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Oral history interview with Edith Feldenheimer, 1982 Nov. 23-Dec. 7

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Edith Feldenheimer on November 23 and December 1, 1982. The interview took place in Portland, Oregon, and was conducted by Marian W. Kolisch for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

(Tape 1; Side 1)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: We could start by trying to go through a little of your chronology, if you don't mind, telling us where you were born and when.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I was born in New York City on August 29, 1900, and went to a small private school; it was Miss Calhoun's School, which is still in existence, I'm told.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Was it a girls' school?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes. And then, went to Smith College, which I enjoyed immensely. I loved Smith, loved the work I did there, the people I knew; it was really a good developing education.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: At that time, Edith, did they have a particular department that was known for being outstanding-- I mean the art department or music...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Not particularly, no. I would say that most of my work was in English and I did a good deal of writing when I was there. And of course, I also was very much interested in the theater and took part in a great many plays. At that time, Sam Elliott, who was originally with the Provincetown Theatre, was the theatrical director and put the plays on; I enjoyed working with him immensely. He was very knowledgeable and very adroit in handling the plays.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Tell me a little bit more about the theater. Is that when you began to be interested in that as a real career?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, that was the start of my interest in the theater. Before that, however, if I can go back, we had a German governess when I was a child and I spoke German as easily as English for many years. Then when I was about ten or twelve, we had a French governess... My mother always had a strong feeling that languages were very important in the world and so I learned some French there, though I later went to school in France. Having both those languages made it much easier at college because I went right into advanced courses where we studied
note: not quite in same format as rest. Used this to experiment on.
the German theater and the French theater and things of that kind which were extremely interesting to me.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: What was going on in the German theater then? Was it the time of Brecht?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, it was long before that. This was, let's see, I went to college in 1916, graduated in 1920, and so that was before any of these things-- before everything. (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So it was classic German theater?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, it wasn't the classic or the well-known German theater. It was just the ordinary, run-of-the-mill. But of course the French theater in those days was very largely classical. You trained, and when you went to the theater in Paris, usually la Comedie Francaise, or something of that kind, you saw the classics. That was good training, good theater training.

But then I worked at the theater at Smith a good deal. Also, I wrote for the college monthly paper and that kind of thing too. At that time, I thought of going into writing as a career.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did the governess have anything else to do? I think you mentioned before that they would take you, or was it your mother, who took you to the galleries?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, no, that my mother did. My mother was a Sunday painter and very much interested in art. It was her ambition from the time my sister and I were small children that we should have an appreciation and understanding of art, not only of her time but of the past. She had been a pupil of Chase [William Merritt Chase--Ed.] in New York. She had painted there and at the-- I don't know whether the academy was in existence

when she was there. She graduated from Hunter College way back in '95 or something like that.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: What was her name, your mother's name?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: My mother's name was Estelle Levy.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And your father?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: My father was Samuel Henry Levy and we were of French descent on my father's side and German on my mother's. So, that...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That accounts for your governesses in both languages.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: We said that we came of fighting blood.

To go back to the time when I was a youngster in my teens, we had a home in Stamford, Connecticut, where we went for the summers. And I enjoyed that very much; it was a big change from New York life. And we went there until one night in September, in 1915, I think it was, or '14 or '15, no '15, maybe earlier, I'm not sure. The house burned
FELDENHEIMER
down. We started the furnace for the first time and it was one of the old-fashioned type of furnaces and something obvious was very wrong and before we knew it, the house was in flames, from one end to the other.

So, we got out safely, all of us, but Mother had a good collection of etchings which was lost-- a lot of things. So we never went back because it would have meant rebuilding the house, and by this time we were thinking of college and that sort of thing.

We went abroad every summer and my sister and I were put in a French school, a boarding school at Territet in Switzerland called Institution [pronounced in French--Ed.].

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: For the summer?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, we had expected to be there for a year because my mother felt that we needed a whole year to really speak fluently. But, children pick up languages very easily and it was a very happy summer. But then the war broke out-- you see, that was 1914ÿ-- and we had a very hard time getting home. It was a time when Americans couldn't cash checks and we had really a great problem. And it was only through help from home that we were able to get on board one of the ocean liners and get back to America. So that was quite an exciting experience.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Were your mother and father both with you?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, oh yes. Well, they had come and called for us at school and...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Many Americans were just stranded there?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: But we were stranded and it was very difficult. So then, from there, that was 1914, I had two or three years before I went to college and then...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Before you went to college, what did you do?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I was still in school-- high school.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: In New York?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: In New York, in this girls' school.

