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Oral history interview with Terry Dintenfass, 1974 December 2-1975 January 13

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Terry Dintenfass on December 2 & 18, 1974. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: Easter Sunday, 1920. Really?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me say it's December 2, 1974. Paul Cummings talking to Terry Dintenfass in her marvelous apartment on 67th Street. You were born in Philadelphia, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. I was born in Atlantic City. The only person to be conceived on the Boardwalk. I hope that's not on tape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But your family lived in Philadelphia, didn't they?

TERRY DINTENFASS: The Dintenfasses lived in Philadelphia. I married a Dintenfass. My family name is Klein. My brother just published his famous book. Didn't you see him on the telly and on everything?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? Which one?

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's called From Sad to Glad. It's on depression or something. He's the biggest expert on depression in the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he has another book, another title?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He's a doctor. He's a very famous man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It said in the magazine he's one of the world most famous doctors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, so you were born in Atlantic City?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, on April 4, 1920.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a good day.

TERRY DINTENFASS: My father was sixty-three, my mother was in her forties.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have many brothers or sisters?

TERRY DINTENFASS: They're all dead but my brother that's the doctor. There were eight half brothers and sister and then two from this marriage. My mother was two years younger than my oldest brother. .

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you decide who was what as you were growing up?

TERRY DINTENFASS: They were all married. You see, she was his third wife. We always took the nieces and nephews as brothers and sisters. They were our age. We were the youngest even of the nieces and nephews. I'm still younger than all my nieces and nephews except this brother's daughter. You met Marlene in the gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think so.

TERRY DINTENFASS: She's very pretty. She worked when I had the folk art that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe, yes. How many years did you live in Atlantic City then?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I went to art school. I went away to boarding school, and then I met a man and decided I would go to Philadelphia to catch him. I was all of eighteen. I went to what is now the Philadelphia Museum College; it was the museum school then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the Philadelphia College of Art. Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What made you go there?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I liked art. I came from an upper middle-class background. We didn't have contemporary art, but we had a great deal of the Dutch and that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean paintings?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Paintings and artifacts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Books, music and . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, it was that kind of household.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So there was art culture interest?

TERRY DINTENFASS: My mother was on the stage at one time. And she was big on poetry. My father was a great deal older but he was quite . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was his name?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Ignatz Klein. Much to my older son's horror he was named Ignatz. He changed it to John legally. He's a psychiatrist. He's a major in the Air Force. He has about ten more months to go. He's married and lives in England.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Busy children.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. And Andrew . . . . Did you see the paper Saturday? Andrew had his first movie, public movie. He's a cameraman. Saturday was the first review he ever got of anything -- Five Young Portraits by Film Makers. He's very artistic. and Susan is artistic. All three children are interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you parents allow your interest?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, they were so old. My father died when I was twelve. And my mother was not interested in young children at all. So we were allowed to do whatever we pleased. My brother went to Swarthmore, and I went to Fairfax Hall in Virginia to be finished. We were allowed to do anything we wanted because nobody cared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have nurses or something like that?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, growing up we had. I come from a Hungarian background. We had a Hungarian couple and a governess. It was a varied kind of background.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it was all in Atlantic City?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, but we traveled. You see, we traveled in the winters. We wintered in Palm Beach. In the summer, we were sent away from Atlantic City because the element was bad in Atlantic City. So they thought. They should know what trouble I could get in outside Atlantic City. We had like a camp. You see, I still go to the Vineyard. It reminds me of a camp. We were sent there for summer because it wasn't polluted. And then we traveled. We always were taken everywhere to see this and to see that. I had a really nice . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where? To Europe? Or to this country?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Not to Europe but to all over this country. They felt we had to see America first.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. That's unusual.

TERRY DINTENFASS: They wintered in Egypt and stuff like that, but we didn't. But they were sure we would do the . . . . They weren't very close. You see, my father died. We lived with my uncle and my father and my mother. It was like a menage a trois (although it wasn't, I don't think), or maybe it was. Then when my father died, I went to live with my mother's brother who was another bachelor uncle. I really was raised by two bachelor uncles. The main interest was that I get married and not disgrace the family by producing any offspring before I was married. One uncle encouraged me because I painted, and he thought that was a nice ladylike hobby.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start painting? What really got you interested in going to art school?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, when I was at boarding school at Fairfax Hall in Virginia, that was a very strange boarding school. They had horses and art classes and boys from Fishburn and Staunton.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's what school was about.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And I really loved the art classes. And my other uncle . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you drawn as a child or made water colors?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was kind of the beginning of it?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. But I was exposed to a lot, you know. I was really exposed to a lot of museum going and concert going, and I liked to sew; I used to when I was little. Don't tell my children that. At boarding school, I really like it. They went to the history of art and all that. And then when I met Arthur Dintenfass, I decided not to go back to boarding school. They didn't care where I went to school. My brother was at Swarthmore. He was the only stabilizing influence. He would try to tell me what not to do. And when I decided I really liked Arthur, he said, "Well, why don't you go to art school? Why bother going back to that terrible place?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, how old were you when you went to Philadelphia?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Seventeen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To the art school?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. And I did mostly art and Arthur Dintenfass.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did he come in? Where did you meet him?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, he was brought home for another cousin. And I was threatened that I shouldn't appear on the scene. They were interested in getting the other cousin . . . . And that's all they had to tell me. So I appeared on the scene because he was so tall and big and quiet and steady-looking, and I thought that one was for me, I'll go to art school and get that one. That's how it happened. Then I went to the museum college for a year. I married Arthur the following fall. Then I had a baby the following fall. And I went to school even then. I didn't go to the museum school; I went to the Philadelphia Museum on the Parkway where Watkins was my teacher and Clayton Whitehall was a teacher. And I kept that up even during the war and after the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? All the way through that period?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Arthur was stationed in always in this country. I lived in Richmond for a year, and I would take a course there. Then, we lived in Columbus, Ohio, for a year, and I went to Ohio State and took history of art and Spanish history.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He is a doctor, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, he is a doctor. He's a surgeon. I have a proclivity to marry Jewish doctors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, obviously, you didn't have much freedom because you had a child there, but how did you like . . . . ?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I had two children in two years. I had two children when I was twenty-one. Then the war came, and then after the war I had Andrew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was your husband involved in the military?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, yes, he was in the Army.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he was in camps here?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. He set up the blood banks all over America. It gave me a chance to grow up. I really grew up during the war. I was very young. I didn't know my head from first base. Living in Columbus was the best experience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

TERRY DINTENFASS: The lady next door was Mrs. Jones. She was a professor at Ohio State. She had two sets of twins all in the Army or the Navy. She was so glad to have some young person around. And she really told me

what life was all about, I mean, that I should really study. She started me on reading a lot of good things like that. She was really a very big influence. I was crazy about her. Then after the war, Arthur came back, and we lived in Philadelphia. He went to graduate school to get to be a specialist, and I went back to school. I was lucky and had help so I could go back. I went back to the museum college.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like Watkins as a teacher?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He wasn't very good. He was very quiet, he would go raising his bushy eyebrows. But I liked Clayton Whitehall.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know him.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He's dead. They're both dead now. It was very interesting. I didn't know anything about it. I didn't think I could even be a painter. I didn't want to be. But it exposed me to . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: It had an appeal and just did something. Were there other teachers there that were important or influential that you remember?

TERRY DINTENFASS: There was Blackburn. I think he's dead, too. I don't remember. At the museum at that time, I think Watkins was the darling of the art world. He had just done The Fire Eater and all those. Remember I'm pretty old. I never wanted to be a painter. I just liked the idea. And I was never a club lady or anything like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you remember anything that Watkins said about your interest or questions . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: I took painting with him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: . . . or personalities or ideas? Do you think his style of painting became important to you, or interested you? Did you paint that way, or was it quite different?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, I think the thing is I was never really interested in being a painter. It was the idea that it gave me a feeling of how hard it was to paint and how difficult it was to draw. That gave me an opportunity when I would see a painting I still see it from how complicated it is -- a piece of paper is white and how complicated it is to break it into. And I just came back from Vancouver and San Francisco the other day from the Dove show. I went to see all the artists I could see that I hadn't seen, and also my own artists like Raymond Saunders and Jake Lawrence. And I can never believe that there's a new way to skin a cat. But yet there was. I couldn't get over it. Sally Roby traveled with me. We were together. We had quite a time. Between the gin bottle and the stairs we did very . . . . But at Ray Saunders' house, we had seen some paints, and we both liked this artist's work. We asked who he was. He is a Chicano. So when we got to San Francisco, we couldn't find him in the phone book. Ray couldn't find him. Finally, the museum called me and said that they knew I was looking for this artist, and they would make a time appointment. So we went to some very minor neighborhood and climbed up all these stairs. And lo and behold, there's this lovely man. But there was another way to skin a cat, I thought to myself. And I wouldn't have believed it. They could do it another way. I mean it's very alive and very . . . . So, I hope to give him a show. I bought one for myself. I don't have it here yet. Sally bought one for the Foundation; in fact, she bought two. And Roy DeForest, of course. He's the pet of the West Coast; she bought one of those. Wait till Isabel Bishop sees a Roy DeForest at the board meeting! She's going to jump out of the window.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What will Lloyd Goodrich say?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He'll say, "You can have another drink."

PAUL CUMMINGS: He really knows how to do it.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, speaking of Lloyd Goodrich. His sister stopped me on the street today. Do you know them? Their name is Hackett. He adapted The Diary of Anne Frank. I met them when I was coming home tonight to wash my face for this interview.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you settled in Philadelphia after living in these various cities, and you went back to school, was that just to study painting? Or did you study art history or other things?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, I was never really a student. I did art history later because of Robert Gwathmey. No, I just did it because -- well, I guess I had to do it. I don't know why. I didn't belong to the ladies' league sort of thing. And Arthur was in graduate school. And I was anxious to learn. And during the war, Mrs. Jones had turned me on to reading and stuff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you read?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, you know, I had never read Dostoevski or any of those people. She turned me on to

really being curious. And one thing led me to another. She used to say, "You really could do it if you wanted to." Then Arthur gave me the big surprise of my life saying that he was going to move to Atlantic City as soon as he graduated. And I said, "But I married you to get out of Atlantic City."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why Atlantic City?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He thought he was a big swimmer. I always marry men that can swim.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've got a big pool right there.

TERRY DINTENFASS: So he wanted to move to where the life was easier. He hated the idea of the war. He hated the idea of always being pushed around and working hard in that sense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And he didn't like Philadelphia then particularly?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, he really loved the sea. And so do I. I was born on the sea. So I didn't put up too much of a fuss. We moved to Atlantic City. I went to work as a nurse in his office. I didn't know a thing about nursing. I worked for fifteen years as a nurse. And still went to Philadelphia one day a week. He taught at Penn on Thursdays, and I went to the museum school on Thursdays -- you know, the Philadelphia Museum and to whoever was teaching. That's how I kept that up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, you had a variety of instructors?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Just depending on who was teaching on that Thursday.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any that you found interesting or that you remember?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I remember Clayton Whitehall. I know that's not a big name in art. I found him very interesting. He was able to give me the idea about setting up still lifes, and what to see in the cubes and rounds, I mean most of this theory that I was involved in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You never got that from Watkins, though?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, Watkins was a very, very taciturn, silent man who would move his eyebrows. And he was very tall. He looked exactly like Arthur did in fact. He would go and stand behind you and go, "Ummm". I don't know what that meant. Well, then I worked for about fifteen years in the office. This brings us to the early fifties. I wasn't really bored with the office, but it was like, you know, people were pretending to be sick that weren't sick. It was the same thing that, you know, any doctor . . . . And then one night at a party, there were some friends out of my youth, you know, the Bubsy's who owned the Dennis Hotel and some other people. I grew up in that town so every once in a while we would be out of the doctors' circle and would be with people that I knew from my youth who were not doctors; they were from other walks of life and another social thing. By this time, Art used to go to this convention and that convention. I had been to Europe a couple of times already. We had just come back from Chicago. So, at this party, we got into a big discussion about "Atlantic City is falling apart." I said, "It is the world's worst city. I've just come back from Chicago, and they have the Art Institute, and they have theater, and they have this, and they have that. And there's no reason that this town, being the big convention city that it is, couldn't have a gallery." And they said, "Oh, it would never go. It would never go." And one man there said, "Well, I had a gallery once, and it positively can't go." I was pretty crocked and said, "I'll bet you two hundred dollars that it could go. I'll bet you anything that if you on sole the best of everything, or showed the best of everything, it would do a lot for this city." And they kept saying . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: You got no support, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, absolutely none. But the next day, one of the men who was at the party, George Busby, called me up. He had gone to school with me. He said, "Terry, were you serious?" I said, "Sure, I was serious. It really would be a good idea, George." He said, "Well, would you come and tell that to Father?" I said, "What?!" He said, "Well, come and see my father." I said, "All right." So with all the nerve I had, I went to see his father. His father said, "This is the Dennis Hotel which doesn't have anything but very rich old ladies from Philadelphia and very conservative." I said, "Mr. Busby, what I want to do is to have the best gallery of contemporary art. It's got to be so good. And your hotel is very lovely and beautiful, but it caters to such a conservative clientele." He said, "Don't worry about that. I'm interested. We'll show you what we have available." Well, I almost fainted because, you know, I was playing around in my head. He showed me this room and that room. Then I really got scared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was going to become real all of a sudden.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I came to New York and I went to see Lou Stern. Do you know who that was? He was the big collector of Chagall. He's dead now. He owned the Rousseau with the moonlight that he gave to the Philadelphia

