

Episode 9

Everything Creative

GLEN LEONARD INTERVIEWS FRANK MAGLEBY

[BEGIN MUSIC]

PRES. DIETER F. UCHTDORF (QUOTE): The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of the human soul. We each have an inherent wish to create something that did not exist before. The more you trust and rely upon the Spirit, the greater your capacity to create.]

NANCY HANSEN (HOST): I'm Nancy Hansen and this is Everything Creative. This program explores a wide range of creative ideas, talents and experiences through interviews and group discussions. Today author Glen Leonard interviews landscape painter and muralist Frank Magleby.

[END MUSIC]

GLEN LEONARD: Welcome back to Everything Creative. I'm Glen Leonard and I'm here with Frank Magleby. Frank, welcome and tell us a little about yourself. Introduce yourself, if you will.

FRANK MAGLEBY: OK, well, I've got a lot of years. I'm 82 now so I got back on my way to get my start in life. I grew up in Portland, Oregon, primarily during World War II. My older brother went off into the service and I missed the draft during World War II by about a month. So quite a few of my contemporaries got drafted at the end of the war and then released as soon as the war was over.

GLEN LEONARD: But you did serve in the army for a while, didn't you?

FRANK MAGLEBY: No, that was later. Because I didn't go in then, they caught up with me later.

GLEN LEONARD: I see.

FRANK MAGLEBY: So during the end of World War II, things were—Oregon—it was kind of a small town, very beautiful, but they were very conscious of the war effort so we were involved in building ships and things like that in the little port there.

GLEN LEONARD: Did you that early have any interest in the visual world?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, I don't know. For some reason, when I was in high school there, in school, well, even in elementary school I had an interest in creating things and I remember my elementary teacher would always have me do the murals on the wall and wood workshop. I'd create my own furniture and things and it seemed like I was always taking them to the principal to show the principal what I was doing. [LAUGHING] And so I kind of discovered that I had a natural bend for doing art or visual creative things and at the time I thought I would be interested in architecture. Portland has a lot of beautiful buildings and structures and some good architects that were doing contemporary homes up there at

that time and the school of architecture is at the University of Oregon. But circumstances didn't work out that way.

GLEN LEONARD: Well, I share that background. In fact, I actually spent a year and a half studying architectural design at the University of Utah before I discovered my other talents.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, you know, I probably would, if I—while I was in high school, I was very active in athletics and someone there had contacted the coach Eddy Kimball at BYU and said there is an athlete up here you ought to look at and so I got a letter from him and he recruited me to go to BYU out of high school to play football.

GLEN LEONARD: Oh, so that's what brought you to the Y.

FRANK MAGLEBY: So that brought me down to BYU, and in my senior year, I was looking in the newspaper and I saw an announcement that Northwest Airlines was gonna sponsor an art contest and it was to deal with air and what's happening with aviation basically and so I got thinking about it. I thought, well, I'd like to try something. I was good in shop and so I went to the shop teacher and he got me a big piece of wood that was about, oh, two feet tall, or two and a half feet tall and maybe 12 inches square, and I came up with the idea of doing an aviator, carving one. Before that, I hadn't done many sculptures, but I'd carved—in elementary school we carved soap and to think I had found a knack to carving and so I plotted out what I was gonna do with this piece of wood and then we had a really good teacher who had been trained in Denmark in crafts and she was very good with metal. We worked with pewter and other metals and she would teach us to make little boxes and started arts and crafts kind of, but good quality arts and crafts, composition of designs and so I wondered how I could incorporate that crafts idea with the sculpture.

GLEN LEONARD: Talk a little about arts and crafts. What are the stylistic details there?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, it's craftsmanship, working with materials, you know, like metal. Well, in this case she did a lot, but she also introduces to other kinds of crafts but I think it's basically mostly metals and wood and ...

GLEN LEONARD: So was the aviator a picture of a man or a sculpture of a man?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I did it standing. I got some pictures of some aviators that were trained in the Air Force so in those days, because of the war, they had a helmet with goggles hanging on and then their flight suits and things like that. So I came up with the idea—since it had to deal with aviation, I carved this aviator out of wood, a standing, full standing figure of an aviator and then he had his hand out and in his hand, out of metal, I made a globe of the world, made a round globe out of pewter and then under his arm, I made a metal airplane so he was holding this airplane under his arm, holding out the globe and so I didn't think—I entered it in the contest, and I didn't hear anything about it and then when they had the graduation exercises, they announced that I had won this first prize in this contest and it was a wonderful opportunity because what the contest included was a free trip to New York by Northwest Airlines and the artist and their student got to go and then they got to take their art teachers with us and there were five of us from Portland and five from the Tacoma/Seattle area, sort of in the area of Northwest Airlines and they actually put us on an airplane, a chartered plane that they provided and took our little group—there were

ten students and ten teachers—and flew us to New York in a chartered plane, you know, one that they ...

GLEN LEONARD: So did you get to meet some artists or have an art experience in New York?