The college experience was a very rich experience. I enjoyed it very much. Made many friends, some of which I still have today, although I've outlived most of them.

But my work with Sam Elliott paid off because when I left college, he insisted that I go on the stage.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And Sam Elliott was your...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: He was the coach.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: ...instructor of the school?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, he was the head of the theater department at Smith. And he insisted. So, he gave

me a letter to Miss Theresa Hellburn of the Theater Guild with a recommendation. And, as it happened, they had a student part for which a girl had not come back, the one who'd originally been hired for it, and so they let me have it. It was a very small part and I did nothing very brilliant but it was a great experience because it was the original Theater Guild company with Helen Wesley, Dudley Diggs, Hugh Trevor and people who were theatrical history. It was really great and I enjoyed it very much.

But my mother was so unhappy about it because in those days, going into the theater had a very doubtful reputation.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Not proper?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, it wasn't considered a correct thing for a young lady to do. So that I left it and started writing. I did reviews for the Bookman, the New York Times, and the New York Herald and did that for a couple of years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did that make you sad to have to give up the theater?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, it did. In fact, I had been hired. Susan Glaspell was running the Provincetown Players and after I had finished with the Guild, she had me read a part and gave it to me to play, and it would have been... It was one of the early O'Neill one-act plays, but it was a wonderful part. Really good, juicy part and I had a feeling that that would launch my career. But Mother was so unhappy and Father didn't approve, so I decided to give it up and that part was taken by Ann Harding, who did make it a career. She was about my age at that time. I was twenty-- twenty-one-- I guess by that time.

So then, my brief and glorious career on the stage-- but, I certainly learned a great deal. It was a great experience.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: In fact, you had at least a little tryout, because I think very often when people have a yearning to do something like that when they're young, as a career, and never have a chance to try it, they will always, always think about it.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: You always wonder what you would have done if you'd gone on with it. Well, of course, that's natural.

But anyway, then I took to writing again and had a couple of years in New York as a book reviewer, which was about as dull as it could be. But interesting again in its way.

Then, of course, Paul came along.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Paul Feldenheimer?
EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: How did he come along? How did he happen to show up?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, do you want the whole story?

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Oh yes.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh good. Well, when I graduated....

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Was he from Portland?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes. When I graduated from high school, we had a dance, you know, a graduation party, and it was a girls' school so the girls all brought beaux. And I brought a boy who I'd known since I was a child. But when we got there, there was this very good-looking young man who I found most attractive, and we were together all evening. My poor beau was left in the cold. (laughter) After a couple of dates, he proposed and I thought he was out of his mind because here I was much too young to get married-- I was sixteen you see. But he said, "That's all right. I'll be back and I'll see you again."

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: He was twenty?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, he was about twenty.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: After about two dates?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was not really a very serious thing, you know. At least I knew he liked me. Well, then he came back two years later; no, more than two years later. I had just graduated from college and he came

back and this time when we ended up together, he proposed again. And he said-- I thought it was ridiculous, besides which I had no idea of going out into the hinterland-- he said, "I'm coming back in two years and if you're not married then, you're going to marry me." And the strange part of it was that I did.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: He really was persistent? (laughter by both)

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was a strange thing, but I suppose I needed preparation or something because when I saw him the second time, I knew that it was just right. And by that time, I was ready to come west. We were married a couple months afterward. He had just come back from Europe when he reached New York in 1924 and we were married January 15, 1925. So it was just a few months before we got married and came west.

In those days, it took five days and five nights to get from New York to Portland on the train. The sixth morning, you looked out the window of the train and there was the Columbia River. A great thrill-- I was just delighted. I was very eager to see the West. I'd never been west of the Hudson.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: What did your family think about that? Were they frightened for you?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, they were. They thought Paul was a dear but they weren't very happy about my going so far away because it was quite a journey in those days. But that was the way it worked out.