Museum. He gave most of his collection to the Philadelphia Museum. We used to call him Uncle Lou as I was growing up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now where does he come in? I mean was he a friend of the family?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. He was a friend of my father's and my uncle's. He was a very big art patron. He had lived in Atlantic City at one time. And we always called him Uncle Lou. And I ran to him. Also, I ran to a lady I knew whose husband was on the newspaper. I'll show you a catalogue she gave me. She said, "Why don't you got to see Lou Stern?" I said, "Well, what's he got?" She took out this catalogue. I think I have it on my desk. I'll have to give it to you. In 1929, he had an exhibition in Atlantic City under the Convention Hall. It was put together by Edith Halpert. And it had everybody: Kuniyoshi, Demuth, Dove, Georgia O'Keeffe, everybody, everybody that was anybody in those days plus everybody that wasn't anybody. He had gotten each hotel man to put up a thousand dollars for this exhibition. Edith got paid a fee. So she gave me this catalogue. Her husband had reviewed it. As I said, I came to New York to see Lou Stern. I don't think I had seen him since I was a little kid. He was like a nice old lecher. His apartment was overlooking the East River. It had all these Chagall's and this beautiful Rousseau and Pascin and Bonnard and, oh, everybody. And he talked with me, and he told me about his gallery. I said that I had the catalogue. He said he thought it possible for me, that financially he would back it, if I needed money to get paintings or anything. He thought it was a wonderful idea but also that I should talk it over with Edith Halpert. I said, "Okay." And he said I should go to see Jack Baur and Lloyd Goodrich. Well, I owe it all to Jack Baur who really pushed me into it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really!

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. I always tell him he's to blame every time I see him when I'm drunk. he was in the gallery to see the Evergood show the other day. I must tell you that every year from . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was all of this?

TERRY DINTENFASS: This was in the early fifties. I opened the gallery there in 1953 or 1954. I can't remember. I can look it up. I was married in 1939. The war over in like about 1942.

PAUL CUMMINGS: 1945.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Was that when it was over? I had a little trust fund, and every year after that I would take it -- it wasn't very much -- and buy a picture. My husband had no idea about paintings at all. The first painting I bought was a Bob Gwathmey. I had not known Bob. I bought it from Eighth Street out of a Whitney Annual. The next year, I bought one by Philip Evergood. The year after that I bought a Kuniyoshi. Each year, I would buy something with this money. And of course Arthur didn't care. It wasn't his money. In fact, the Evergood's sort of startled him. He wondered what they were. But that's what I did. So I had built up these pictures. You see, as well as going to school, I would buy something. And that I guess gave me the feeling that . . . . And I bought only what I liked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you buy other things? Or was it just that one picture a year?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Just one. That was my money, and Arthur was a bit tight (put that under wraps). And I felt justified in doing it. My children have beautiful pictures because as they grew up on their birthday I would give them a Milton Avery, say, or a this or that. Then a Milton Avery water color was a hundred dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now they're a little more.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Slightly. I no longer have any Avery's. They have theirs. But that's how it started.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But so there never really was any intention of being a dealer or any of that?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, no. Then I was frightened to death to do it alone in Atlantic City. Then Mr. Busby said yes, he would give me the room. And Mr. Baur said he would show me how to go about going to the other galleries and calling them, and Lou Stern would call those if they were in doubt about my financial position. And then I got really scared. At that time, Atlantic City was getting very culture crazy because I had made all this fuss about art. They were going to open an art center. I met a girl, Jackie Davidson. They asked me if I would do the exhibition. I said certainly. And I thought, well then I don't have to open the gallery. So I met this Jackie Davidson at the art center. She was a very nice woman. I couldn't get out of opening the gallery because . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody knew about it by then.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Mr. Busby kept after me. So I asked Jackie Davidson if she would do it with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was he interested in having it?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Then I tried to tell him "Oh, no, no." The paintings I would show would be social protest. And, I had very strong art tastes; I mean they would have delicate taste. And, I was very opinionated and very biased, and that his clientele wouldn't like it. These old ladies would fall out of their rocking chairs. And he said, no, that even if they said bad things about it they'd talk about it and that would be good for the hotel. He said he would charge me a token rent. I was too frightened to ask what was the token rent. For about a week I didn't have any idea. You know, I was thinking "token" can be anything; I don't know what he considered token. Well, he charged me a dollar a day. Imagine it! It's a Quaker hotel, for three years. And he furnished a porter so I wouldn't have to lift things when shipping. Lunch the first day. Oh, they were wonderful to me. And I was there for six years. One dollar a day. and then I moved. By that time, art was on the rise. And the Traymore Hotel asked me to come there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was it that you were already interested in social protest painting?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I came from a family that as I told you was very peculiar. My mother was very outspoken. All my cousins went to private schools, but she wouldn't allow us to go away to school like that. She said that we had to find out that the boy in back of us who was black knew more than we did. It was after my father died that I went away to boarding school. And we always had mixed company. They were anti-Zionist, although I'm Jewish. They were religious in a reformed sense. There was nothing in the Orthodox sense. They were cosmopolites. They really wanted you to know you were Jewish and wanted you to know that they cared about people. She did especially. she was a very haughty lady, very handsome, very good-looking. She had a real respect for everybody. I imagine that's how it started.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that her ideas became the images that you . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: And also my brother is very civic-minded in his own way. Also, the family was philanthropic. They didn't believe in having mink coats and diamonds. They believed in hospitals and helping this and that. They were socially oriented. It's a peculiar psychology. There is a group of people, not only Jewish people but, you know, who believe in . . . . Nathan, another brother, went to Swarthmore too. And I sent my son to Quaker schools.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Because I feel that their philosophy is the best. Johnny went to Irwin. Andrew went to the George School. They really give you an idea more than an isolated point of view. I guess that's where it comes from. I don't know. I still have it. And although the gallery isn't just social protest oriented, I think that most of the men in it have a great concern for humanity. I mean, you certainly wouldn't say that Bill King is social protest; they're King protest, especially the last . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of things did you show the first year?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, you wouldn't believe what I did. I went to Edith Halpert, and she tried to push all her artists on me. And she was going to make this the most fancy opening in Atlantic City. I had bought paintings from her. I bought my Kuniyoshi from her. I said, "Edith, you can't do that. You just can't. You know, this is a Quaker hotel, and these people are very conservative. And I don't want Karfiol, and I don't want this one. I want just what I want." She'd say, "Well, how about this Shahn?" I said, "I don't like that one, I like that one." And I really wouldn't. I said, "If you won't give me what I want then I'm not going to take anything." If anybody did that to me today, you know what I would do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They'd have a Bill King.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I could hang only about fourteen paintings. I guess I took O'Keeffe, Shahn, Marin, and I forget who else from Edith. And from Charles Alan, I took Herbie Katzman. And I went around and took from each gallery. They allowed me to pick. Business wasn't what it was some years later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you know about Herman Baron at A.C.A.?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, I loved him. I have the most marvelous photographs. Oh, sure. Let me explain to you that's how all of my problems started or that's how my real life started. Before I opened the gallery, this man who said he had had a gallery called me. He wanted to become my partner. I went to the lawyers with him. After we had this meeting, I went back to see the lawyers again. I said, "I don't feel comfortable about going into business with this person. He's not interested in the art business. He's interested in monkey business. I'm a nice girl, and I'm married, and I don't want to be involved." And I could eat those words. I don't know what I was saying. The lawyer said, "Well, don't do it. It's like marriage, and you're going to get into trouble. Find somebody else." And that's when I found Jackie Davidson. And then this man called me and said, "I'll introduce you to somebody who can really help you. You have one of his paintings in the house." So we went to visit Bob Gwathmey in New York. And to me, he seemed like a dirty old man. He was like fifty-three or so, and I was

thirty-three. I thought he was a wonderful painter, and I had bought his paintings. He asked me to go to lunch. I said, "Oh, no, no. I won't go to lunch. I'm going to eat with my cousin." And I don't think I'd ever even danced with anybody at a dance let alone go out . . . . You know, the whole thing was a whole big thing. I got back to Atlantic City, and two days later I got this ridiculous letter from him about how glad he was to meet me and all this garbage. You know, I didn't know what it was all about. I handed this letter to my husband. And he said, "Oh, he's some old . . . . Don't pay attention to that." But he did offer to help me. And of course I immediately got into trouble, I didn't know exactly how to go about it. There were some artists . . . . There was something called the John Hay Whitney Fellowship. Do you remember that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was given to minority groups. And since I was interested in helping minority groups, I thought that would be terrific. And then of course I had to go to see Walter Williams. In those days, he lived in a loft building, and it was different. And I called Bob at home. His wife said he was at Cooper Union. I very calmly dialed Cooper Union not in the least thinking that anything like this was going to happen. That's how that happened. And he was only too willing to help me. But I wasn't so willing to help him. It took a while for that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Here you were coming from Atlantic City -- how did you find things?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I picked out the artists . . . . Mr. Baur did it. He sat me down and said, "If you're really serious . . . ." And Edith Halpert did the same. They talked to me a long time. They said they thought I was serious about it and that they would help me. "You just pick out who you really want to show, and we'll call that gallery, and you'll go there, and you'll look at the paintings." And so I did. And Edith Halpert came to Atlantic City with Sonia -- that's Natalie's mother -- and she hung the whole first show for me. She stayed for two days at the Dennis Hotel. It wasn't a big hoopla but it was just beautiful. Oh, and then Bob took me to Milton Avery. Avery was between Rosenberg and Borgenicht at that time. He took me to Max Weber's house. He had left Rosenberg. I don't know who he went to; oh, went back to Edith. And then my life began, my real life. And that's almost twenty years. And then I really started living. Every experience I've had since then has been art related. A few divorces but aside from that . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had never met any of the big established painters until that point, had you?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Not at all. I had bought their paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had bought the work but you had never met them in New York?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I wasn't an arty person. I was just interested in the pictures. They were my family. I got divorced, and of course it caused a terrible scene. I had no money. It took me years to get divorced. I had to live in my gallery. I had nothing at all. And they became my art family. Like I started the gallery with five men. It was: Bob Gwathmey, Philip Evergood, Antonio Frasconi, Herbert Katzman and Sidney Goodman. Those five people were a real family to me . The Frasconi's never locked their door. It was a whole thing. And those five brought me five more. That's how it started. No, I didn't know any artists at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were in Atlantic City for a number of years before you came to New York, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I still didn't know the artists. You asked me about Herman Baron. Well, you see, I had met Bob by that time, and Herman Baron was Bob's dealer, and also was Phil's dealer. And of course Bob and Phil were Herman's pets. And they were very left wing; I'm sure that's common knowledge. I didn't know Phil, but I knew Bob and Herman. You know, Herman was a man who lived by his convictions. He lived very simply in one room and never went anywhere. When he was ill, Bob and I would take turns sitting with him, and Phil would come down. And when he was in the hospital, they would spell each other as nurses. But they tried to make me one of them. Well, everything went along fine. I was interested. They gave me all these books to read. By then I was way in Dostoevski and so on. You know, they were all educating me. Then came the Hungarian Revolution. My Hungarian book was very much turned off by this. They couldn't justify it to me. Then Bob insisted that I meet Phil. I guess that was like during the first years I was in business. Bob said he was having a party for Phil after an opening at Herman's. He invited me. And I went. Here were all these people that I didn't have any idea . . . . Al Lerner, Herman Baron, Bob and Rosalie, Phil and JuJu. I found myself sitting next to Phil Evergood. Of course by that time, I had bought many paintings by Phil Evergood; he is my favorite painter. He said to me, "Wouldn't you rather be in a nice warm bed with me than in this room with all these people you don't know?" Well, I nearly dropped dead. I thought I'd be very smart, and I said, "Well, Mr. Evergood, if I said yes you would run." I didn't realize that insulted him. He jumped up on from the chair, and he shouted, "You're sexually insincere."