FRANK MAGLEBY: We had a wonderful experience in New York but on the way, since we weren't on a scheduled flight, they would fly down over the Grand Canyon, not Grand Canyon, but Yellowstone and then over the badlands and they wouldn't land but they would fly down so we got to see the country in a very unique way in a fairly large plane, a regular passenger plane and flew into La Guardia Field in Manhattan and they had arranged to have the press come and meet us and so we got our picture in the New York Times and then they put us up in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, which is a big nice hotel and we spent two weeks in Manhattan as part of the prize and so we got to go to all the museums and then we got to go to the musical plays at that time, Oklahoma, I think was one, I can't remember now just which ones were playing but it was one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences for a young person that had been kind of isolated in a little town in Oregon, growing up here

GLEN LEONARD: And as you visited the art museums and looked at those master works, did you get any inspiration there that, oh, I wish I could do that?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Oh, yeah! I think for the first time, Portland has a pretty good museum and we did spend time in school going to the museum and on my own and I saw a lot of the art, they have a pretty good American collection but it was really interesting to go into the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan and you know, all the really great museums in the city, and that experience was really a unique one, and then I have an uncle, his name is Dean Fossett, who was living in Manhattan and had a studio and a home in Vermont and he heard that I had won this contest and so he wrote me ahead of time and said, well, why don't you just stay back there that summer, don't come back with the group, and spend the summer with me and so I opted to do that and he then showed me the artist exposures in New York, he had a wonderful studio there and took us to the different things, and he had done some murals and granite stone too and took me out to see those and we went to the professional, you know, the art galleries then more saw what was going on with the contemporary artists of that period and then we went up to Vermont. And he introduced me to painting. I had never done any painting before that. I had done drawings and maybe some water colors you know, what you did in school as a young kid, and he set me up and we went out every day and did plain air painting. We went out in the landscape there and I started to introduce to the whole idea of painting by going out and working with my uncle.

GLEN LEONARD: Now he has done murals in Utah, too, has he not?

FRANK MAGLEBY: His older brother has, Lynn Fossett.

GLEN LEONARD: Oh, Lynn did that one...

FRANK MAGLEBY: In fact, Lynn is the oldest member of the family and Dean was the youngest. Lynn had gone to New York before Dean and so I had two uncles that were professional artists.

GLEN LEONARD: So you come from a family of creative people. That must have been a wonderful introduction to the broader world of art in New York.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, what it did for me is understand that art could be a profession. I had two uncles that were very enthusiastic and avid at working at that as a profession and I never had any doubt that that was a problem or a question. You know, I just assumed that if you wanted to do it, you could do it.

GLEN LEONARD: And they encouraged you

FRANK MAGLEBY: And they encouraged me, and helped me a lot. As I was growing up, they both were very, very good to help me so that's my first introduction to doing painting which I hadn't done much of before, so that's why I thought before I wanted to be an architect because I was more into construction and I thought my natural best would be to architecture. Then I got to BYU and that scholarship. I came back that fall and went directly to BYU and I found out that they didn't have a school of architecture so I didn't have, and the closest thing was the Art Department which related to what I had been doing all summer so I enrolled as an art major and just continued on painting and ended up that being my major focus.

GLEN LEONARD: Now this little aviator you did, how large was that?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Oh, he was about two feet tall, something like that.

GLEN LEONARD: Pretty good size, so you left sculpture behind after that.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I really didn't get involved with sculpture much after that. When I was in Vermont, I'd get a piece of wood once in a while and carve on it a little bit, I made a horse's head and some other things out of wood but I really didn't pursue it as a professional type direction.

GLEN LEONARD: You work in oils.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yes, that's what I got started with basically, oil paints, working with oils.

GLEN LEONARD: Have you tried other media?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I have but I always come back to oils, I just like oils best. To me, they are more, they have more tactile quality and working time is longer and there is a lot of things I like about oils that I have never liked in the other mediums.

GLEN LEONARD: So you got two degrees at BYU and you were majoring in art in both of those.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yes.

GLEN LEONARD: You spent some time in New York pursuing your education at the Art Students' League?

FRANK MAGLEBY: That was after I graduated from BYU. I actually stayed at BYU and got a Masters Degree there and it's kind of interesting. When I was there, about the time I was a student, they were doing temple murals and they built the Los Angeles temple and I was intrigued by the murals they were doing in the temples and both my uncles had done murals in public buildings and so I kind of thought, well, I'd like to train myself to do murals, and I'd

never... so I actually, for my masters project I did a mural for one of the little grade schools there in Provo. It was Father Escalante coming into Utah Valley. He came here with and the school was named after the little Indian guy that brought him into the valley, named Joaquin so it was Joaquin School so I did a mural of Joaquin bringing Father Escalante into the valley.

GLEN LEONARD: That's interesting. You were introduced to temple murals and murals early and of course, one of your last large projects was murals again for the Nauvoo temple. We'll get to that a little later. So at the Art Students League, what were they trying to teach you?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, in university there is a difference in just the curriculum. The university was more structured without the intensive studio experience. I mean we had classes and the classes were I had to take a print class and I'd take a drawing class and at the Art Students' League it's a professionalized school and they work from models mostly live models and you work in the studio, there's teachers there, the faculty the ones that come in are all professional artists that spend a day or two a week teaching at the league.

GLEN LEONARD: So you are doing live

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, working from live

GLEN LEONARD: The human figure

FRANK MAGLEBY: Right

GLEN LEONARD: But you didn't pursue that later, did you?

FRANK MAGLEBY: No, but I thought that I think in those professional art schools like the art students league, I think the consensus is that you learn best by drawing from the model and that drawing translates to anything you wanna draw. The human figure is complex and it's the discipline that you gain by drawing from the figure that will transfer to whatever other kind of drawing you wanna do so it's a good way to just develop your drawing skills and we didn't get that much intensive studio experience in the university. It was fractured and broken up more

GLEN LEONARD: Did the BYU Department focus on preparing you to teach or preparing you just to do your kind of art?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I'm really not sure at that time what they, how their focus was. It was an art major but then you took all of your other general education classes and your required classes and so it wasn't as intensive a focus that you would get like you would in a professional school where you every day you're just focusing on working on your art skills and your craft. So I think a university is still a little more general education oriented than especially in the undergraduate level.