So then I lived in Portland. When I first came to Portland, as I had been wont to do wherever we went, I immediately contacted the museum and Miss [Annabelle--Ed.] Crocker, who was probably, I think, one of the most able art directors I've ever known. She had an instinctive knowledge of what was good and she would tolerate no compromise with mediocrity. She would have the best or nothing. She often said, "I would rather have no show at all." And she had so little money to work with. She said, "I'd rather have no show at all than have anything that was not tops." Before very long, I was helping her and then, to my great surprise, I was invited on the board in 1930.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Excuse me, she was the director then?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: She was the first director of the Portland Art Museum.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Do you remember how old the museum was at that time? Had it been established....?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it wasn't very old, you see. This little group of men who felt that Portland had reached the point where it needed a museum had gotten together and had raised the money and had sent Miss Crocker... Mr. Adams, Charles Adams, who was one of the early directors of the museum, had recognized her ability and her knowledge and her instinctive taste and had arranged that she have a year of study of art in New York and Paris.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Because she was a local Portland...?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: She was a Portland woman of rather ordinary education. I don't believe she'd ever been to college. But, he realized that her potential...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And great sensitivity, I think I've heard...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, great sensitivity. And there was also great sensitivity in him, because many of those men were interested more in the civic purpose of a museum. But he was interested in the art, and of course he recognized that in Miss Crocker and she became the first director of the museum. That must have been-- it was before I got here.

When I arrived, the museum was located in what is now the Chamber of Commerce Building. But in those days, was a very antiquated structure-- a two-story, brick building. The lower floor had some Greek casts because Miss Crocker had been advised in her contact with other museums that you must have some Greek casts for your basis, for your sculptors, for your students to study the classics, at least as close as they could get to them. So they had a few of these casts in the lower floor. And then upstairs, there were two fairly small galleries where Miss Crocker occasionally had shows. In those days, it was quite the thing to do. It was socially very acceptable. And the ladies that poured were always featured in the paper on Sundays. The interest in art, to my surprise, was minimal. But the interest in the events at the museum was considerable. So that went on.

Well, one of the members of the board was Mr. William B. Ayer, who was a prominent lumberman. Another was Mr. Adams, who was the president of one of the banks. A third was Judge Carey-- you know, Alice Rockey's father-- who was one of the important judicial minds in the community. The board was small in those days; there were about ten or twelve. Margery Hoffman Smith was the first woman on the board, I was the second, and Mrs. Harry Corbett joined us a few years later.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That was in the first few years?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That's the early board. You could find out down at the museum who the other people are because I've forgotten their names.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Mr. Ladd, I think, was one, wasn't he?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, yes. One of the Corbetts I know was on there.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Henry?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Mrs. Corbett joined later but I think her father-in-law...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And I think Wood, C. E. S. Wood?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, one of them was on the board at that time. But these people were all very truly, truly devoted. They were dedicated, they wanted a good museum, they wanted Portland to have something that compared with that they saw in the East, in the smaller cities of the East. And in those days, it wasn't so difficult to do.

Mr. Adams had a remarkable collection. He had Renoirs before anyone knew about Renoir. He had some of the French Impressionists, several of them, some of which the museum still has, which his heirs gave to the museum, and some he gave to the museum. A beautiful Pissaro and some really very great treasures, great treasures of the city.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That must have been rare, wasn't it? Because there were not that many people in Portland who were collecting?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Who knew about these things. But that's why we were so fortunate in having these people who really cared about it and who were very generous and who built up the museum that way.

I went on the board in 1930, after I'd been here just a short time and I've been on and off the board after they put in a term, a process whereby you served a term and then were off. But all in all, I've been on that board for 21ÿyears. And on what used to be called the Art Committee, which is now called the Acquisition and Exhibition Committee, I think ever since. (laughter) I think all 50ÿyears. I don't believe I ever wasn't on that-- and of course, loved it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: They had a rule, I think that you could serve only two terms or a certain number of years and then you had to get off.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I think, two three-year terms and then you go off for a while.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Then you could come back?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: And then you could come back after a while so that it was not a continuous career, but it held up pretty well.

Then when I got to Portland, also my theater interests revived and I played with a civic theater, which is those days was under Bess Whitcombe. They later broke-- Bess Whitcombe and what is now Civic Theatre-- and went their separate ways. But I played the lead in the Thirteenth Chair in 1926. (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Edith, is that when it was up on 23rd and Washington, in that little..? Oh no, in the Barn...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was in the Studio Building in those days, as I remember. I may be wrong.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I remember one of the earliest locations was in what's now called the Old Barn on Jefferson, Broadway?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I don't remember that.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: At any rate, that was a long time ago, too. So, you were in the Thirteenth Chair?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: . . .in which I played an old woman, and Bess Whitcombe spent a great deal of time making me up for this part because I was 26ÿyearsÿ-- you can imagine. But a member of the audience once was heard to remark, "Isn't it too bad that nice Mr. Feldenheimer married such an old woman?" (laughter) So it shows her makeup was pretty good!