PAUL CUMMINGS: What a great line.

TERRY DINTENFASS: There was dead silence. I didn't know anybody there, and everybody was like looking and

trying to shush him up. That was the beginning of a terrific friendship. After I returned to Atlantic City, he wrote me a letter and apologized and said he had heard that he was a naughty boy and that maybe we could get together and maybe Bob and Herman and I would drive up to the country. That started like every two weeks he would come to New York. He lived in Woodbury, Connecticut, in those days. Or the three of us would drive up there; Herman who didn't really read a map at all and couldn't drive, and he didn't drink; Bob who only drinks and doesn't drive left it up to me. So that Herman never knew that Route 222 went both ways. He would say you turn right never thinking that it might have gone left. We never got there the same way twice. And of course, once we got there Phil and Bob got crocked and then the two of us, and Herman had to rest. Oh, those were the best times of my life. We had a wonderful time. Then as time went on -- Phil was very, very reticent, he really was really kooky, he was so paranoid he couldn't bring in an outsider at all -- we finally talked him into letting us bring Frasconi because I like to drink a bit, and then Frasconi would drive the car back as far as Connecticut. We'd stay there overnight. And then the three of them were all politically involved. So they never paid any attention to me. There were lots of crazy . . . . It was just the most terrific thing that ever happened to me. Then, I really got the opportunity of sitting down and seeing . . . . Like Phil would paint; he did my portrait, and I would see how he painted. He was painting on something when we got there. And I'd spend days with Bob. He liked to be read to while he was painting, and I would sit there and read.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of things?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, interesting articles, say, in The Nation, or novels that I was interested in. He'd just like you to read, and he would keep painting. Or, if you were reading a book that you didn't want to read out loud, he would turn on the radio, Station WBAI. He painted sitting down. Most of the painters that I know paint standing up. It was really interesting. And I used to go to visit Milton [Avery] and stay with them in Key West. You see, I got to live in their lives which is a different feeling than a dealer usually has. And they would lend me their money to run the gallery. Armand Erpf came to Atlantic City. That's how I met Armand Erpf. He was the one who really put up the money to run the gallery. Lou Stern was too sick by that time. He died only a few months after I opened my gallery. But Armand came in one time in Atlantic City.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he come there, do you know?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He was a speaker at a conference of organizations on Wall Street or something. One day in October, this strange man came into the gallery. I thought, "He looks like Halloween." He had a velvet collar, white scarf, a Homburg, black laces. He said, "How much is this? How much is that? How much is this?" I thought, "My goodness, he's really nuts." I told him all the prices. I didn't know who he was. He'd say, "Well, if you were me, would buy this one or this one?" I said, "Well, if I were a beginning collector," I had no idea who he was, "I'd take the smaller one. You can always buy a bigger one." He said, "Well, I'm going to take that one. I want it delivered at four o'clock on Thursday afternoon." This was like on Tuesday. "And here's my card." I thought he was some joker, you know. The card read "Armand Grover Erpf". I couldn't believe it. The minute he got out of the gallery I called up Bob. I said, "Did you every hear of Armand Grover Erpf?" He said, "Grover? I've hear of Armand Erpf." I said, "Well, who is he?" Bob said, "Why? Where did you meet him?" Bob was very jealous. I said, "Well, he just bought these four pictures, and I don't understand -- he wants them delivered . . . . " "I'll take you there. I'll pretend I'm the delivery man." And he did.

So, he met me at the Lincoln Tunnel, and he rides along with his cap and his jacket and pretends he's the delivery man. I had no idea that Mr. Erpf was Mr. Bananas. So we go in with these four paintings. And there over the mantel he had a Renoir. And there was that marvelous Miró that he gave to the Museum of Modern Art. Well, I was so busy looking at his pictures . . . . So anyway, he said, "Step into the library." Bob was waiting down stairs since he was the delivery man. Mr. Erpf said, "Here's your check. You'll be hearing from me, young lady." I said, "Thank you very much." I almost dropped dead. I asked, "Can I see the rest of the pictures?" He said, "Yes." And he showed me. He had some very good pictures. But no Americans. Not one American. These were the first Americans that he bought. And then I left. So about two weeks later, I got a call in Atlantic City. "This is Mrs. McNamara." I said, "Yes?" She said, "Mr. Erpf is calling you. He isn't going to speak to you. I'm going to talk to you. He wants you to be here on Wednesday night for dinner at seven-thirty." I said, "Well, I have to ask my husband." That's true. She said, "Well, if I were you, I'd go." I said, "I'll have to call you back." So I went home, and at dinner I said to Arthur, "Would you like to go to New York to a dinner on Wednesday night?" He said, "No, I hate New York." I said, "Well, can I go?" He said, "Sure. What is it?" I said, "It's some dinner for that man I told you about, and he said I should be there at seven o'clock. Can I go?" He said, "Yes." You know, I didn't know that people didn't go off to New York. And I still wasn't so involved with Bob. I was still playing this nice role of nice housewife. And I was still working at Arthur's office and at the gallery. Arthur was busy, and we had a second nurse in the office by that time. I worked half a day. So I came to that dinner. I didn't understand one word that was going on. There was no one there at all that I knew. It was very, very formal and very fancy. They were talking about Philippine Telephone & Telegraph. There was all this talk about moving that telephone company from Manila to Guam. There was somebody -- Kirk -- who was connected with Columbia and a lot of people I didn't know. And I couldn't figure out why I was there. Anyway, near the end of the dinner party, when they were serving after-dinner cordials, Armand said to me -- and I wasn't calling him Armand in those days -- Mr. Erpf said,

"I want you to stay a little later." And I thought, you know . . . . So I did. He said, "You have no idea why you're here, do you?" I said, "No. I certainly don't care about Telephone & Telegraph." And, oh, during this dinner, I got very uptight. They were talking about how they could save sixteen cents salary -- I don't know what -- a week or something on I don't know how many thousand employees. Here they were going to put all those people out of work just to save that money. I blurted out -- oh, I'll never forget -- poor Armand; I said, "How can you move a whole company? Won't that put a lot people out of work?" Dumb me. I said, "How about the people in Manila? Don't they have jobs and families?" I said I thought that was awful. I mean, didn't they consider they had families and jobs? They were moving it to Guam because labor was cheaper. Of course. that was the most popular thing to say. That's the way my mind worked at that time. And I still wouldn't move it from. Well, anyway, that had nothing to do with art. After dinner, after everybody left Mr. Erpf said to me, "You know, it isn't that you're so dumb. But nobody knows you in New York, and they know me. I want to buy an American collection. I want to buy one painting at a time. You're honest. And I like your taste. You'll bring me three paintings that you'll pick out. I'll buy one of the three. And you can either take a flat fee, or I'll pay you whatever percentage of the purchase. And I'll tell you who I want to buy. And then you go find me three paintings that you think are superb. That's what I want you to do for me. That's why you're here tonight because I want to get started." I said, "Tonight?" Anyway, that was the end of all that . And then I left, and Bob came and met me for a drink. And that was the beginning of the end there. And I did it. But what it ended up with was that every time he would buy a Marsden Hartley which would be superb, after going through hundreds of Hartley's -- I went to d'Alessio and to Rosenberg -- and I always took Bob along because we always had great lunches and everything. I would end up buying a second one with the money I made from the first.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's all right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was wonderful. That's what kept me alive when I first came here. I sold most of those pictures. The only paintings I couldn't sell were the Evergood's. So that's how I got started with him. And then he's the one who really deviled me into coming to New York. Bob wanted it. But Armand kept saying, "You're foolish to stay in Atlantic City." So that's how I got connected with Armand Erpf.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there many people who bought from you in Atlantic City or around there?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. I had one local client in all the years that I was in Atlantic City. Oh, they thought I was ridiculous. You know, if I had an Evergood -- I don't have that Evergood, Inger has it now -- but I had a beautiful Evergood -- that Apple Girl that everybody knows -- over my mantel piece. People would come and say, "You don't really like that, do you?" Nobody had paintings. But only one local collector who still buys occasionally. But the collectors that I have from all over the country, you know, the people who attend conventions -- the bankers, the AMA, the textile people, all of the conventions -- those people have stayed with me over the years. I have New Yorkers that have been clients of mine since I was in business in Atlantic City and still buy from me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: People that first saw you there.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And from the Midwest and from the Far West. Sure, they came to conventions. And I made a very good living. I was able to have a secretary. I didn't make money in huge amounts. But I would be able to sell a five thousand dollar Levine that Charles Alan couldn't sell in New York. I mean I went and picked each painting . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But were these mostly split commissions, percentages?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, yes, sure. And I wasn't in business to make money. My business was to have something for people to look at. I wasn't even interested in the money at that time. I never thought about coming to New York until General Bull Moose got carried away.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very interesting. So by being in a place where a lot of people came to . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: You see, now there are lots of outlying galleries. I mean you can't go to any town . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they have six of them.

TERRY DINTENFASS: But there were none then. And that's why Edith helped me. She thought it would be like a repertory; you know, that she would have a showcase outside of New York. Sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you really had to sell a fair number of pictures to make money?

TERRY DINTENFASS: But I really made it to make expenses. And I did. I made enough to cover expenses. And, oh, my partner Jackie was very uptight. She wasn't used to being out of her own social milieu. And the Dennis Hotel was very conservative, elegant, sort of old world. And she hated that. She wasn't comfortable. And so we decided that . . . . And that was the real reason. It wasn't anything personal. We liked each other. So, we went to

the lawyers and dissolved it. And, oh, also I was the kind of person who said, "Now we should buy five thousand dollars worth of Avery's." Because for five thousand dollars you got four oil paintings and five water colors, you know. Well, she didn't have the kind of capital, and it made a tremendous imbalance. And so we dissolved it. And I ran the gallery by myself. I got a secretary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you moved to another place, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I moved to the Traymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why there?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Because they offered me the best deal. They had the best space. They were anxious to have the gallery. It was a big convention hotel. And they're still my clients. The Tisha's; they owned the Traymore then. And they own Loew's theaters now. They've just bought a huge Billy King for their outdoors. They've all remained, you know . . . . I'm a very lucky lady, Paul.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting that, you know, the coincidences -- all these things have worked out in the way they have.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I have been so lucky. People were so good you can't believe it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I always think that about the art business. The people who are really in it -- if they feel that you're really going to make a commitment to do something, they do all sorts of things. It's very different from the real business.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I still don't make a lot of money. This looks like a fancy apartment but it cost all of $29,000 when I bought it. And I don't care. I have everything I want. I mean I'm really a lucky lady. And it's provided enough travel. Like who would know Sally Roby if I wasn't in this business? And how about you? You came in at the beginning. You remember when you did that mother and child exhibition?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: You helped. And everybody helped me. And I was really pretty dumb.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were hiding in the back room all the time.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, if a customer comes, I still hide in the back room. Don't kid yourself. Or in the bedroom now until Louise bangs down the door.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did you build up clients? Because people come every year to a convention?

TERRY DINTENFASS: You mean in Atlantic City?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I got like Dr. Kelps -- that's a funny name to remember -- he would come from Iowa. And Dr. Radoff would come. And Dr. Ronas would come. They would come every year; they would save up their picture buying to buy from me. Not that I knew they would come, but they did come. And then, there were other people who were bored because Atlantic City had nothing to offer, and they would actually know paintings. They would know that this was a very good this or that, or that was a very good Murch or whatever. And the would say, "What are you doing in Atlantic City with a Georgia O'Keeffe?" And I thought well, I don't know myself. That's how I got a clientele. Nobody local. But I managed. And I sold quite expensive pictures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Up to what range would you say?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I think the most expensive painting I sold was maybe seven thousand dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was pretty good in those years.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. It was a big Jack Levine called The Girls on Flugel Street. But, you know, I was very choosy. I would have at the most three of anybody's paintings and usually just one that I thought was superb.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you never built up a stock or anything, did you?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I couldn't do that. I bought for myself with the same money I had. No, that's the way to make money. I still can't afford that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To buy and put away for a while?