GLEN LEONARD: Well, learning from the human body is one way to learn from nature and of course your focus has been getting out in nature, in the plain air, getting out there in the open air to take what God has created and translate that into something that people can capture the religious idea of celebrating the Creature's handiwork.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I think that's very much part of it.

GLEN LEONARD: Talk about that a little.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, I think that as you work in nature, you develop a sensitivity to the creation of everything, the landscape or the human figure or whichever subject you choose to work from that you by working directly and confronting it you develop a greater appreciation and sensitivity. I believe that creativity depends on an emotional response and I like to go where I get the greatest emotional response and for me, I ended up finding that it was not in the studio with the model or figure but it was in nature because I love to get out into nature and physically experience both visually and all my other senses what's there and then that in turn came back and feeds back into the thing you're creating. And so I think I just ended up going out and doing landscape painting primarily because that's my experiences that I enjoy the most.

GLEN LEONARD: And you were teaching at BYU from 1959 until when?

FRANK MAGLEBY: 91.

GLEN LEONARD: So you were there teaching students and at the same time you were getting out into nature and creating landscape. How did you find the place that you wanted to paint?

FRANK MAGLEBY: That's part of the joy of it. I love to explore and go on the back roads and to go into different parts of the country and I think that I don't know. I'm an outdoors person. I like to get out into nature and...

GLEN LEONARD: Do you do other things in the outdoors? Hunt? Fish?

FRANK MAGLEBY: No, I'm not a hunter, but in fact, it's kind of funny, when my friends go hunting, I'd go with them and I'd take a camera cause then I'd get up into the woods and places so I love to explore and to see different parts of the country and I love to travel because of that, too.

GLEN LEONARD: The paintings I've seen of yours are those that show the hill country, the mountain country in Utah, northern Utah in particular. You say you explore other places?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Oh yeah, I love to travel and

GLEN LEONARD: So where else have you painted? What other kinds of subjects? What other landscapes?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, you mean in my career? In my total experience?

GLEN LEONARD: Yes.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Oh, I've been to Europe and painted a lot. I've painted throughout Europe in different country sides and cities and things and then painted South America, and done paintings down there, from material down there and I have a home in Vermont because I love the country side there, the landscape that's there, and it's quite different in Utah, so I, it doesn't mean that I'd pick it over Utah because I love Utah because Utah is such a wonderful variety, when you look at the Wasatch Mountains and up in the canyons and

then you go down into the desert and to the canyons down there, the national parks, and it has more variety than any state that I know of.

GLEN LEONARD: You painted all of those deserts and mountains?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Oh yeah

GLEN LEONARD: And I understand you have done seascapes and cityscapes as well?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah.

GLEN LEONARD: What got you into the city?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Just because when I was living in Manhattan, I painted Central Park with skyscrapers behind it. But I think that, and in some of the unique places like in Italy and that where the cities are very colorful and very fun to paint.

GLEN LEONARD: And a camera catches it as it is. What do your landscapes or cityscapes or seascapes do beyond what a camera can do? What's the creative part there?

FRANK MAGLEBY: The creative part, I think is, it's a matter of perception. When you go out, your eye sees everything. There is a lot of detail and a lot of things there that are kind of confusing, and I found out that we have a psychological mechanism that simplifies everything when we first look at nature, at a person or whatever you're gonna choose to paint. You see it in a general sense and I think that mechanism was given to us so we don't get confused so you don't see all the variations of colors or textures or things, but you see kind of a general thing. I think the camera does the same thing. When the camera takes a picture, it takes the general picture of the area but there's an interesting thing happens in creativity, and it's called color constancy. Our mind has a psychological mechanism that makes us see things in a general sense so when we look at it, we see things without a lot of detail or a lot of depth and I found that it takes almost 20 or 30 minutes to tune that out. So if you're sitting out there and you're looking, all of a sudden, you'll see colors that you didn't see when you first sat down. In the shadows, you'll see brighter blues or purples and then the highlights you'll see different so that it, to tune that color constancy mechanism out takes time element and unless you have the time to sit there and really look carefully, you don't experience that, and that's the height, the emotional part then comes when you start to see all these beautiful colors and things that you don't see immediately then that feeds on your emotions and that reflects back into your work, into your art.

GLEN LEONARD: I have a similar experience when I visit an art exhibit. I was down at the Springville Spring Salon last week and you walk through the exhibit and see the different kinds and approaches to art and you see the compositions and the colors and then I walk out of it, an art exhibit or a museum anywhere and as I walk out into the real world, suddenly, I am seeing things differently, I am seeing composition, I am seeing colors and I just say, wow, where's my camera? I'm gonna capture this. But like you say, it's more inside you; it's what you see inside.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, I told my students the experience that I heard. There was a man that commuted into New York City from out in Connecticut. And he'd get on that train and ride it into the city every day and then he'd come back at night and one morning when he was leaving to go into the city, he looked out and here was an artist in the railroad yards with an easel set up and he was painting there and he thought, why would he choose that railroad yard? It looks kind of grim and you know, I don't know why he would pick that and so then he didn't think about it and then when he came back that night, the artist was still working there so his curiosity got him to go over and look at the painting and when he went over to see the painting, he could see then what the artist was seeing and feeling because the painting was showing things in the railroad yards where there were colors and textures and things and shapes and things that made a beautiful composition in the painting that he'd never would have seen when he drove through there every morning and he said, while it was interesting because after that experience of seeing the artist's interpretation of it, when'd go back to that commuter train again he started to see these things in nature and then in the railroad yard he said, so what it did is it opened this mind to be able to see more through the eyes of the artist than he had on his own before that.