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So did that lead you to begin thinking about more theater?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I've always been interested in it but I didn't do very much more at that time. I got very busy learning to cook and be a housekeeper and all the things that a young bride has to learn. But I never relinquished my interest in the museum-- I've been with that for so long.

Then, of course, another one of my interests, imported from New York, was the symphony, because we always-- at home the Philharmonic was a way of life to our family. In fact, I had an uncle who was the oldest member of the Philharmonic membership when he died at 95. He had been a member since he was 17ÿyears old. He was a great, great music fan. So, of course, music was very important and it was not
very good when we first came, I must admit. But, it improved as the years went by.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Would that have been Van Hoogstraten?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Before Van Hoogstraten. Now I can't think of the man's name.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I was thinking of Van Hoogstraten as one of the earliest directors.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, and there's a woman now alive today who's the daughter of the first conductor, who conducted as best he could for about ten years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: But they had very little support? Was it difficult?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, it was difficult. The auditorium was cold and uncomfortable and it was never a full house except the first night, when again, that was a social event. And it took quite awhile until it really felt established. I think Van Hoogstraten was as much to be thanked for that as anybody because he really gave us the kind of music that you hear in other cities and he worked with a small and barely competent orchestra. But, he did a great deal with it. He did all that could have been done, I think. And, then he left during the war, went back to Germany; although he had been Dutch by birth, he'd been married to Elly Ney who was the great Nazi musician, you know-- she was Hitler's favorite. So he went back to her and to music in Germany, which was always surprising after the years he'd spent in this country. But then....

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Leaving behind a very small, underfunded and really not a very good symphony orchestra. In fact, they were orchestra members who always had to work at something else.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh yes, because they were paid for their performances by the hour and they were paid very little-- not nearly enough-- so we couldn't attract people from other orchestras because they wouldn't have either the prestige or the financing that they needed. But, that again, grew, and before very long, I was on that board, the symphony board, for some years. Until Bloomfield came. I forget; there was somebody in between Van Hoogstraten and Bloomfield but I can't remember who it was.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I don't remember either.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I'm sure the symphony can tell you.

But anyway, Bloomfield came, who was a real musician. He was a fine musician. He was a very difficult man both for the orchestra and for the audience and for the board. But he was here for several years, two years I guess. And then he was invited to go to Rochester, New York, so he left. At the same time our manager, who was Phil Hart, left to go east, I believe, and the three outstanding men who should have taken over the symphony presidency were all too busy, or so they said, to do it. But they said if I took it, they would all

help me and they really did. They were wonderful. They were John Fulton, Jack Meier, and the banker, Carvel Linden.

[Tape 1; Side 2]

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No conductor, no manager and $40,000 in debt-- that was the point at which we either would continue or give up.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Excuse me. These three men said that if you would assume the presidency, they would back you all the way and do the financial...?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, they would help. Jack Meier put on a benefit concert which raised quite a little money; several people gave us really generous donations and we were able to wipe out the debt... And Bloomfield left. We got Hank Norton-- Henry M. Norton-- to be our manager, who was a brilliant manager, and quite a remarkable man. Then we got this young Italian, [Piero?] Bellugi, and he took over and gave us not the most intellectual concerts but very gay, very melodic, very pleasant concerts; also some very good music, because he was a very fine musician. He was there for two years, and then he was invited to conduct for two years at La Scala.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: He was young, too, wasn't he?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, yes, he was 30, I think or 31. Something like that.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Bloomfield was still quite young when he left, in his thirties.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes he was.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So there we had two conductors...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: They were quite young conductors but they both of them had the energy and the foresight to build and they both worked very hard for the symphony and did a very good job. And Bellugi was invited by La Scala to do two weeks conducting; that is the highest honor a musician in Europe can get-- to be invited to La Scala. The board had voted to rehire him for a third year-- he had two years-- but he gave up the sure pay and prestige of being the conductor here in Portland to go back to La Scala for the honor. It's the kind of thing that shadows the whole of his life, because from there, he could go almost anywhere.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Have you heard, by any chance, what he's up to now?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, yes. He had ten years as director of the symphony in Turin, which is considered one of the very good Italian symphonies and now he's doing-- you know in Europe, they do so much guest conducting, and I understand that he's doing that, mostly.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: As I think Bloomfield is also. I hear he's guest conducting, isn't that so?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I don't know.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I know that he was in either Hamburg or Frankfurt.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, he did opera there a couple of times. He hasn't a symphony since he left here but he has done occasional opera in some places.