TERRY DINTENFASS: And I had to sell all my pictures except I couldn't bear to part with the Evergood's. I hung on to them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean when you came to New York?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, when I came to New York I just couldn't give up my future.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why did you decide to come to New York?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, first of all, Bob was going to marry me. That should please be under wraps on the tape forever. He kept getting to me, "Did you go to the lawyer?" And I couldn't exactly make up my mind. Here I was a nice lady with three children. I really liked my kids. I thought how awful and what a disgrace. Of course, he convinced me it wasn't much of a disgrace. Of course, he didn't marry me; he went right home as soon as I moved here. And Armand Erpf used to say, "You're foolish. You should really open a gallery in New York." And so I thought, well, I'll try it. So I came to New York. I worked for Herman Baron for a year. So I had a years apprenticeship with him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that very different from what you had been doing?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, it was so sad. Herman Baron didn't care about money either. But he cared about politics. And he didn't know how to collect money, and he didn't know how to charge. I'll never forget that Armand didn't have an Evergood, and I was dying to sell him an Evergood. A beautiful Evergood came in. I said, "Herman, you've got to charge more than you're charging for this Evergood, or he won't buy it; he's so rich that, if it's not a major purchase, he's going to think it's not good." Herman said, "How much should I ask?" I said, "At least four thousand dollars; I think five thousand dollars." He said, "All right, I'll ask five thousand." Very courageous. I said, "Promise me you won't change your mind." He said, "I won't." He was, you know, very low key. Armand came in. He said he had four miniatures and a half. So we took him up. And I got hold of Herman -- I can see him to this day -- I pinched his arm so that he wouldn't change his mind. Armand said, "Mr. Baron, how much is this painting?" Herman said, "It's five thousand dollars, but you can have it for four." So it was no good. It didn't work. Armand bought it of course. But Herman didn't have any . . . . That was the most he had ever gotten for a painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really! In all those years?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. He was just afraid. He didn't understand why anybody would pay anything like that for a picture. In the meantime Edith Halpert was getting . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

TERRY DINTENFASS: So that's how it started. And then, after that year, Herman died. I tried to buy his gallery. And Bella Fishko tried to buy it. We got into a world war over it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's what the was about?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Didn't you know that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I didn't know what it was.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was over the fact that each of us wanted to buy it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did she work there ever?

TERRY DINTENFASS: She did. And I did. But not at the same time I did. I worked there when Al Lerner had just gone off with Joe Hirshhorn. And, oh, I made the gallery look more chic so I thought, bought furniture and fixed it up a little bit -- ACA Gallery. But then he got sick, and Ella couldn't decide who to sell it to. And then I decided I really didn't like all those painters. I hated certain ones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You only wanted the few that you wanted.

TERRY DINTENFASS: So, with Armand's pushing and carrying on, I opened my own gallery. Finding a place of my own was another whole long tale.

[END SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is Side 2. It's December 16, 1974. Paul Cummings talking to Terry Dintenfass. Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: This is Upstairs Downstairs. Now we're downstairs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How did you find a gallery and location?

TERRY DINTENFASS: If I tell you the really true story, you wouldn't believe it. Well, Bob had been looking for a long time. And every time I came from the shore, I couldn't find anything. One day, we were drinking our lunch. I guess it was Antonio Frasconi's or Leona's birthday. We were very friendly with the Frasconi's. We were at Cerutti's for lunch. That was across the street where Vidal Sassoon is now. It was a terrific restaurant. There's still a Cerutti's clothes shop -- the sisters. We knew Cerutti very well because we'd been thrown out of there several time. They always put us where we wouldn't show if we made a lot of noise. Anyway, this day Cerutti came back to us and said, "I know you've been looking for a place for a gallery. There is a man who comes here everyday to each lunch who has a building on 67th Street. When he comes in, I'll come to the table and ask you to come and meet him. But, pointing to Bob, he said, "But not you." The Frasconi's came, and we had more drinks and more noise. All of a sudden, Cerutti came. So, I went up front, and there was Mr. Ti who was Chinese. He's a very big Orientalist. He owns this antique . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, around the corner. Oh, yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He was an enormously wealthy man. Very, very refined. Very lovely. We introduced each other. He said that he would meet me at such and such an address at three-thirty. Well, I tried to keep dear Robert from getting going. An impossibility. And of course Mr. Ti didn't understand a word that Bob said because he has such a heavy accent. Neither of us could understand much of what Mr. Ti said because he had quite a Chinese accent. It was the basement of that house. It was the kitchen. The tile was still up on the walls. The iceboxes were all there. And it was really weird. The lower level was the laundry and the scrub room.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The garden floor level, yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: When I could get him alone I asked quietly how much was it. It was very reasonable. I said, "I'll take it." He said, "Ah, so." That was in April, and I didn't sign the lease until the end of August.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my goodness!

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was impossible to . . . . First of all, he's very Chinese. To this day he is. He came all the way to Atlantic City to see how I lived, to meet my children. And the whole Chinese bit. And then it turned out that his lawyers were Cordher [phon. sp.] Brothers who were the lawyers for Hitler. That didn't go over very big with anybody. And then we had all these meetings about who was going to pay for what. You see, I wanted it fixed so I could live there. I lived behind the store all those years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now did you plan that?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I planned that. I didn't have any money. And, I had to have room for Andrew. There's a bathroom on the very downstairs where the garden is. And I had a kitchen. I had everything. A bathroom for myself. There was a bathroom in the front. But he had an architect who spoke only Chinese and French. Mr. Ti spoke Chinese and French. Frasconi speaks only Spanish and Spanish-English. I can understand Bob, but nobody else can. We used to have these meetings in Cerutti's about what we were going to do and how we should do this. Well, that poor architect nearly lost his mind. In fact, he's dead now. Well, that went on until the drawings were exactly the way we were going to have it. My lawyer wouldn't let me sign the lease because it was very difficult to understand from Ti who was going to pay for what. So we split it down the middle. When we went to the lawyer's to sign the lease, his lawyer said that he should sit over there, my lawyer should sit there. Neither one of us talked to each other, and the lawyers went back and forth. Finally, we did sign the lease. And then, I opened the gallery in November, 1959. I had a group show. I had five men to start with. I had Herbie Katzman, Philip Evergood, Bob, Frasconi, and Sidney Goodman, who had never had a show in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now where did you find him? He was about the youngest, wasn't he?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, he was fantastic. I had this gallery in Atlantic City, and this little girl used to come and see me every week or so. She introduced herself. Her name was Eileen Taber. Once she said to me, "Can I bring you the work of my boyfriend?" I said, "Sure. But, you know, I sell only well-known artists, and I don't know what it will do." She brought me this portfolio. And you wouldn't believe it! Sidney was nineteen. I nearly fainted. I asked, "Could I keep it?" She said she would have to ask him. So she asked him. He was very resentful. He didn't want it. I brought them to New York to show to Bob. He said, "How old did you say he was?" I said, "He's nineteen." He said, "Liar! If I could do this at nineteen, I'd be Picasso today." He said, "I'll take this one, and here's a hundred dollars." And he wrote out a check. Well, Sidney had never seen a hundred dollars. I mean, literally, he was a very poor boy. He played the bongo drums in a burlesque house. He did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? That's fantastic.

TERRY DINTENFASS: So, then I took the drawings to Jack Baur, and he said, "Oh, you're going to have to open a gallery just to show these drawings." So, that's how I got Sidney Goodman. This is in Atlantic city; I'm pointing backwards again. And then, he would give me a few paintings. I used to sell paintings to a Dr. Abe Melamed from Milwaukee. I still do occasionally. I had never seen him. I would advertise in the little magazine called Art Gallery. He would write me a post card asking do you have a blah? Do you have an Avery? And, I would write back and say yes and send a slide. Occasionally, he would buy some very expensive pictures. We'd ship them to him. So one day, I was in the gallery, and this little man came in. He's very teeny tiny. I hope Abe Melamed is not listening. He didn't introduce himself. He just looked around. He asked, "Do you have any work by any young artists?" I said, "Well, I do, but I don't know if you'd like it. They're very complicated and very bizarre." He said, "Show them to me." He looked at them. He was very careful. And he said, "Where does this man live?" I said, "In Philadelphia." "Does he have a car?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Call him up and tell him to bring everything in his studio here." So I said, "Yes." I called Sidney. He came down to Atlantic City. It was about two hours from Philadelphia in those days. He brought all these student canvases. Well, Dr. Melamed must have bought ten oil paintings and about fifty drawings and gave me a check. I think we charged something like fifty dollars for a drawing and a couple of hundred dollars for an oil painting. Sidney and I were just stunned. We hadn't the faintest idea of what was going on. Later, Sidney graduated from the Pennsylvania Museum School. He got a job as a teacher there. Just about this time, I received a letter from Melamed saying that he didn't feel that this boy should teach, and that he would be willing to subsidize him for a year for five thousand dollars. I didn't know what to do with that letter. So I brought it to New York and showed it to Jack Levine. You see, we were all friendly, that whole group. Jack said, no, no, no, he didn't think that was a good idea. He asked, "Has this child ever been to Europe?" I said, "He hasn't been anywhere."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Except to Atlantic City.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, Eileen was from Atlantic City. He wasn't married yet. I said, "Anyway, he's getting married." Jack said, "I'll tell you what. Tell this man that he should treat him to a trip to Europe in exchange for say, a couple of paintings." Sidney and Eileen had been married by now. I called Sidney and told him that they were able to go on this trip to Europe. Well, he wouldn't think of going in an airplane. He was the only man in the whole infantry who came back from Texas on a train. He doesn't fly. He just got a National Endowment from the Department of the Interior to do one of those things -- you know, certain artists were chosen to do a series for 1776. Do you know where he went? To Wilkes-Darre because he could go by train or car. He doesn't fly at all. Then, we had to get boat tickets. Well, between Bob and me, we got the tickets. Then, they came to New York and stayed overnight with Bob and Rosalie. Bob took them down to the boat. Sidney had never seen anything but a rowboat. Bob said he was afraid to jump off the . . . . But you should see the drawings that came out of that! Oh, the drawings that Armand Erpf -- the drawings are that big, just great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What? Four foot, five foot drawings?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Oh, terrific. And the paintings out of Spain. I guess the ship landed in maybe Cadiz or one of those ports. He rented a car and went all the way up through Spain to, you know, the Prado, to Paris, to England. He kept writing me could he come home? I kept writing back, no. But anyway, there were lots of interesting paintings out of that. And then Dr. Melamed took . . . Oh, he was a naughty boy. Instead of taking three paintings at once he'd take one, saying he would take one the next year, and then he waited and, then he took one. And by that time, they were worth the whole five thousand dollars. He was very smart about the whole thing. But he helped Sidney a great deal. He gave a painting to the Museum of Modern Art. That was the first Goodman. And then, they bought two after that, two drawings. By that time, I had moved to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the investment paid off.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He just gave one of his paintings out of that very group to the Whitney Museum and got a six thousand dollar tax write-off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but look, it took him, what? Half a dozen years?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. But that's not very much. Oh, it's beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good. Were you working at ACA?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, I had already done that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In between?

TERRY DINTENFASS: That was what I was doing. And then I kept the gallery in Atlantic City for about six months while I was working at ACA.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was like two jobs?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Because I thought that I could manage it. But I couldn't. You can't have a non-resident manager for anything today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too personal.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I had somebody who I liked a lot but she was, you know -- she couldn't really . . . . You have to do it yourself in business. I couldn't manage that. And then one nice snowy November day with five artists and a nervous breakdown, I opened the gallery. Bob told me that I must frame all the paintings for the artists free. Oh, he was just running a cooperative gold mine. Oh, and do you know what we did do? We were the first to do posters. Did you know that? We did those beautiful posters. And they were all lithographs; they weren't like photo offset. The men went down and worked on the plates at Verne Muller's [phon. sp.]. And so, the first two years those were original lithographs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're expensive now, aren't they?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, boy, yes. They sell for like twenty-five dollars really. And I don't have some of the original ones myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? They all went to work.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. I didn't think about it in those days. I didn't know anything about running it. And I lived in my office.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like living where you were working?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, it was impossible. First of all, I had come from this big home that was on a beach and was really, you know, like a fancy dancer. And then I moved to this office that I had to pretend wasn't my bedroom. And then I used to entertain and have a dinner party in the main gallery. But we had a lot of fun. And Armand was impossible. I called down and asked, "Could I please speak to Mr. Erpf?" I said to him, "Well, you're such a Dali Lama, would you please stop the snow?" He said, "You're too fresh." At three o'clock he called me back and said, "Hope you're satisfied," because the snow had stopped. Then, I had a lot of clients that came from Atlantic City. They were curious. The Museum of Modern Art gave me a list. And the Whitney gave me a list.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you had very much contact with museum curators around the country before?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. I still haven't really had that until -- of course they change in a minute -- but just in the last five years I've been more in the museum world because of the Dove estate and because of Jacob Lawrence. No. You were one of the first people . . . . You did a mother and child show for the AFA, wasn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The AFA toured it.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Nina just got a job for five hundred dollars a day. Did you hear that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Renata told me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen her for a long time.