GLEN LEONARD: When you go exploring nature, you know, and open your eyes looking at places, how do you know that's a place you wanna paint? There's everything out there, like you said, this big world, do you suddenly say, oh, I wanna paint that? Or do you have to just sit down and say and think about it or look at it for a while before you know that's a subject because there are so many options?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, sometimes, sometimes it comes to you like the Eureka principle. You just all of a sudden you go wow and you get that look that sometimes you just have to take time and you know the old saying, stop and smell the roses? Sometimes we move too fast through life and we don't take the time to stop and just really look and I think that one of the things I've enjoyed about painting and even going out and photographing is that when I get out there and start to get in tune and get an emotional impact of what I am looking at, then all of a sudden I see all kinds of opportunities for paintings and if I'm moving really fast, you don't have that same emotional tie to what your vision is. We had two other artists, Grant Johansen, Bob Marshall and I went to Europe one summer and we decided when we left we were just gonna do a painting trip so we rented a little car and we started heading out and we said every day, we're gonna stop and paint. We took ours actually, I took my oils, a box of paints and they took theirs and the first day or two, we were sightseeing, we'd go on and we didn't really stop and paint so I thought, this is ridiculous, we're gonna stop. So one day, we said when the light's good and usually it's in the early morning and in the afternoon that middle of the day you travel and there's not the light is not that great so let's say, at 4 o'clock, we're gonna stop and we got to four o'clock and we thought, well, gee, there's not much here but we committed ourselves to stop and paint so it was kind of funny because one of us went one direction, maybe a hundred yards one way and the other and we went looking for something to paint and pretty soon we saw something by taking the time and after a little while one of us go, "hey, you gotta come and see this here," you know, we were yelling at each other, this is great, come and look at this because all of a sudden, our eyes tuned in and we started to see what was there that was meaningful. So it isn't always the grand and the dramatic that makes a good painting. You can paint very common subject matter and make a beautiful

painting if you stop to see the effects that are there with color and light and all the other things that make up a painting and so the content isn't always the important thing, it's the way the artist sees it and takes time to interpret it.

GLEN LEONARD: Frank, you were a teacher for 32 years at Brigham Young University. How do you get these notions and the ideas and the abilities to see in the students? Can you teach that or do they have to come with a talent and creative

FRANK MAGLEBY: Can you teach talent, you mean?

GLEN LEONARD: Can you teach creativity? Can you teach them how to see? Can you create a good artist or do

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I think teaching them how to see is the most difficult. I think that there are things you can teach very easily and that is process; so materials and process, that you can teach. You can teach drawing through exercises and you can teach them to develop their skills but they almost have to have that innate personal drive to really learn and I think that there are some things that you can't teach but you can teach them to get into it and start to develop their own process and their own vision and start to work and through that, they develop. I don't think there are any secrets that you teach, you know, I think it's more experience that you give them.

GLEN LEONARD: I see students coming out of BYU that really know who they are and know how to paint in a distinctive way. It's a creative process. How do you nurture that creativity?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, one is just encouragement. Because most of them, their parents will say, you wanna be an artist? And the first question they ask, can I make a living at art and so its, if the person really has, I can think of one, maybe he won't mind my mentioning is name, was a student that had a lot of ability, Christian, and Chris started out in the engineering department and then he'd come over and take some art class in high school. He was very talented as an artist and he wasn't encouraged too much by his family. They thought art wasn't a very potentially good career because of the income factor and then he'd come and take another class and he was torn because he wanted to be doing art but he signed up in engineering and finally he made the commitment to come and just go all out for art and I think that that's something that they'll say, well, can I make a living and my thing is you can make a living but you can't be an average artist. You have to make a commitment to become an exceptional artist and then there are opportunities all around you to make a living. Your work will sell and you will have plenty of opportunities to do it. But boy, it requires a stronger commitment than say some other professions or some other areas of study. And only with that commitment to really work give it everything you have will you succeed.

GLEN LEONARD: So would you say that you were born with a creative talent and a creative mind?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I think it is, I think it is something and I think most of the ones that I know that are successful artists had that when they were little kids, they knew they had a special talent.

GLEN LEONARD: You know, after your retirement, you had some special opportunities. At the Church Museum where I used to work, we did an exhibit on the art missionaries. The Church sent

the art missionaries to France to learn to paint. They were painting in one style and in France at the time impressionism was big and so that's plain-air painting because the impressionists wanted to get light and air

FRANK MAGLEBY: They were highly influenced by that.

GLEN LEONARD: Of course. And the world was influenced. A lot of the Utah painters became impressionist painters. And a whole school of them. But they came back and did the assignment which was to paint murals in the Salt Lake Temple. That idea at the museums spurred an interest in the Temple Department. I guess you were the first art missionary called by the Temple Department, weren't you?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I was, in fact, it's kind of an interesting story how it happened. After I retired and I wanted to, my bishop came to me, well, first of all, I had seen an announcement in the newspaper and it said they were gonna build a new temple in New England that at that time was gonna be Hartford, and then one in Preston, England, and I'd just been with my wife and I had been to England two years before and I'd gone around and I had done some paintings there and in fact, one of them was the Benbow farm, which the Church Museum ended up purchasing, at one exhibit

GLEN LEONARD: It's a beautiful landscape of a historic place.

