recent psychological things?

Hagemeyer: No. I know of painters who use Zen philosophy. No, I use none at all. I am steeped, very likely, in certain things.

Gilb: Are you a reader of Freud?

Hagemeyer: No, more of Jung. I have read a great many of Jung's books. I am very interested in Jung because he transcends the physical manifestations. in other words, sex. Freud builds almost everything on sex, and of course, you can't deny that; that would be perfectly ridiculous; but Jung has gone so much further. You must even understand the notes and introductions he has written for the great Oriental philosophies, mysticism. He is always very careful to note that being a scientist, he feels sympathetic and feels that there is something there that he as a scientists doesn't go into. As William James has done.
Gilb: Oh, you are a reader of James too?

Hagemeyer: Oh, very much. His book on the Variety of Religious Experiences is almost a bible for me, because he touches on all the different experiences in religion. He doesn't go overboard; he's a pragmatist.

Gilb: And he's a beautiful writer also.

Hagemeyer: A beautiful writer, so simple, so flowing. Those are the things I read. Take Jung's notes, like the Secret of the Golden Flowers, very esoteric, and unless you are more or less initiated, which I have been through teachers, it is very difficult to understand. That doesn't mean to say that even now I understand it, but I somehow get a feeling that I cannot even express or put down, that is almost unconscious or subconscious.

Gilb: Do you read novels?

Hagemeyer: Very rarely; almost none.

Gilb: Poetry perhaps?

Hagemeyer: I used to read poetry more than I have lately. Much more so when I was young.

Gilb: Do you read books of ideas like the books of the psychologists?

Hagemeyer: Yes. Philosophy, ideas...

Gilb: What philosophers? Do you know Santayana?
Hagemeyer: Oh, very well, and I like him very much.

I can't tell you which or what; certain things don't come back to me. I can tell you books I am reading right now, like the one on my desk on The Consolation of Philosophy by a Greek. Platonic. And he wrote that, as so many of the other philosophers have done, in prison.

That was actual prison, but I often feel in prison too.

Gilb: Well, you are isolated...

Hagemeyer: Isolated, yes. I can't find the people to really be very close with. I can pick the author I like though I don't know most of them in person, of course.

Gilb: You would probably be disappointed because what you get is the best of them in their writings.

Hagemeyer: Yes, and also I can take my time and chew on it. I read very slowly.

Music

Gilb: You said that you listened to music for hours and hours and hours.
Hagemeyer: Yes, in the evening. Recordings. I listen to much music. Music is one of my pets.

Gilb: Do you have favorite types?

Hagemeyer: Yes, the pre-Bachian, Monteverdi and Palestrina. Bach of course, very much. Mozart... I know them all so well, but to make a choice is very difficult. Mozart I would go miles for, but not all of Mozart. I don't care for Beethoven's symphonies, except his Ninth, but I like his concertos and his chamber music. He is more of a musician for me than, just like Mozart is entirely so. Mozart is for me almost the greatest genius among the composers.

Art

Gilb: Do you go to the art museums much?

Hagemeyer: I used to very much, in Europe and also here. Now I am a little bored and also I can't quite follow the modern trend. I don't know what they are talking about.

Gilb: I remember your mentioning that you liked Rembrandt.

Hagemeyer: Of course. Some of those paintings of Rembrandt's, and Da Vinci. And Holbein and Bruegel. Real...
Gilb: By comparison, does modern art look trivial to you?

Hagemeyer: No, I wouldn't like to say that. I just don't understand it. I don't get moved by it. I have to intellectualize it, to ask what is the architectural composition, how do they do it, but that is not being moved by it.

Really, to be moved by music is to forget everything and to identify yourself with the thing and to be lost, to surrender, but I don't do that when I listen to Bartok or Schoenberg or Milhaud. It means something to me, but I don't like it. It tortures me. I listen all the way through. Not always, many times two-thirds or half and then I can't stand anymore. But I might say the same thing of some of the early things that Mozart did, the ditties, but they are always very beautiful because they are so melodious. After you hear them a couple of times you can whistle them; they sing right through your mind all the time.

I have the same feeling about art, and that is why I like the Oriental, the Japanese and Chinese.

Gilb: You do?
Hagemeyer: Oh, decidedly. It does something to me. But the modern medium in most of the arts, I can't comprehend. I have to figure it out. I have to ask, and I don't because it would be an offense, particularly from me, to ask an artist, "What are you trying to say?" I either get it or I don't.

But I was moved by a friend of mine who just had a show after mine in Oakland. His work was very intense, tremendous.

Gilb: Who is this artist?

Hagemeyer: Leon Golden. He is the one who had the Fulbright Scholarship and now he is in Rome.

I made a note to myself. I said, "Well, he has his own language and it is a language that I wish that I had."
EXHIBITING

Gilb: There is one other topic I wanted to ask you about and that was your exhibiting. You have exhibited for years and years and years now. Have you found that the museums and galleries are as open to exhibiting photography as they would be to painting?

Hagemeyer: Yes.

Gilb: No trouble there at all?

Hagemeyer: There has never been any for me, except the City of Paris. I know all those people quite well, the directors or curators, but that is just a policy with the City of Paris. But I had a couple of shows at Gumps. At the DeYoung Museum. Oh, so many places all over.

Gilb: And in Europe too?

Hagemeyer: Yes, in Amsterdam and Brussels and Paris. And then in the Dutch East Indies, at that time Batavia.

Nothing special. As a worker in the arts (you may be a worker in the arts and not be an artist) you have to show! A show is the only advertising, the only publicity to make a living.
I have never had to sit on Market Street. I am almost ready to have to do it now. I'm not doing anything here. I don't mind that people know it. I don't know why.