TERRY DINTENFASS: She's doing all the subways of Canada. Can you imagine!

PAUL CUMMINGS: I love it.

TERRY DINTENFASS: You were one of the first people. You came in and said that you were doing a mother and child show. I told you where this Evergood was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been in 1963 or something.

TERRY DINTENFASS: You were one of the first museum-type people. And then, of course, everybody wondered who I was and what I was doing. Mr. Baur and Mr. Goodrich were wonderful to me, and they sort of helped me. And Mr. Jack Gordon was there. I didn't have it bad. I went to see Bill Lieberman before I came. He was extremely nice. I've stayed friendly with all those people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you got to know the New York museum group. But did it take a long time to attract museum people from, say, St. Louis or Chicago or California?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, sure. And still I don't know them all. And now I'm not so frightened. I was frightened. I didn't know what I was doing. I mean I really didn't. If I only knew now what I knew then -- what I didn't know then. And Armand Erpf was so funny. He used to call up and say, "What are you doing?" Of course I was doing nothing but freezing the back of my store. He'd say, "I'll be right over." And I'd say, "Well, I'd rather go over there." He had a fireplace and everything. And he'd say, "Oh, no, no, you need discipline." So he used to come over with his railroad reports. I should read these reports. I'd say, "What do you want me to read railroad reports for?" He'd say, "So I'll know how to answer the dumb questions you're going to ask me to the board."

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't advertise a great deal when you first started, did you?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just posters.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I just began doing some this year. No, the posters were a big talk piece. And then people would come in to get one for their cousin Mabel or something. And of course, Frasconi really had a good following. Bob had a following. Herbie Katzman had no following just like now. And Sidney got . . . . What happened was that the first show was a group show of those five. The second show I decided to show Sidney Goodman. And he got a rave review. Of course, I hadn't the faintest idea of what it all was. And, oh, we sold everything in the whole gallery. Everything wasn't expensive but that was a big. It was interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you found over the years that a rave review by a major critic in -- what was that? In The Times?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, I think Canaday wrote it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That would make such an impact? Does it still?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, sure. I'd hate to say it didn't. I'm very cynical about the reviews. But it makes a difference. And if you get in Time magazine, they come in clutching the paper. Invariably, you can sell a picture they reproduce. It reassures them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. It makes it real or something.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's very real if you rave. I can tell you that. It was happy time. It wasn't so unhappy. And each of those five artists brought me five others. That was agreed on, that each should help me find an artist. So Sidney brought me Raymond Saunders; I went down to Philadelphia to look at his work. Bob convinced Jake Lawrence that I was much better to be with then Charles Alan. Tovish came through Herbie Katzman. And Bill King said that he wanted to join the gallery. Edith Halpert had said to me, "Don't you dare rob a dealer. Don't you pirate anybody. Don't you dare." So I said to Bill King, "I can't take you because you belong to Charles Alan. I can't take anybody that isn't free." This was before I even opened the gallery. About a year later he came and said, "Please take me into the gallery." I said, "No Billy, I can't." About two hours later, he came back absolutely crock out of his skull, and he said, "I'm free."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have many artists come into the gallery who wanted to show you work?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, I still do. Then I had a lot of trouble. You see, I was friendly with Moses and Raphael Soyer. And I didn't really want them. Not that I didn't think they were nice people. They are lovely people. But Moses wasn't my favorite painter, nor was Raphael. I didn't want to hurt their feelings. I didn't know how to handle that. And then, of course, there are always artists who have friends they want to help. That's the biggest mistake I've ever made, where you try to help people and then you get squashed. I've always looked at peoples' work and gone to peoples' studios. I like to see what's going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is it difficult to make your choices as new artists appear?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, you know, I'm a very personal gallery. I'm not a big gallery. And I've never made a lot of money. No. I've found that if I like then I want to show it. And I would go to see the studio. Even if I liked the slide, I'd go to the studio. It's not the way to make money. I still run my gallery like they always ran them, you know, sort of trying to . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Keep it going every day.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's hard. Especially now with the overhead.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have somebody working for you when you first started?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, let's not talk about that. I had never hired anybody in my life but a maid. And I had

never fired anybody because I had the same maid for twenty-one years. The biggest mistake I ever made was that I went to Charles Alan who was wonderful to me. He was the only dealer in New York who wrote me a letter and wished me luck. I asked him, "Can you help me?" He said yes, he knew somebody and would make an appointment. So, I met this youngster in the Plaza Palm Court. We sat down. And I was a nervous wreck. I was about thirty-five, and he was about twelve or something, nineteen or twenty, had just graduated from Princeton. We discussed this whole thing. He was so nervous. I wasn't particularly good with that kind of person. Do you know who it was?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Jonathan Scull?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. It was Jock Truman. And when I see him, I go out of my mind. Because he's been with Betty Parsons and is most creative. I didn't hire him, and she did. Oh, and then I made an awful mistake at the Hirshhorn Museum. I introduced him to my date as Donald Morris. Oh, boy, a psychiatrist could do a lot with that one! I suddenly realized it was Jock Truman and not Donald Morris. So I hired somebody, and he seemed very nice. He looked like he was keeping files. One day he wasn't in, and I went to the files, and there were no files. Just empty drawers. Then I got Jonathan Scull.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you find him?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He was very tall. I could see him at the May meeting. Well, he worked at AFA. Roy Moyer was at AFA. I called Roy and asked, "Who is that tall man. He seems like he'd be very good and could keep files." We didn't keep much better than -- I can't remember the first name. He was nice and pleasant. He's a very nice boy. And do you know that Roxanna Alg is his cousin, this new girl in the gallery? I didn't know that until recently. She came from Parke-Bernet. She's a really tough lady, a very ambitious young girl.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a small world.

TERRY DINTENFASS: You can say that again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, it's really interesting because in the sixties here you were showing people who were, you know, like Katzman who is sort of expressionistic, slinging paint hither and thither; Gwathmey who is exactly the opposite . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, do you know that if you look at my stable today, everyone is different. I make a fetish of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean they're -- I don't quite know how to say it -- they've so related in a way, and they're not in others.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, in a way, they're all figurative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: But they all have a particular personality paint-wise. There are no two in my stable that paint alike; no two. And they all have distinct artistic personalities, not as human beings but in the work, I mean. Billy King is his own man. Tovish is his. And that's the thing I like. That's what I like about . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you find, for example, that you got a reaction from, say, they abstract expressionist people who were a little bit older, or the Pop Art people who were a little big younger and kind of coming up? Did you have a sense of what was going one elsewhere? Or were you so busy that . . . ?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I worked hard. But I used to go to every exhibition that I possibly could. I really like abstract painting. I like Rothko; the early Rothko's I really loved. And Pollock. And Kline to me represented the strength of New York. And some of the Pop people I found very amusing. It's just that for me to sell I couldn't relate. I like to look at them still in museums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you feel that you need when you look at somebody's work to be able to handle it?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Just absolutely a gut rapport. Not with the person because people can be pretty awful. I has to touch me somewhere. Like Raymond Saunders' drawings are like a needle. They're very sensitive and of very high intensity. Sometimes I like it if it's very frank and outspoken. It's just the work itself has to hit me. It's a purely personal thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But there's always some kind of fairly noticeable reaction that you have?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I feel it. It's almost like a physical reaction. I'm very involved with the pictures I sell. And sometimes I hate to sell a picture to the people I do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody says that. But now you also have the work of these people in your house. Do you collect them?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't have a lot of paintings. But what I have here belongs to me. I have an O'Keeffe though I don't handle her. That was one of the most fascinating experiences of my life. I went out there. I like her work. I don't ask any clients home, you know, hardly ever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't entertain like some dealers do?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. I feel that that's what that conversation about privacy goes on about. No, I don't. I entertain at the gallery. I usually have a wet opening. Once in a while, I used to have a party here, but it would be a real bash with a band or something. Like Bobby Short had a party a week ago Sunday. He used to sing at parties here when he didn't have any money. We used to have them for fun. It was always the artists and the artist's friends. It had nothing to do with clients. I still maintain that policy. When we have an opening, sometimes I don't know anybody there. It's just for the artist. Like Sidney Goodman wanted a dance once. We gave a dance in a gallery and had a rock band and all his friends. And we nearly lost our lease. For all those openings, I don't send anything to anybody. I don't believe in that. I believe it's for the artist that did the painting. I know that I don't do enough to promote it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's his party.

TERRY DINTENFASS: That's right. And I wouldn't have a gallery if it weren't for that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what about the collectors? I mean, so many dealers seem to entertain them and take them here and do all this, you know.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It may pay off, but I don't. I think the only time I did it was for Mrs. Spingarn who is now in her nineties because she wanted to meet Jacob Lawrence. Do you know who Mrs. Spingarn is? You know about the Spingarn Medal? Well, she came in once before Brandeis had the Saltzman Chair. I had never seen her. This little old lady came in. She sad down and looked at all the paintings. She asked me how Mr. Lawrence was. I said he wasn't so well; he was a little uptight because we were having a revolution that was changing everybody who was Negro to black.

[END SIDE 2]

[BEGIN SIDE 3]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is Side 3 -- January 13, 1975. Last time we were talking about Mrs. Spingarn and Jake Lawrence.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, that was the first exhibition that Jake had with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you had said that she came into the gallery and looked around.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, yes. It was a civil rights exhibition. It was really political. It was when the blacks turned "black" from being "Negro". Everybody was very confused. I had Raymond Saunders who had been Negro one week and black the next. Jake wasn't comfortable being black, and his paintings were getting very tight. His doctor came into the gallery and asked if Jake was all right. I said I though he was all right but not the greatest. The doctor said he thought Jake was getting uptight again and couldn't I arrange to have him sent somewhere. I said there's no money. Just after the doctor left this old, old lady came in. Didn't I tell you this last time?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, that's just where you stopped.

TERRY DINTENFASS: She had an English walking stick, shooting stick. She sat down and asked, "How is Mr. Lawrence?" I said, "Well, he's pretty good." She said, "What do you mean ‘pretty good'? You know he's been sick." I said yes, I knew he was sick, but that he was fine. But it seemed that because of the whole situation, a great deal of weight was put on Jake because they wanted him to be like the leader, and Jake is really not a leader. He's a painter. And he was very nervous about it. His doctor had been in, and they thought it would be a good idea if we could send him away. She said, "Well, where would you send him?" I said, "Well, he wants to go to Nigeria." She said, "Is he married?" I had no idea who this woman was. I said, "Yes, he is." "Does he have children?" I said, "No." "Well, how much does it cost to go to Nigeria?" I hadn't the faintest idea. She was a bossy old lady. She said, "Go to the telephone and find out." So I went to the phone, and it was $960 round trip. She said, "Oh." And with that she got up and left. She didn't buy anything. About an hour later a chauffeur came in with an envelop with $2,500 in it saying, "This is for Mr. Lawrence to go to Nigeria." I almost dropped dead. I called up Jake, and he couldn't believe it. He said he knew who she was, but he had never met her. I said he's better quickly arrange it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did she know Jake Lawrence?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, you know, that was the Spingarn Medal. They started the NAACP.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And the Spingarn Medal is the one they give to outstanding black people. Jake has won it since then, but it had never been won by an artist before. It was only two years ago that he won it. I was living in the gallery in those days, and I gave a dinner party in the gallery. I had a very nice kitchen. And I had very nice drunken friends who helped a little bit. Mrs. Spingarn arrived for dinner. You know, Bob never called anybody Mrs. anything. Right off the bat started calling her Amy. Nobody ever calls her Amy unless he's known her for about a hundred years. And he'd give her a slap on the back. I thought she'd go right out the window. She was a very frail old lady; she was in her eighties. Next thing Jake and Gwen came. It was all very polite. I had invited Armand Erpf. Well, Armand Erpf didn't get there and didn't get there. Bob got drunker and drunker. Jake had a few drinks. I got more nervous by the minute because Amy was being called Amy all over the place. Then the bell rang, and it was Armand. He arrived, and he was so busy telling us this story about the woman in the taxicab taking so much time to get the money out. And Jake turned to him and said, "Are you a cab driver?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a great line.