FRANK MAGLEBY: A historic place. And so I said to my wife, since I'd retired, I said, "Wouldn't it be fun to go back to New England since we'd spent so many years in Vermont and then go to England again and do paintings for those two new temples?" Cause the Temple Department had been purchasing paintings from me for the new temples, as they were going up, so that kind of got in my mind, I got thinking, that would be a fun thing to do, and so then my bishop came to us and said, "you know, your kids are raised and you're retired and you're thinking about doing a mission," and I thought, yeah, I said, "I am but I'd like to do a mission and do paintings, because that's where my talents are" and so I told him that. And he went to the Missionary Department. They said, "You can't do that. You go where they send you." But anyway, it's kind of a long story but I went to the Temple Department people because I had been working with them and it finally, they thought that was a great idea and they went to Brother S.—I can't think of his name now, anyway, they said, "well, let's check it out" and so finally it ended up going all the way to President Hinckley and he just said, "well, great, we'll call him as a painter for the Church" and so I got a call, my wife and I were both called to paint.

GLEN LEONARD: Now when was that?

FRANK MAGLEBY: That was in 1991. And what was interesting, they said, write a proposal and I wrote this proposal we'd like to go to New England and would like to go to England and do those two temples, and as we were about ready to go, I got a talking to the temple people and they said, you know, we're just finishing a temple in Orlando, would you be interested in doing any for it, I said, I'm at your beck and call, I'd love to go any place and so we started out first and went down to Orlando.

GLEN LEONARD: So these paintings were about what size?

FRANK MAGLEBY: They were about three—well, they were about 20, 36 x 48, 3 feet by four feet,

GLEN LEONARD: And most of us have seen some of your paintings hanging in a lot of temples. Were the paintings specific to the location of the temple?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, that's what, in this case, they were. I'd done some temples before that that weren't that specific that the interior designers had picked for certain temples. I think they picked them more for color and content than they did location. And I don't think they even thought about that but I got thinking to myself, if I'm gonna do a temple painting for a temple in Orlando, I should be painting the subject that those people who are gonna attend that temple will identify with and so I went down there first thing. My wife and I packed our car and we went down and spent quite a bit of time in Florida just driving through this. We weren't familiar with it at all, visually, we hadn't been there before in our life and I was really impressed by certain things visually when I got there that were unique to Florida. One was the skies. Because there is no mountains and it's flat and the skies are huge and there were beautiful cloud formations in the skies and so I thought, well I would love to paint the skies that exist in Florida, that are so dominant.

GLEN LEONARD: So is that what you did?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I did, yeah, I did one and then another

GLEN LEONARD: Now, you gotta have a landscape down here at the bottom, you gotta have a base, so what's showing at the bottom?

FRANK MAGLEBY: In the landscape, the sky was large. Instead of in the mountains here you got a small sky and a big mountain. And so that was the visual impression I got by being there. And so, as I went around Florida, I picked subjects that were, that to me, related to that region.

GLEN LEONARD: Did you do more than one painting for Orlando?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I did four for Orlando.

GLEN LEONARD: All of them skies?

FRANK MAGLEBY: No, no, see, they are entirely different, there are other sections of Florida; there was one thing I was impressed by by sitting with these big live oaks. They are huge trees and they are probably a couple of hundred years old. They'd have the moss hanging down and they are called live oaks because they aren't deciduous. They don't lose their leaves in the winter. And they're beautiful forms. So I did this one with big the big live oak tree, and to me it was kind of a metaphor of the tree of life because it doesn't lose its leaves and it's just a beautiful form so I did a big one of that and then as I was going on along the little byways there, things along the shore with the marshes and stuff and so I did one of that. So they are all kind of local oriented.

GLEN LEONARD: As an art missionary, how many different temples did you create art for that specific temple?

FRANK MAGLEBY: When I was on my mission? Well, let's see. I don't know by number, but we went.

GLEN LEONARD: Well, let's see, Orlando, did you get to New England?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, we went to New England from Orlando and I did four paintings up there to go in the temple and at that area, we were close to the sacred grove and we were close to Joseph Smith's birthplace so I picked historical spots when I went up there so then we went to the Susquehanna where Church history sites and that was sort of in the rich heritage of that country, so that wasn't any trouble at all finding really interesting places to paint.

GLEN LEONARD: And you brought that gospel perspective into it. And then came the big invitation. You were asked to put together a team of artists to do wall murals for the Nauvoo Temple.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, that was kind of interesting because I saw the announcement in the newspaper that they were gonna rebuild the Nauvoo temple and President Hinckley had said that it was being done with contributions that people were they were gonna use tithing funds and so I thought, gosh, I did that mission, I'd love to contribute something to the Nauvoo Temple so I called the Temple Department and they said, well, the designers are picking the art so you need to call them, so I called Lawrence Wise, he was the head designer, told him what I wanted to do and he said, well, that's great, but he said, did you know we had murals approved? And I hadn't heard that at all. And he said, they were excited because this is the first time they had murals approved since they had the temple done in Los Angeles and they were gonna go from room to room like they did in the old temples instead of doing the murals and so he said, would you be interested and I said, well, the extent of that was the three rooms the amount of square footage and things

GLEN LEONARD: So they wanted one in the world room,

FRANK MAGLEBY: The creation room first

GLEN LEONARD: The creation room

FRANK MAGLEBY: Then the garden room and then the world room.

GLEN LEONARD: Those three rooms.

FRANK MAGLEBY: And so each room was specific to that and they were gonna move from room to room like they do at the Salt Lake Temple and the older temples. And so I said, well, there is one year time to it.