I've had shows here, at Sam Hume's and in Oakland and other places, but perhaps portraiture is washed out, people don't have portraits done anymore. It isn't a matter that I am more expensive. On the contrary. Of course, I am specialized.

But I may have to. In the last couple of weeks I have been playing with the idea of getting a studio down town somewhere in Berkeley where people pass, where there is some traffic. Perhaps have a case out or some kind of showing of my work.

Gilb: A great many great people have had that problem.

Hagemeyer: Yes. You don't mean to include me among great people?

Gilb: I think your photography is rare.
TECHNIQUE

Hagemeyer: Well, I have a reputation and the prestige. For me, photography is just like eating. Sometimes the technique, for me, is more difficult than the taking of a portrait.

Gilb: What do you mean, technique?

Hagemeyer: After the taking, the darkroom technique. The finishing.

Gilb: Have you ever thought of using color?

Hagemeyer: No, I don't like color for photography.

Gilb: Why not?

Hagemeyer: It is too imperfect, too corny, too cheap, too hard. Some of the reproductions are better than the actual picture. Or the lantern slides. No, I am not interested in color.

Gilb: When you say the technique is hard for you, what do you mean?

Hagemeyer: I mean it is more troublesome for me.

Gilb: You don't take the same joy in the mechanics of it?

Hagemeyer: Well, yes. You can't always get the material. That is so often the case, or they change the material. Paper, films, chemicals.

Gilb: You are not a great experimenter in the realm
of paper and chemicals and so forth?

Hagemeyer: No, no. I simplify. Everything is done to the greatest simplicity. I use one certain paper; naturally, there are a couple of grades. One film.

Gilb: What film and paper?

Hagemeyer: I am one of the few who only use orthochromatic film, not color sensitive, which means that sometimes in portraiture you have to do a little retouching, which I do. I don't apologize for it.

I can't think of the name of the paper, a common paper. Just ordinary enlarging paper. I enlarge because my films are 4" x 5". I prefer to make them exactly the same size as the negative, but of course, people like them larger. I don't make them larger than about 6" x 8" or 6½" x 8½". I don't like them large.

Gilb: You are conservative in the realm of mechanics?

Hagemeyer: Yes, it is very important but not primarily. It is what you get on your negative, what you have actually recorded that is important.

Gilb: Have you found that in, say the last fifteen years, your style or approach has changed?
Hagemeyer: Yes. My style is continuous, progressive; there isn't a change so much in my work as in myself. I know there is a change. I see things differently today than I did even five years ago.

Gilb: Are there any words that could describe this change?

Hagemeyer: No, I don't think so. It is very hard to put my finger on. That is the way I work. I use very intuitive means. I am not trying to do something that is bangy. I don't give people halos. I find certain characteristics of them. Just like when I am talking to you, I would do a portrait when I see a certain expression. It is impossible to define, to put into words. I put it on my film.

When people ask me, "Which one do you like best?" or "What did you mean by this?" "Why do you like it?" I say, "You tell me." "I have done it and why should I say any more than I have said."

The same thing goes for painters. That's why I don't ask them. When I get facetious, I do. When I feel that they are trying to put one over, like Mr. Dali, then I ask, but then they know why I'm asking.
Gilb: With Dali, I'm surprised that you bothered.
Hagemeyer: Oh no, I have a great deal of respect for Dali. Also contempt, perhaps.
Gilb: But respect too?
Hagemeyer: Oh yes, he is a very great technician, and he is an artist. He is almost a genius, even if he is a clown. Mr. Picasso is very different, but he can also clown. A great many artists are actors, poseurs.
Gilb: How do you like Matisse?
Hagemeyer: I don't like Matisse very much. He is too much of a decorator. He is too shallow for me. Not his very, very early work, but his later ones.
Gilb: Which painters do you like the best?
Hagemeyer: Oh no, that is too broad a question. I like certain things of Picasso and a lot of it I don't. In a book of his paintings, I can show you the ones I like. Classical, of the Greek. I don't like his late work; I just don't understand what he's driving at. He has tongue in cheek.
Gilb: Do you think there are any great painters in the United States today?
Hagemeyer: Yes, there are. I couldn't mention them. I had a discussion about that last night when I
was with a painter. I couldn't mention any, but if he mentioned someone, yes, there was a certain thing that I saw.

Gilb: You mentioned Price, that you thought Price was great.

Hagemeyer: Yes, yes, C. S. Price. I just got a catalog from somebody. His late work is inner; there is something inside of him. Also, a very simple statement, just what Price is. He doesn't try to be someone else or to follow a fashion or a type or a genre.

There are many others. They try so hard to be modern and they become incomprehensible to me...I discussed a certain painter, a Frenchman, really a Hollander; I don't see his work at all. His name is De Coninck. To me it is frightful, hideous, an insult to my good taste, if I have any.

Gilb: Did you like the Impressionists?

Hagemeyer: Yes. You mean Whistler, and so many others. All those schools. I'd like to tell you this, I don't go by schools. Why should I like a Durer or a Holbein or a Rembrandt or the later ones? There are so many I can't even think of them. I have no particular favorite.

I like Morris Graves...
Gilb: You do like Morris Graves?

Hagemeyer: Very much. He has something mysterious about him, very mystical, Oriental. I know of his philosophy. I would like to know him personally because I am sure I would get along with him. But he is also more or less of a recluse, not because he wishes to be but because he is very difficult to contact.

Gilb: Yes, he's another example of the type you admire.

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