TERRY DINTENFASS: We nearly collapsed. Here he's the biggest financier in New York City. "No, no," said Armand. Well, Jake went off to Nigeria. And then about nine months later, we got an offer . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he gone for a long time?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He would have stayed for fifteen months, but nine months later, we got an offer from Brandeis. They were setting up a Saltzman Professorship. Of course at that time, everything was turning from white to black, and they had to give it to a black. Of course, the most distinguished painter was Jake. So we got this long, involved letter. Then of course, I had to send cables and tell him that he had never seen $15,000 in his life and that he had better come right back. So he went to Brandeis and lived in Cambridge for a year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he like Nigeria?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He did a beautiful, beautiful suite of paintings out of that. And, oh, we had some business with those. You see, Mrs. Spingarn was supposed to get a painting out of that. Of course, as soon as the paintings came from Nigeria, I was busy selling them because we had to pay the rent. So when Mrs. Spingarn finally got around to picking hers, we were having fits. We had to show her all ten paintings, but we were hoping that she couldn't see the ones that were sold. Luckily, we figured that she'd walk from left to right. She picked one out, and, luckily, it wasn't sold. It was in the Whitney show. Oh, that was a beautiful exhibition. And he loved Nigeria. He went to stay in Abeokuta. I have a friend who was a psychiatrist there. He became Minister of Health and then head of the World Health Organization in psychiatry. He lives in Geneva. He sort of looked after Jake because it isn't as easy, you know, for blacks going to Nigeria.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's very difficult. When they get there, it's not what they think.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I've just been invited to go to Africa. I don't know if I'll go or not. With this Dr. Lambeau. He has a white wife, and we're friends. About thirty of us. But he took sort of an interest in Jake because Jake really was lonely. He could do nothing but paint. And Gwen hated it. Because women are at the back of the bus, believe me, even if they're black.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right, right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: They don't share their women with the rest of the world. And women don't eat with them. They just wait on them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a male society, really.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Gwen, you know, is very haughty and high and mighty. That's the Jacob Lawrence episode.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous.

TERRY DINTENFASS: That was really good.

PAUL CUMMINGS; It's interesting -- we've sort of moved around -- we haven't really done it chronologically, but what about people like Herman Baron and Edith Halpert, and Charles Alan of course, and other dealers that you knew? I mean, once you had been here for a couple of years, were you still associated?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Edith was furious, and she would have nothing to do with me. Charles Alan was the only dealer -- I have letters from Charles that say be very careful about coming to New York because you're a big fish in a small pond there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was always terribly cautious.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, he was being very nice to me. And I went to him for every little thing. Like if I needed a typewriter table, I'd ask him where to get it. I took Charles' advice on almost everything. Then I asked him to help me find somebody. I told you that story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And he recommended Jock Truman. Of course, he's still with Betty Parsons. But I couldn't cope with that kind of personality. But Charles was fine until -- he didn't like it that Billy King left. But Billy King was always leaving Charles. But when Jake left he had a fit. He came over and raised absolute Cain with me. He had bought paintings of Jake's for his own inventory, and he insisted that I buy all those. Which I did. And then, of course, there was the big shock when it came to hiring Charles. Well, he had asked me for a job . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that was some years later, though.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Many years later. I stayed friendly with Antoinette Kraushaar and friendly with Grace Borgenicht. And, you know, there's a coterie of dealers who have nothing to do with the kind of art dealing that I do. Then there's a group (you can count them -- I'll be there are only four or five of us) who deal in the same way. I'm sure that if I brought a client to Grace -- which I have done many times -- I mean it's all just very aboveboard. There are no deals made. Nor with Antoinette. Nor with Joan Washburn who is a newcomer. I mean it's all up and honest. You tell the client you're taking him to another gallery. You tell the gallery you're bringing him a client. But the others all buy pictures together. That's very dirty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean they group together to buy things?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, but that's a way of expanding your capital activity, too.

TERRY DINTENFASS: But, I don't want it. I wish I had more capital.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a different kind of business.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, and I don't want that kind of business.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean you really don't do back room dealing, do you? I mean you have Dove and once in a while an O'Keeffe or something.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I used to be able to sell ten O'Keeffe's a year if I wanted to. But the only back room dealing -- I find now it's a little different -- is like if there's an estate that has to be settled. In a case like that, they'll bring me their paintings. They trust me. They say, "Well, we have a Gwathmey, and we have a Lawrence, and we have a Rattner." And I'll say, "Well, I don't handle Rattner but I'll place it for you." But I don't take anything for that. So I don't do any back room dealing. Is that what you mean by back room dealing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, also, you know, having four or five artists who you don't represent but whose work you deal in.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I know a lot do that with Sheeler. I see the ads all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. Well, he's a blue chip item.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He has blue chip prices, I must say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did you live in the gallery? Then you moved here, right?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. My daughter was going to England. I lived in the gallery for three years. And one year, I lived in Billy King's house. He went to Greece. You see, the men are like my relatives. I mean, when I was living in the gallery, Billy said, "Terry, I'm going to Greece. There's no reason for you to live here. You know, use my house. You pay the maintenance." And that's really the way it's always been. If I didn't have enough to pay the rent, I used their money. I'd tell them I don't have enough this week. Herbie Katzman is the only man who I ever owed a diaper service. He was here Saturday too. You see, if their teeth hurt they come in here and tell me their teeth ache, and they have to go to the dentist. "Okay?" I say, "Okay."

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you move here then?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I moved to Susan's first. She lived on 66th Street. She was going to London, to Oxford, to marry. She came in one day and said that if I wanted her apartment I could have it tomorrow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, anyway, your daughter went off to London.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Then I went to live there. That was very nice and cute. I lived there for, I don't know, maybe two years. Captain Kangaroo left home. He came and lived in the studio. There was a great noise on 66th Street, the big noise. And then one day, my very best friends who are in the greeting card business came by and said to me, "We have some thing to show you." I asked, "What is it?" They said, "Well, when your through work. We'll wait for you." I said, "What are you doing here? You work too." "We'll wait." Then they walked me down the street. I kept thinking, "What have they got to show me?" Then they said, "We're going to show you the apartment you just bought." And I started to have a fit. I kept saying, "I can't afford an apartment." They said, "Well, you're going to buy an apartment. We want you to buy this apartment." So we came to see it. It didn't look exactly like this. The lady downstairs owned it, and she showed it to me. I forgot to ask how much it was. I said, "I'll take it." Dave _____ was furious. He said, "That's not the way to do business. You're supposed to find out first what it costs." I said, "I don't care what it costs." He said, "But you don't have any money." I said, "I don't, but I'm going to have it." And that's how I bought it. It was only $29,000. Can you imagine that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which was -- what? -- about ten years ago?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, ten years ago. Well, not quite ten. And then of course to fix it up. I don't come from an exactly frugal type background. I wanted two bathrooms because Andrew had to have a room and bath. And then Bob had a stroke. I'd just as soon put this on tape. He didn't want that. I said, "What do you mean you don't want me to buy that apartment? It's beautiful." And Jake and Gwen and Bob and a friend of mine were all having dinner at Susan's right after I made this . . . . And he said, "You can't . . . ." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "What will the elevator men say?" I said, "I couldn't care less what the elevator men say." (I wonder what they've said since.) He never came here to stay. He went back home. That was the end of that. He went home to mother. And I moved here. And that was the beginning of a beautiful .l . . . Oh, it's just great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just worked perfectly for you.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, I got a young architect from Yale who had been a friend of . . . . Charles wasn't talking to me in those days. He did it for hardly anything. It just turned out great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fabulous. Well, you had most of your artists selected for the gallery in the first few years, hadn't you?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I came with five.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but they then brought five more.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Five more, and those five more brought five more. And five more I could kill myself. And then every once in a while, like Hyman Bloom came out of the blue. And, I thought Tovish came because of Katzman which I think he did. Hyman Bloom, I always thought, came because of Tovish, but he told me it wasn't that at all. It was because of a man named Jerry Rubin who is a big collector in Boston, only bought Boston artists. He came down to look at Tovish's show, and we went out dancing one night with Captain Bull Moose. Then, he went back to Boston and apparently said to Hyman, "Hyman, if Durlacher is closing, then I want you to go with that lady. She's funny, and she'll look after you." And do you remember Kirk Askew?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Kirk Askew came to visit me. He was very old. He said to me, "Terry, I don't know you, but I know that Hyman Bloom is coming to your gallery. And I want you to be very gentle to him." And that was terrific when I went to interview Hyman. I told you about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I didn't?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's one of the most terrific stories. Oh, he's the most beautiful man I know in the whole world except for Ornette Coleman. He's a very strange man. Tovish had said to me, "Write him a letter." So I wrote Hyman a letter and said that if he would see me I'd be happy to come to Boston. I got a little letter back written on a tablet. It said, "I'll be very happy to see you." and it gave a phone number. I dialed the number and

asked, "When would you like me to come, Mr. Bloom?" He said, "Tomorrow." I didn't have any idea of what he was like. Bob had printed this picture of this recluse. He lived in a walk through flat in Brookline. He's been in the gallery seven years, I think, or six years. I rang the bell. And this little, tiny, young face is looking over the bannister form way up high. I said, "Do you know where Hyman Bloom lives?" He said, "I'm Hyman Bloom." He's a very tiny man. He had nothing to sit on. In fact, later he bought two chairs so we could sit and talk. He had like his artist's painting stool, a camp chair. He had oodles of books. There were no canvases showing; everything was turned toward the wall. I said, "I came to see you about being in my gallery. And I want to explain to you . . . ." And he said, "Oh, I am in your gallery." That was all there was to it. He said, "That's good enough." That's all there was to it. There wasn't any discussion of terms. There was nothing; just that "I'm in your gallery, and whatever you decide is fine with me." But there was one string. I must go every six weeks or so and either have lunch with him or go and have dinner with him and reassure him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you've seen a lot of him then over the years.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, yes. And he changes my whole life. Every time I go there, I feel, you know, that this is really what life is all about. And he always has Nina with him. Nina is his ex-wife -- Nina Boland. He was married to Chip Boland's daughter. And they're very friendly. But the last time when I went, he said he had something to show me. I said, "What?" He said, "Don' you want to see a sample?" I said, "A sample of what?" He said, "Of my work. You're going to give me a show in April." I said, "You must be kidding. I've come here for seven years and have never seen anything." And we support him. I give him X dollars a month. But he manages to average out and over every year almost break even. We never see anything -- like he'll send a big drawing, or send drawings. And even if I ask him for drawings, and he gives them to me, they're always wrapped. I never see anything -- never until this last time. And then there was a terrible -- do you remember the fight between Jack . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: You never see anything in the studio?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Never. Always turned to the wall.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder why? That's fascinating.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He has his ego. He has a special ego trip. He's a very, very self-contained man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you've given him only -- what? -- one show?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. One drawing show. In April. It will be the first painting show in twenty years. I mean, I don't know what New York will think of those paintings. They're extraordinary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are they related to the drawings? Or are they different again?

TERRY DINTENFASS: They're highly colored. Oh!

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really!

TERRY DINTENFASS: Tremendously high in color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From him!

TERRY DINTENFASS: They are. They are. They're like jewels.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's extraordinary.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And very frightening. They're not cadavers all of the, but they're pretty frightening. They're frightening because the more you look at them, the more you see the soul. He really is a man with a soul. And his paintings are . . . . I don't know what the critics will think. They don't relate to . . . . They could be related to Grunewald.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they're related to what he's done all the time.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. He meditates. He went to India this year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, another thing. One thing he has done for the last three years is to call me up and ask if he could come here. Now, nobody knows he comes to New York. He comes to New York, and he stays here. He'll go to the Met, or he'll go out and hear Greek music. Or he loves Indian music. And he stays maybe two or three days. But he's never here, sort of. And he keeps me up all night. He likes to talk, and he's interested in

everything. He's not a recluse at all. He's so special. I can't tell you. He's an extraordinary man. Speaking of Charles, I used to rave and carry on about him. (I shouldn't do this -- poor Charles -- he's down there sorting out which souls he can associate with). But when I used to rave so about Hyman -- I'd come back and for two or three days I was -- really he does something, he turns me into . . . . So one time, Charles had to go to the William Lane Foundation. I wanted to borrow some Doves. And Charles had never met Hyman, and he said, "I'll like to meet Hyman." I said, "I'll arrange that." So I said to Hyman, "Charles Alan would like to meet you." "Oh, sure. We'll have lunch." When Charles came back he said, "I don't think he's so great." So I said, "Well, he is." "He didn't impress me." I said, "Well, he's pretty important as a person." So the next time I went to Boston with Bob, I said to Hyman, "How did you like Charles?" He said, "Oh, he was all right. He's sort of a cross between a jellyfish and a Marine."