GLEN LEONARD: There were six artists involved.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, yeah, when they asked me if I'd be interested, and I said, well, that's gonna take more than one person. They said, well, we figured it might. I think it would take a team of artists to do the three rooms in a year's time and

GLEN LEONARD: So did you all work on specific rooms?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, all of us. We did. They said, then, would you like to pick a team and I said, yeah, I got some friends, so I was able to go and call five of my students, former students that were very successful and doing good and asked them if they would like to work on the

Nauvoo Temple murals and so they were excited. So we got together as a group. There were six of us and we decided the best way to distribute it was to do two persons to a room and then we took off after we decided who was gonna do what rooms. Then we took off and did the research for it so two of us that were doing the world room. Gary Smith and I, we went and took the church history areas. The ones that were doing the garden of Eden went to Florida through all the beautiful gardens and things down there to get material for there, and the creation room, they headed for the coast, with the ocean and all of that, so we spent probably two or three weeks researching the areas that we were gonna paint in the murals and then we met and we had the Church build us some models of each room and then we did little sketches in 2 inches to a foot and did our designs on the sketches that would go in each room and that way you can study them. This is a traditional way of doing murals, is to do sketches first and have models. That was something I learned years ago about mural painting.

GLEN LEONARD: So these early, early experiences with your family and with Los Angeles now come to be part of your experience.

FRANK MAGLEBY: All of a sudden there's something that I thought I'd never have an opportunity to do would be temple murals and it came so when I was young, I thought I wanted to be a mural painter and then it didn't happen so then all of a sudden, this opportunity came.

GLEN LEONARD: So how do two artists work together on one room?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, we decided to break the room in half.

GLEN LEONARD: Oh! [LAUGHING] So how does it match?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, we made it match pretty well, I think. We each had a main wall and a side wall and then it wrapped on the end wall and then we met in the middle of the end wall but we kind of got our subjects to match and in the world room, we decided we'd like to portray the world as the Saints at that time would know the world so we started and then we also wanted to use the metaphor of the four seasons and so we started with the spring, the Church in Vermont and then moved through to the different areas where Church history took place, ending in Nauvoo with winter. And so I took the spring in Vermont around to the middle of the back wall and then Gary Smith took it the rest of the wall out through the winter showing the different locations, showing where they had moved from one to the other.

GLEN LEONARD: So your design you agreed upon so it was consistent. His style is quite flat, isn't it?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, we decided that, too. We decided that we should keep our own identity. That was a decision we had to make. Should we mix our styles? And we decided we should create the way we naturally would create them. And I think that that worked out very well. We were able to merge the two together and keep our own identity. We didn't wanna have kind of a work that no one could recognize each other's way of working.

GLEN LEONARD: You mentioned Chris Young, and he was teamed up with James Christiansen for the Garden Room. Now James Christiansen is a fantasy artist and Chris I guess—was that a

special challenge to merge those two styles? Did they also work like you did, half and half?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, they did the same thing.

GLEN LEONARD: Jim didn't do all of the animals, huh?

FRANK MAGLEBY: No. In fact, Chris is probably the best experienced animal painter. His are beautiful. I think that Jim didn't do them all. He did a couple. He did some deer and a cougar or something in the garden but...

GLEN LEONARD: There aren't any little fairies or fantasy

FRANK MAGLEBY: No fairies. And each one, ... I don't know, everything seemed to just work together. We had a good collaborative relationship, I think, in all three rooms.

GLEN LEONARD: I guess of any experience you've had, this is one where you can depend upon the Spirit to be of help.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Very much, yeah. And you know, we got a lot of good counsel from everything that goes into the temples goes to the First Presidency, and they were very active in making comments and things that we hadn't thought of that they would, especially President Hinckley came up with ideas that weren't probably as good and others that were, I mean we weren't doing the thing we probably should be doing and we took the criticism very seriously and he was right in most cases in the artistic sense that—for example, he felt the world room was a little too tender. [LAUGHING] It ought to be a little more wild and

GLEN LEONARD: More robust.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, he felt that it should be the lone and dreary world, not the garden. So as you move from the Garden, you are moving into another environment and he was right. When we started to do that, we were able to retune our paintings to have a little more of that lone and dreary world effect. We put in storm clouds and lightning and predators, and things

GLEN LEONARD: Somebody else was doing the garden.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, they were doing the garden. So it was interesting. We got a lot of good feedback from President Hinckley at that time and he was a lot of fun. Not in a critical way but he would come through and give us, he would see things that we hadn't seen. Relationships that we thought we should.

GLEN LEONARD: I guess you did get it done in a year because

FRANK MAGLEBY: We got it done and just made it.

GLEN LEONARD: That's all the time you had.

FRANK MAGLEBY: We were able to paint in Provo at the Motion Picture Studio and they came in and built the rooms actually for us there at the same scale, with walls and we hung our canvases on the walls and painted them in there and they actually created the same lighting that we were gonna have in the temple. They got the lighting engineers so we were painting

under the light that they would be seen by and we got it was such a wonderful working experience because everything we needed was provided for us and it was just a great experience for all of us because we spent a year and so and it felt like it was really a rewarding thing to be involved in.

GLEN LEONARD: Highlight of your life.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah. It was.