Well anyway, after my two-year term, which was de rigueur for symphony presidents, I was invited to go on the board at Reed [College--Ed]. Well, I had never done very much in the field of education. I've always worked with the arts and I was rather reluctant to take it on, but I did. That was another great experience, a kind of experience that really forms your thinking.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I hate to do this because I want to get on with that, too, but before we leave the symphony completely, could I ask you what you think about... Because it seems to me in Portland, maybe everywhere, that both the museum and the symphony have been so-- maybe I shouldn't interfere and bring this in now but I'm afraid that we might not get back to it-- have been so fraught with controversies between the board and the director. This has happened at the museum a number of times. Maybe I would like to even go back and have you talk more about that, because it also happened with the symphony. One of the things where you stopped was what happened after Bellugi, when we had...before Larry Smith...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: We can leave that subject with your quotation. Say it again.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: You mean, the intervening conductor, who was Jack Singer. And I wanted to say: Nil nisi bonum. [Speak no ill of the dead.--Ed.] (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: All right, we can leave that, but I do think it's something that pervades the stories of symphonies and museums all over the country. It's not just here...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It's bound occasionally... You can't have a steady improvement from one to the next. There's bound to be setbacks, always.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Always going to be controversies, I believe, always, between certain boards and directors because of personalities and presidents perhaps disagreeing with boards, and boards disagreeing with directors or the business manager. Anyway, I'm sorry.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That's fine.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That's something I wanted to say.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Now come, give me a question and maybe I can think of an answer.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Let's talk about Reed because this is quite a departure, as you said-- from music and art

you went to education.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well yes, I found Reed very simpatico, because they were forward looking, they had a real intellectual education to offer and it seemed to me that it was an outstanding institution. In those days, Dick Sullivan was the president and he was a wonderful man, a fine educator, a wonderful person. It seemed to me when I got on that board and looked around that they had everything except art. They had a small art department which was being taught in a rather desultory fashion, but they had no impetus toward anything creative. So I worked with the director of the art department at that time, who was Hubert Crehan, and he and I worked out a program for an Art Associates group who would finance the shows. We hoped for a monthly show, if we could afford it. Crehan had come directly from New York, and his friends were all eager to help him. Louise Nevelson had the first show, the one-woman show, outside of New York, at Reed. Alice Neel had a show at Reed. And we have in the intervening years had some outstanding national artists at Reed. Our greatest problem has always been publicity. The newspapers aren't interested in art. It just doesn't pay or something.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: You mean now, still?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: All these years. Now it's been 20ÿyears since we started this, and we cannot get a good criticism.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That's extraordinary.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, there's nobody to give it. There's no one here who knows enough about art to give a really telling criticism. There's now a man on the Willamette Week, I'm told, who has written some very good articles about outstanding shows we had. But he isn't always there and not always available. And really, there's nobody else that I know of.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Although the media does give it enough coverage as far as announcing shows and printing something, but they don't have a true critic.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, they may have a line or two-line notice that there is a show at Reed but they...

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: For Reed in particular?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, Reed. But of course, they again have the problem of not wanting to show things from one college and not from another. So, I understand that. However, I do wish and I hope in time, there will be enough interest in art to force them to. Because if there is an interest, they'll do it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think you're right. We don't really have a qualified art critic. The young man you're talking about is Paul Sutinen, who writes in the Willamette Week, but I don't know that he's really that trained.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, but he has good eye and he also knows something about the background of these shows. He's given us several excellent reviews-- it was when we've had an important show. We've had some quite important shows when you go over the lists of the important artists of the day, but very little publicity. However, we've had a very loyal following and the little group of about 60 to 65 people who help us every year hasn't varied very much. It's been quite wonderful; they've been so loyal.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Would you like it to be bigger than that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, they need the money badly because nowadays-- we started this thing with a budget of $2,000 and we put on a season for $2,000ÿ-- well, now you can't even get a show for $2,000.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Is it true, I think that you had told me before, that most of the shows you get there now, you don't pay for except for the transportation?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Pay for the transportation and insurance. And there's always a chance-- we've several times had pictures sold from the show. People are interested in contemporary art. It seems that it falls between the PCVA, which is the very far-out contemporaries, and the museum.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think I should identify that the PCVA is the Portland Center for Visual Arts. As we know, that is a big, big space.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, a big space, and probably quite well endowed, from the shows they've had, because they've had really important shows. They're very valuable to the town.