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, you've talked about the people -- you've been very involved with the artists lives and their work and everything . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I've been writing, you know, some papers for about three years now and writing about them. You know, I've sat and watched Bob paint. I've watched Phil paint, Milton Avery paint. Not many dealers get a chance at that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think that happened?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, as Bob says, I'm the world's biggest mother. I love my children, and I love people. Well, I like you, and I feel comfortable with you. Also, I like their problems.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It has always interested me that you basically, I guess, had people in your gallery, and you've been very close and kept them for years and years. I mean, every couple of years you don't clean everybody out and try a new thing.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I have a heavy point of view. I'm not particularly a popular gallery. I have some mistakes who shall remain nameless. Which I did either to please an artist or to please somebody who I thought needed help.

PAUL CUMMINGS; Did you ever try an artist to see if you could work with them and find it didn't pan out?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, the New Talent shows let me be a little freer because I try them that way. I make a commitment for one show. I've done that. And then if it doesn't go . . . . Like with Suzy. But it went fabulously. All the museums bought her. But I have such a heavy point of view. It's not a happy hour gallery. You know that. And apparently, I tilted everybody by hiring Roxanna who is very way out there with a new, chic . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean?

TERRY DINTENFASS: She comes form a whole other world. And I did it thinking maybe I could get some of that world to be interested in my kind of art. But it's too heavy for them. They really aren't interested in Hyman Bloom's insides. My people paint what they really feel inside, and it comes across to most people. And they don't want that. That's why Evergood is so unpopular. People don't want to see what Evergood has to say. They don't want to feel it. They know about that. It's like saying: I'm not going to a Beckett play because who cares about Beckett.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It gets to be too personal and too intimate in a way.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And it's not fashionable to really let people know how you feel. And I think the reason the artists stayed with me -- of course, I can't answer for Suzy; she's been with me only a few years -- is that they know that I care. I care a great deal about it. I do. I like them as people. Especially the ones that have been with me for years. And they know that if they have a cold, they can call up. On Saturday, somebody had a toothache. And Jake called me the minute he heard about Charles. I wasn't in the gallery Saturday; I took Saturday off. And I called Jake, and he knew I would call him back. But it's more family. And you asked about me and Herman Baron. A lot of that I got from Herman and Ella because they treated their artists . . . . Of course, they were a political gallery. Also, in a way, all my men are politically oriented in the same way. And there are no two in the gallery that paint the same. I haven't set up a competition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're all quite individualistic.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Even Sidney Goodman. Well, he's like a child to me. He grew up with my own children. If I go to the Vineyard in the summer, he goes to the Vineyard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that you've reached the kind of relationship where they will let you in the studio when they work. A lot of them don't even let their wives or family watch them work.

TERRY DINTENFASS: No, they don't. Do you know that Annie King never saw the King work until I put it up?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's quite possible.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, but King always comes here between divorces. I mean, he expects to come home to his mother. And any problem that they have like, you know, he'll come and ask me about it. You know, about Eli or about his other children. That's what I myself have been writing about. That it was unique to sit and watch Phil Evergood paint, or Milton Avery, or Bob. Well, I used to go and read to Bob. Of course, we had a different relationship. Phil used to paint; he did a portrait of me. And we'd talk. Milton Avery just appointed all the time so I could just sit out there and talk to him. They aren't self-conscious with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they don't feel it's an interference or anything?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, no. They're very isolated from me too. Remember that. And also, lots of them wanted to show me how they did things. It was interesting how Bob really draws on the canvas, to see how he moves the tissue around. They really know their work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how does that translate into gallery life? I mean, if you've been to the studio and watched somebody work on a painting, then six months later the painting comes into the gallery in an exhibition, can you say things about that to somebody?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't. Never. No. I feel that's a personal part. I don't understand the painting any more than the person who is buying it, really. And frankly, I've come to the conclusion, dealing with the men that I do deal with, that they don't understand it either. They don't know what it means. They may know what they're trying to say, but it doesn't always come out that way. Do you know what I'm trying to say?

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I can talk easily about Sidney because he's so literal. Like there are holes in the floor of a canvas. Like he makes holes, big architectonic interiors. And, you know, he puts those holes there. But I wouldn't dare say to him, "What are they?" One time a client asked, "What are those holes?" And I made up a story. I didn't know what they were. The next time he was present, and somebody asked, "What do those holes mean?" He said he didn't know, and I'm sure he doesn't. It's for balance or . . . . I mean, I don't think that . . . . I don't think Bob even knows.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I thought, though, when he does the still lifes, you know, the flowers . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, you should see his books, if he doesn't destroy them. I'm so afraid he'll destroy them. He sits on the grass and draws them right from the flower. And all those notebooks. You know, he would never ever let anybody see those. And Billy draws a lot too. Oh, and Hyman must have hundreds of studies. Once in a while one of them will say, "What do you think of that?" I never answer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you say?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I just don't answer. I learned long ago that you don't have to answer everything you're asked. It's true. I mean what right have I to say it's . . . . Sometimes, a painting comes in that I think is not as good as other paintings, but that doesn't mean that I know it. And that used to trouble me. I used to buy all kinds of books on the meaning of meaning and the meaning of painting. It's all a crock of you know what. They don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But don't you think there are things that one can articulate that you glean from looking at pictures? I mean, you live with them all the time. I mean, you have them in the gallery and in the house.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I feel that particular Lawrence is for me. Now I know there are three people who aren't for me. But the balance and the rhythm and the push and pull in the painting . . . . I just think that it's an unconscious . . . . I think in the clients that I have I find there are some people who know nothing about art but invariably can pick the best picture. I have one client in Philadelphia who does it continuously. And she doesn't know; she never asks whose paintings they are. She just turns to her husband and says, "Barney, buy me that." I think it's an inner . . . . I really do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have different reactions to different paintings? I mean, if Katzman sends six paintings to the gallery . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, sure. That's what I'm telling you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you look at one and say, you know . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: That's for me. That's right. And I hate to sell it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What says that to you?

TERRY DINTENFASS: That's just what I'm trying to tell you: There are fifty books. How do you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but I mean your own -- do you react?

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's a gut reaction, I'm sure. But I don't know. You know, like I'll say: that's the best So-and-So I've ever seen. And I really mean it. But then, I come home, and I think to myself: how do you know that's the best So-and-So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no way of explaining it? There's no way of saying why it's the best? Or how it different form the other ones?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, you know, I've been a client as well as a dealer. So I know that there's no way. It's the thing that makes you most comfortable. There are certain technicalities that I've learned over the years. I mean, it's not purely incidental. I've had some training in art school and all that. But it's more than just the technical side. It happened on Sunday. We went to see the Man Ray show. Did you see it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen it yet, no.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It's very interesting. We went upstairs first to see this Bouguereau show. And there is a man who has all this most beautiful painting quality, and there was just nothing as far as I'm concerned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no life.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Nothing. No point of view. And then Man Ray, although he's no painter, had a point of view. And it's so much more alive. It's very different.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, does the subject influence you when you look at things?

TERRY DINTENFASS: No. because I like abstract painting. You see, I think deKooning is a fantastic painter. And I always like the early Rothko's. We used to have big fights over that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How early do you mean?

TERRY DINTENFASS: 1953, 1954. I really like those. Oh, yes. And I was crazy about Franz Kline. I would have bought a Kline years ago but a Kline in Atlantic City would have just . . . . But he represented all of New York to me. And yet, they say Kline meant calligraphy to somebody else. And there's the answer to the question, I think. To me, Kline had all the structural push and pull of the City. And yet when you hear other people talk they say it's just pure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any reason why you've never taken a totally non-figurative artist into the gallery?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I would say some Doves are pretty totally non-figurative. The reason is I guess -- oh, I started out with a social protest point of view. And I really believe in man's inhumanity to man being of utmost interest to me. And the men that are in the gallery deal with the human figure and the humanness of life even if it's nature. Herbert Katzman you couldn't dare call a social protest painter. Yet he communicates the energy -- I'm making this up -- I didn't think about it -- but it's the energy of living. And although Dove was abstract, it was the essence of what he did. It wasn't really abstract. It was the essence of The Storm.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It grew out of his nature.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And human nature as well as the energy. Now, I haven't seen anybody that turned me on. You see, although I thought Rothko's paintings in a way did something to me emotionally, the color did something visually to me. You know, those early ones are very high in key. I think they dehumanize, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But don't you think that's an American quality to make it bright and clean?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I'm a dirty old lady so what would I do with bright and clean? What kind of nonsense is that? I take a lot of showers, but I never come out bright and clean. I think I'm known as the dirty old lady of the art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting, you've been a dealer in New York for quite a while now. Do you think it's been a problem being a woman dealer?

TERRY DINTENFASS: How do you mean that? I mean it's a problem being a woman. I find it a real problem. I don't like to fight Larry Fleischman. But when I came here, they were mostly women anyway: Antoinette Kraushaar, Edith Halpert, Grace Borgenicht. And then came Dandy Danny. But they deal in a different way. Pierre Matisse to me is like a woman dealer would be. I don't think all women are so good either. I just think it has many things to do with being a woman except when it comes to making a contractual type thing, with a corporate thing. Like Nina Kay is more man than she is a woman. I mean she knows how to go in . . . . And I can't do that. I find that I've lost a lot of business because I can't do that. Also I find it a great deal . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But she's like that.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I hate it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She loves to go in and bang on the table and have everybody bite their cigars and stuff.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I'd rather have them say, "She's a nice lady". They bite their cigars, but they don't know why. I guess I would have been much more successful had I been like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But do you think that, you know, given the sixties where abstract expressionism was the great public thing in terms of museums and criticism and then Pop art came as the younger artists . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: And now the New Realists?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, well, there are always New Realists if you look through every couple of years.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I'll tell you the truth. I don't believe I will ever be a big, fancy gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but have you been able to see effects of those broad . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: I've not only seen them. I mean, people that once would buy a Tovish will buy a Trova due to the tremendous publicity. The museums are just beginning to give me some recognition. Jake Lawrence is the first. They gave it to Billy King, but I went out and beat the bushes for that one. And now Dove of course. Dove has been neglected.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's an American classic, too.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I'm sure Hyman Bloom . . . . I think I've just gained recognition. And I think because of the kind of art I have -- like I said before, people and museums don't want to be unstylish.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, they're terribly afraid to be independent.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And I sell things to museums. That's what's so silly. I mean, we've just sold the Philadelphia Museum a big Goodman. We've just sold Syracuse a big Goodman. And this is a young man. But they're not being unstylish. They're just buying it and not showing it, if you know what I mean.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So in three years they can pull it out and say: we . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: And they do the same with Jake. I wouldn't be in business if I hadn't been able to sell. But I haven't the reputation. And many people don't have any idea who I am at the gallery. That's why I think it's funny you're doing this interview. They don't really know who I am.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, you know, for example, Tovish doesn't produce a great deal of work does he? You see, that's one of the problems. Trova turns out an enormous amount.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Even if Tovish did thousands of pieces of sculpture, like Billy King does, he wouldn't be as popular as Trova because I haven't the money to push; I don't have what they call the radical chic, or whatever you want to call it. I'm just not a chic gallery. And maybe people don't like my folksy attitude. That's true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With all the wood furniture, I mean, that kind of reminds me of Edith in a way.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I really like people. I like the people that I want to sell you. And if I don't like them I hide in the bathroom. It's true. And Louise bangs on the door and says, "Come out. We must finish the sale."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that collectors just come in? Or are they brought by other collectors? Or do certain artists attract them? Or museums?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, some of my artists have had a following for years. Some of my clients have come to trust me. I still have the clients I had in Atlantic City. Would you believe that? And from the Midwest. Like Dr.