GLEN LEONARD: These paintings were done in Provo intact. So were they done on canvas and then rolled up and transported?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah. We could order canvas any size. The walls were twelve feet tall and 28 feet long, the long walls, and so we'd get canvas cut to exactly the size we'd need and then when they created the rooms for us to work on, we could put those four walls together and study them as we worked on them so it was like working in the temple room but we were working on the stage with all of the things we needed. Then they'd take that canvas off. We had stapled it to the wall and then they would take that off and rolled it and shipped it to Nauvoo. And they had professional hangers that would come in and do that, they'd hang the murals right on to the wall with an adhesive and we were able to go there then afterwards, after they were hung, and touch them up. So we spent maybe two or three days going and touching up little areas that didn't quite dry when they mounted them together. And that was a wonderful experience to go into the temple there and work there. We were the only ones at the temple finished ... when we put the murals in and so we were in there just by ourselves working on those murals. That was really a nice experience.

GLEN LEONARD: Frank, what feedback have you had from people on those murals? I guess not everybody knows you. But those who know you and have seen them, what feedback do you get on those and other landscapes you've done? Do people like them and if they don't like them, do they tell you?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I haven't had any negative feedback yet. [LAUGHING] I think everyone that has gone through seems very excited about the murals and I think that the Brethren, the First Presidency like them because then they decided that they could put murals in the new temples and so they have started to do more murals in the small temples, even though they are using the projection process. They have a place to project. But they still add something to the temples.

GLEN LEONARD: So some of the ordinance rooms in the newer temples do have a wall mural in the ordinance room?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, they are usually landscapes and they are not site-specific landscapes but they kind of lend a feeling of the creation and the idea of the creation and the beauties of nature, God's creations and I think they give an ambience and a feeling to the endowment rooms that they didn't have before.

GLEN LEONARD: God is the Creator and it's wonderful that in the Lord's house, we can celebrate the creation. Now that you're finished with that, what else is on your agenda? [LAUGHING] Other things that you like to do? You're still painting, I assume.

FRANK MAGLEBY: I'm painting every week. I have a studio here in Utah and one in Vermont. I got a beautiful timber frame studio in Vermont so I'm ready to head back there right away and spend my summer and fall there.

GLEN LEONARD: Are you painting more of New England and less of Utah?

FRANK MAGLEBY: It's about equal. When I'm here I'm painting mostly Utah and when I'm back there, I'm painting that whole region. I go over to the main coast and other areas that I love, too.

GLEN LEONARD: So that's where you do your seascapes?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah.

GLEN LEONARD: You know, when my wife and I were buying paintings for our home, we bought local artists in the Farmington area doing local scenes. And I would guess that maybe the market for Utah landscapes is in Utah, the market for New England is in New England. Do you work with galleries to get your paintings out?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I used to work with a gallery in Santa Fe before I retired and I would go down and paint New Mexico landscapes and they were always very popular down there. The beautiful place around Taos and Santa Fe and you know, it has a whole different feel to it and so that's one of the things I love about landscape painting, I can go to any region and paint and enjoy it. I'm not as tied to marketing my work now, I do pretty much what I choose and don't worry about marketing it and so I don't try to go to specific areas for the marketing value but

GLEN LEONARD: But you do market somehow

FRANK MAGLEBY: Some I do, yeah, maybe I have a show once every year or so but I don't—when I retired and started doing these paintings for the Church, I pretty much pulled them out of the galleries so I haven't been working with galleries lately on a professional level.

GLEN LEONARD: My wife and I spent a year in the Santa Fe area as senior missionaries and we got to see Taos and all the places in between. I was impressed by the skies of Santa Fe. Do you do sky paintings in New Mexico?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, another thing, the colors are different. It's the foliage and the light, and there's a lot of things there that are different in New Mexico than say Utah. Southern Utah has its own ambience and New Mexico has another whole range of color and the experience and the plant materials and things.

GLEN LEONARD: You visit lots of places and a lot of paintings from those places. Do you ever just sit down with a blank canvas and try to create a landscape out of all these experiences? I know you like to paint out in nature but now you're painting more from photographs. Do you always use an image or can you just create something out of nowhere?

FRANK MAGLEBY: Well, I think I'm more, I think some people can imaginatively create things. I'm not that inclined. Usually I rely more on what I see and I'll go along and I'll see a painting, you know, we'll be driving and I'll say, "Stop the car!" Because I'll see it and it has to do with the light, the time of day, the mood of what you're looking at. And so I'm not a person that has a strong imagination. I usually rely more on what I visually experience. And it would be very hard for me to create something that I haven't experienced.

GLEN LEONARD: So you're celebrating God's creation. Is he telling you what he wants you to paint? I mean you say you're inspired by it. Do you mean spiritually inspired?

FRANK MAGLEBY: For example, when we were in England painting things for the Preston Temple, we wanted to do something that was in that temple district, so we, like we mentioned, sort of site-specific for the temple, and I hadn't done anything in Wales, and that's part of that area, and we were driving one day, we were actually heading for Ireland to catch the ferry and as I was driving along, it was one of those English days when it's this pouring rain and I was driving along the highway and I got looking out and there was very seldom a place to pull off there because there is no parking at the side of the roads, there are just two lanes and either have hedge rows or other things, so when you see something, it's hard to, and I've looked to my right and down in the valley, there is this beautiful valley with mountains and streams and I could just see all of the ingredients for a painting and, as I say, I see it, I know, you know, I look at it, I say, oh, there's a painting. And so I and fortunately, right there, there was a pull-off and so I pulled off and it was just pouring rain and I said to my wife, I said I could put the sunlight in but all the physical ingredients and the landscape are there. I could imagine the light. So I got out of the car with my camera and I shot about four or five shots of the stream and the mountains and all the stuff, that was attracting, and it was still raining and all of a sudden, the sky broke open and these clouds, shafts of light came down through the clouds and the sun hit, it was like theatrical lighting, you know, when they'd hit a spot on the stage, it was doing this to the landscape, and it was just amazing what happened when that light hit and it came down and you could see the shafts in the sky and so I took some shots really quick and by the time I got back to the car, it had closed in and was raining again.