Kelps and all those people. And they bring you other clients. I've heard them say, "You can buy from her. She'll take it back if you don't like it. You can really trust her." But I still am not big, Paul. I mean, I'm not putting on a modesty act. I wish I were. I'm just wondering how I'll weather this storm.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What storm? In terms of what?

TERRY DINTENFASS: The economic storm. I think we've had the best year I've ever had, the best fall I've ever had. So it seems that I'll be all right, but , you know . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating. I've had three artists in the last week tell me very quietly that the last year is the best we've ever had. What's everybody talking about recession for?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, people are putting their money in things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think it's very tentative, yes. People are putting money into things that they didn't five years ago.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't think, though, that I'll have any problem. I don't know. Also I think my kind of people are coming out of the . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean the artists? Or the collectors?

TERRY DINTENFASS: The collectors. The collectors are beginning to understand that they should have bought . . . . You see, they should have bought a Jake Lawrence when I sold it for nineteen hundred dollars. Now I'm asking eighty-five hundred for the same fellow. It's true. And these that bought it for nineteen hundred are asking what do I have now for nineteen hundred. And I say: I think you should buy this or that; I really think you should buy another very good young artist; or you should buy a Raymond Saunders. That's what's happened, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the winners attract more activity.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, like Mr. Moriseau. He's a terrific collector. Do you know him? He's really nice. I mean he'll call me up -- he can't come in anymore, he's too crippled -- and he'll say, "Send me some slides. What have you got that's hot this week?" But he'll buy. He won't buy what he doesn't like. But he'll buy if I send it down, and he likes it. So that's what built up . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they keep year after year after year.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And also there's been a big changeover of dealers, don't you think? Like Martha Jackson is dead. Edith Halpert is dead. A lot of people have died in the last . . . . I was telling Roxanna there's no young woman in the art field. There's Stephannati and Christo, but there are no woman.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How have you found working with dealers in other cities?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I've found that very good. They too want the Ellsworth Kelly's and the Stella's. But I've always been cooperative. I give them more than is their due. I'm glad to make the exposure. I sort of resent having to send out of the city. But like if it will do Billy any good to have a show in Atlanta or if it will do Saunders any good to have a show in Carleton College . . . . We do a lot of university work that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think those exhibitions pay off in any way?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, sure. I think they pay off fine. I think they pay off with the fact that I cooperate with a university, or I cooperate with a dealer. Esther Robles just sold a nice Dove for me. I mean it pays off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good. She's been a dealer for a while.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, she's a wonderful woman. They may fool around on the edges with other dealers -- which they do -- and then when they get burned they come back. It's the same mamma routine. I love to help young dealers. But I was saying there's no young woman.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think that is? Why do you think there are so few young women? There are some young women who are private dealers.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I thought Joan Washburn was courageous and then she looped up to . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: But she still has her gallery. But she's not much younger than I am. There's no young,

aggressive woman. Nancy Hoffman in the Village. But she's not that young, is she?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, she'd in her thirties.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, there should be one in my field.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't even know any private dealers who handle the kind of things that you have.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I always hoped it would be Louise but I don't know if Louise would take that. And she's not young any more either.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean open her own private gallery?

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't think she should. I mean, you have to have a certain amount of . . . it takes a lot to be a dealer. It takes a lot to be in any business. You know that. It's a very rough. There is nobody in my area, and it makes me very sad. I often wish my daughter would come to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Even in other cities like Philadelphia or Boston?

TERRY DINTENFASS: They don't count. I mean, why should Stephannati and Christo and Bernie Dannenberg? They're all young people. There should be a young woman. And it doesn't take all that capital. It takes guts. But I think that they just don't like art. Just like everybody else. They don't like this particular art. It's not stylish. They prefer to move in that world that is very chic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I think it's also something else and that it's easier if you have a small Ellsworth Kelly drawing to sell because you've got four or five dealers all around the world selling Ellsworth Kelly every month.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Fine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you're kind of going along on a lot of coattails. That's really what a lot of those people are doing.

TERRY DINTENFASS: But that's no reason for them not to be able to . . . . Someone has to . . . . Someone will come eventually.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think Christo is that adventurous in showing famous American water colors.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, they borrowed them from me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But doing a Matta exhibition. He's certainly not an unknown quantity. And a lot of other people.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I wish there were some young person because I'm not so young any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure, you are.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Are you kidding? Listen, if I could be mother to all these artists, I'm no lass. I have enough problems. I had my first second-generation customer. I almost dropped dead. A man from Colorado came and he said, "You know, my father was a customer of yours." And I said, "I think I'll kill you."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's good.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't think it's so good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very significant.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Of what? Of getting old?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have many collectors who trade up? You know, will buy a smaller painting and then a few years later . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. Yes. We always take it back, and we always sell it again. I have no problem. Yes, I have many clients do that. But now I find there's a big fall out. They want to get into Sheeler and Shahn. Well, not Shahn so much, but Sheeler and O'Keeffe and Demuth. They want to get out of anything they've made a mistake with. And they really want to get out of like Jenkins. They want to get out of the space cadet suits, as they're known among us figurative people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I love that. But how can you trade, say, a Jenkins on, say, a Dove?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, I don't take those. I never ever take anybody but my own. I told you I don't do that. O'Keeffe maybe; or Evergood. It makes it easy. Of course it makes me not very rich, but that's it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've mentioned once going out to visit Georgia O'Keeffe and what an interesting experience that was. When was that?

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was a day or two after my mother died. I'd have to look it up in my files to give you the exact date. But I would say eight years ago. I was still living in the gallery. It was more than eight because I wasn't living here yet. Maybe ten years ago. It was one of the most thrilling experiences. I really enjoyed that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that come about?

TERRY DINTENFASS: O'Keeffe had just left Edith Halpert. One day -- God, I can't think of what his name was -- Pollack, is it? -- a very florid-face man . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: Peter Pollack?

TERRY DINTENFASS: He was at AFA once.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Peter Pollack, yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: He came into the gallery. He said, "Why don't you get O'Keeffe in this gallery?" I said, "She belongs to Edith." He said, "No. She's left Edith. I was just talking to Doris Bry." He gave me Doris's name. I called her and she said, "Well, I don't know." Then I wrote O'Keeffe a letter. She sent me a telegram to come. I had no money, but I had a very nice boy friend. He said, "What do you mean New Mexico at Christmas?" I said, "I don't want to stay very long. I just want to go." He said, "Well, all right, if you want to go. If we go to church Christmas Eve. We can take the flight to Albuquerque." So I did. He stayed in Albuquerque, and I rented a car and went to Abiqui. Of course I had never seen New Mexico. And driving to Abiqui in the dawn was just lovely. And then of course I couldn't find Abiqui. I was sixty miles behind it. Finally I got to Abiqui. I asked somebody where O'Keeffe lived. And, you know, how that's an adobe . . . . I rang this little tinkle bell. Dogs were barking like mad. A voice said, "Come in." So I went through that long corridor. And there she was in the blazing sunlight in that patio in a pin stripe Marlene Dietrich suit with a Chiffon scarf at eleven o'clock in the morning. I almost fell over dead. You know, I wasn't prepared. In New York, I had always seen her in a cape. Well, anyway, we had this terrific talk. She asked me all about everything. She asked if I would like to stay for lunch. I was flabbergasted at the house. It was beautiful, all white. The only painting was The Dove, just one painting up of her own. And some African . . . . And then we had lunch. I loved the way the firewood was all this way instead of this way. And those dogs -- I was petrified of those big blue chows barking. Then she asked, "Would you like to see my ranch?" She never offered me a drink. You know, I like to have a drink. I said, "Yes." So we drove to the ranch which was another sixty miles. And there, instead of being high and looking down, you're low down. Did you got the ranch?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, I've been there.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And that's beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: And then she said, "Climb up on the ridge." So I had to go up on the ridge and I thought I'd fall. And then, we went back to Abiqui. She showed me all the bones and things. She has them on shelves. Then, she calmly said, "Would you like a drink?" I almost fainted. Here I had waited all day to have a drink. And then she asked me if I'd stay overnight. Which I didn't. Of course I didn't tell her that I had a friend in Santa Fe. So I drove back in the sunset. It was beautiful. And then I realized that she didn't paint sexual things at all. She painted the landscape. It's as simple as that. I really don't think that they're all pornographic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, people see certain shapes, and they think: oh, I know what that is.

TERRY DINTENFASS: But, you know, I heard this from my son. He said, "Mother, don't you know that every painting is pornographic? Everything is. All of life is sexual." He didn't use the word "pornographic"; he used the word "sexual." Well if you look at The Dove, certainly you can make you know what out of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I think it is. That's why I think the new art is so cold -- the Anuszkiewicz's and the Stella's. They're not literally pornographic like the other literal pornographic . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, how do you like all the new Super Realist people?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, I don't, if you want my truth. I think they're sort of . . . . I knew Lowell Nesbitt when he was . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean the spray people, you know, like Cunningham and people who just . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't really like it. Chuck Close, you mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I don't. If the painting quality is good . . . . The only real Realist I love is Gillespie, and he's not a Super Realist. I don't like them. I don't like their painting from photographs or painting photographs. Do you like them?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very bland.

TERRY DINTENFASS: That's what I say. They haven't got the human quality it takes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what about O'Keeffe? Did you represent her then for a while?

TERRY DINTENFASS: She was very nice. She talked to me about my gallery and whether I was sincere. And then I came back. I worked out some sort of arrangement with Doris Bry. I'm sure it's not for the public. This is under wraps. The arrangement was that I could sell X amount. And Doris, at that time, had no setup. I helped her set that up. I found her the apartment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where she's living now?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the still unpacked boxes?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Oh, it's all fixed now. It's beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It is?

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, I got her the architect that did this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When?

TERRY DINTENFASS: About two months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: After all these years!

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes, I finally embarrassed her into it. I said, "Doris, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You're very, very rich. And you have no idea. This is a disgrace."

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, it just looked as if she'd moved in two weeks before.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, she had the same architect and the same contractor. She'd knife me in the back in a minute, or anybody else, but she still comes to ask my advice. She'll call me up and ask me who she should get to do the slip covers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, she finally did something to it.

TERRY DINTENFASS: I haven't seen it yet. But, I know it's beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a fascinating space.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Yes. And, he rearranged the space. A very good architect. She had the best builder in New York work on it. And as soon as she unpacks all those cartons in her bedroom . . . . She even used the painter that I used. She called me before the summer to find out, "Who does your painting?" I said, "He's a young German. He's very good." But, she hasn't been able to move those boxes of letters so he can paint the bedroom. She's doing that this week. She's friendly. But, she became very successful, and I would say, being very catty, quite greedy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean representing O'Keeffe?

TERRY DINTENFASS: In the fact that she doesn't want to make it easy. And she has her own hang-ups, I guess. All she has in life is . . . .

PAUL CUMMINGS: The famous association. It's very difficult.

TERRY DINTENFASS: O'Keeffe is not going to be with us that much longer. She's blind, is she, I hear?
PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's very bad. But, she's just restricted her papers at Yale for another twenty-five years so she expects to be around at least that long.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Well, didn't you hear the story someone told me yesterday about a woman who bought a Hermes pocketbook because it would last long? She was ninety-two. She'd like to buy a Hermes because it would last.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tradition, you see. You haven't had many artists who've left the gallery, have you? I was trying to think the other day.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Just Phil. He was bought from under me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But that was that funny gallery.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Gallery 63. They gave him $25,000 to leave.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is very peculiar. And then he had trouble with them.

TERRY DINTENFASS: They closed, and they sold his contract to Hammer, and then Hammer sold his contract to Kennedy. There's nothing left in the estate. Besides, by the time Phil left me he was still painting but not . . . . And then, he had that cerebral accident. I can never not love Phil Evergood. I mean, that's obvious to everybody. I love his work. I think he's the greatest painter of this . . . . We went through this twenty years ago, you and I, when you did a mother and child show. Do you remember that? And I said, "But I know where this one is, and I know where that one is."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, I remember. It was not twenty, Terry; it was only . . . .

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was twenty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ten.

TERRY DINTENFASS: It was more than ten.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was 1965.

TERRY DINTENFASS: Was it ten? But I really believe in Phil's work. And Arnaud d'Usseau who wrote Deep Are the Roots is in New York now. We were having dinner. He and Phil and Bob are all very friendly. You see, they are all out of that same political situation. He too thinks that Phil is . . . . He's a master, I think. Of course, I'm not going to live to see it. I told the children they should shoot up a rocket . . . .

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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