GLEN LEONARD: You were at the right place at the right time.

FRANK MAGLEBY: When I saw it, I knew that was what I had to paint and fortunately, the light just created. But I probably could have made up, you know, imagined part of it, but at that time, I didn't have to because it was there, and that's sometimes for a photography that's handy. Because you get an instant

GLEN LEONARD: Is that a common experience?

FRANK MAGLEBY: It's a common experience in seeing things that I wanna paint. We had another experience where we were driving through South Wales and I drove across this bridge and I just looked out and I saw the landscape and I told my wife, we gotta stop. And I pulled over and there was a little inn there and I got out of the car and drove all around and we hadn't been in that area before and didn't know anything about the history of it and a lot of the sites that we had been painting were Church history sites and so I got out of the car and I went around and I came back and my wife and I took my camera and a sketch pad and

did a little sketch, came back and I go, “There’s a painting here. Cause I could see it when I drove by. The light and the time of day, the light, those things, you just sense immediately and so when I got back and we were looking at this little town called **Skinthrift** and I said, look that up, and we were looking at a book with a lot of Church history things that happened and my wife got in the index and sure enough, it was listed and it’s a little place in South Wales and they had sent some missionaries there and the priests had given them so much harassment they went back and then they got back and they thought, we’re not gonna let him bother us and so they went back again and ended up baptizing some of the very first saints in Wales in this little river where I chose to stop and paint, so it was a little village and the river, and I had no foreknowledge that that had happened there.

GLEN LEONARD: Frank, it seems to me that you’re not a person that creates something out of nothing. You’re the person who looks at the commonality, and most of us only see commonality. But you see a painting.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, I can see it. I even had that experience in South America. I was down there getting paintings in Ecuador and the construction manager wanted to drive me all around. We took a week and went all through the mountains and we’d go around and someone would say, oh, I know there’s a beautiful spot there and I’d go there and wouldn’t see anything that I wanted to paint. And then I’d be driving and I’d say, stop. Stop the car. And then I’d see things, usually happens in the early morning and evening hours, afternoon, when the light’s good, cause the light makes the landscape so much more dramatic.

GLEN LEONARD: Light and shadows.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Yeah, you get richer colors and contrasts and those things that move me emotionally it happens in that kind of day. So I really—that’s a precious time to go out.

GLEN LEONARD: You know, I’m kind of like that as I write. I face blank pages all the time and I have to put words on them but I’m creating a story out of materials I’ve gathered. In other words, I’m looking at all of the materials like you look at the whole world, all the information, I select from that, and then I pull it together and create a story, so mine’s a little different, and then I’m putting pieces together. That is, I do my research in the world I’m looking at. I’m finding a story, and you’re finding an image. You’ve done hundreds and hundreds of paintings. Do you have a favorite?

FRANK MAGLEBY: A favorite? There are a few. There are a few that I look back on and I try to keep a fairly good photographic record of them. I go back and say, oh, I really still like that.

GLEN LEONARD: So why do you like them? Why are they your favorites?

FRANK MAGLEBY: I think that because they came so spontaneously sometimes that sometimes when you’re creating a painting and you look at it and you say, “Gosh, how did I do that?” You know, things happen in the process of creating it that you’re doing it intuitively and you don’t even, it’s not a conscious thing, and then you look back at it afterwards and you say, “Wow, I don’t even know how I did that.” And some of those paintings that have that feeling in them, that are spontaneous and happen just intuitively, they are some of my

favorite paintings. I don't know. It's something you can't always create when you do every painting, it happens on some and others, it's not as strong.

GLEN LEONARD: Are these in a particular place or are these in a variety of places?

FRANK MAGLEBY: A variety, yeah.

GLEN LEONARD: So it's not the place, it's the experience. The creative experience.

FRANK MAGLEBY: And when you're creating them sometimes, people say, how long does it take to do a painting? Sometimes, your best paintings are done very quickly because you're working very intuitively, you're not consciously, you're relying on the emotion and the intuition, and those paintings, I think, are spontaneous, they're fresh, they're ones that you—and every painting isn't that easy, you know, some of them you labor more.

GLEN LEONARD: Well, and I found that with writing. Sometimes I just, I'm in the shower and all of a sudden, the words are coming. I have to go out and start writing. Other times, I just can't write. It's not time to write, it's not consciously or subconsciously coming together where I'm ready to say it.

FRANK MAGLEBY: We talk about that experience as being in the flow, and it isn't always a conscious level that you're working in, it's an unconscious level, and I don't know how to explain it other than this kind of flows, it comes out of you and I think it's a product of your emotions, your feelings and your vision, what you're seeing, when you merge all those together, you get better results.

GLEN LEONARD: I think that God-given talent has to percolate a little, you can't force it.

FRANK MAGLEBY: No. Yeah, it seems to come spontaneously, when it comes.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

GLEN LEONARD: Well, it's been a pleasure to be with you and being creative is a satisfying experience in life, isn't it?

FRANK MAGLEBY: It is. In fact, I feel guilty when I'm not doing it. It's so satisfying that if I'm not doing it, I think, I should be doing, I should be working.

GLEN LEONARD: Well, the world's out there. Go tour it.

FRANK MAGLEBY: I intend to as long as I can.

GLEN LEONARD: Thanks for being with us.

FRANK MAGLEBY: Thank you.

NANCY HANSEN (HOST): You have been listening to an interview between Glen Leonard and Frank Magleby.

[END MUSIC]