And there's the museum, whose only contemporary concerns are pretty well established artists. I felt that there was something in between there that Reed could fill.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Which they've done just beautifully, I think. One thing is the space, which is...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It's better now that we have the Vollum Center, you see. Now they can show things with more security because they were always so worried about fire in that little faculty office lounge.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Although it had that good light.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Beautiful light, and the space was all right, but it was the fire that worried everyone.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: The Vollum Center was created for these shows?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, this is the main room of the Vollum Center, and they use it for dinners and they use it for lectures, and they use it for art shows. It's a very useful, helpful space.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And it has, as you say, very important shows. The one I remember recently, in fact, was the photography show of Eve Arnold, which was a beautiful thing.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: They've had several. They have a photography show on right now-- Burger from San Francisco. Do you know his work?

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I only know it from reproductions.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, they have a nice show of his there now. I haven't seen it there but I'm going to get over there soon.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: But then, you did say you liked to have rather small shows, not try to attempt huge.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, no. Of course, we couldn't afford it to begin with. But sometimes in a small show, you get the essence of the creative feeling of the artist just as well as you do in a big one, and that's all we can aim for at this stage in the game.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So that people who support that-- it's almost like members of a club-- they are the same ones who go on contributing. Who makes the decisions about what shows will be brought?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it's run by the art department of Reed College and one member of the art department-- for a while it was Charles Rhine, who got us some splendid shows. We had a wonderful Jim Dine show; that was a beautiful show. Now it's Greg Ware, who is a sculptor and who teaches sculpture at Reed. He was some very interesting, very exciting ideas.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Do they tend toward contemporary work much more?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, it must be contemporary. We can't afford to grant Old Masters. Which reminds me that Reed also, although it's almost unknown, has an excellent collection. It has a small collection of art and no place to put it. I'm hoping that time will come when they'll find a space both for it as a gallery and as a storage space. Because if they can keep these things together, they know so much better what they have. It's rather impressive, to have about-- oh, I'd say about 180 works of art, of paintings, drawings, sculpture, some photography, and they are all the best contemporary. We have a very discriminating committee and they pick only what they consider to be museum quality in contemporary art.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: How are those pieces bought?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, people give them from time to time. The college has no money to put into it. In fact, they have no money to put into the whole project. But there have been many generous people who have given things from time to time.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And so the committee is made up of the head of the art department plus some of the members of the Arts Associates?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, no. It's a faculty committee. It seemed better to do it that way. We didn't want to get into any problems, all the different kinds of view when you get a real board. It isn't big enough, important enough, to need a board.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, that's interesting to me also to think about this aspect of Reed. Because Reed is not thought of as a fine arts school; it's thought of as a science college, isn't it?
EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, science. I think its main reputation is for excellence in science and also literature and mathematics. But they are not coming into their own. They have some excellent people in the art department and they're trying to develop that to some extent.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Could we say here-- just to clarify something if the people are interested in the history of Reed College, because we've talked about this-- that the stigma has been put on the college by the fact that John Reed, who was brought up in Portland, became a communist? He was a communist. His name has been associated with the college, and the college has suffered from the reputation of being communist, which is absolutely.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It's absolutely not; it's rather a conservative college to tell the truth. But forward looking, they've always been interested in advancement of education.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Very progressive.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It's progressive, yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: But there's no connection between the name John Reed.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: In fact, I don't believe they ever had any faculty members who could really be called communistic.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: At any rate, I think that's something.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That's something they've had to live down all these years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Many people of today still confuse John Reed as being-- the college being named for him.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Absolutely. (laughter) The last thing in the world they wanted.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That may have harmed some of their applications, student enrollment.

Is there anything more about the Art Associates?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, you know we have a new space.

[Break in tape]

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Your interest has been.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: My interest has been in both the collection and the Art Associate shows. I have made it my particular pleasure to collect for them as much as I could because I think for a small liberal college there's nothing like a good art collection to put them on the map.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That reminds me of Lewis and Clark [College--Ed.]ÿ-- I don't know that you have any association with, but they've done just exactly that. I
don't know if they've built a collection up but they've built a place to put it. So that it seems to be in the future.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, they have some very liberal donors.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Yes, and a president who is very actively seeking that.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, if we ever get a building, we'll have a collection all ready to go in. (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I hadn't realized that you had that much.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I wish it were better known because I think we'd get gifts from more people. But of course anyone who offers anything must understand that it has to be accepted by the committee.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: How does one go about letting the public know that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I don't know.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It's difficult isn't it?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes it is. If I knew, I'd be happy to try it. (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think the museum, too, is always wishing they could let people know that certain things are very willingly accepted if you would think about it before.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: So many people have a treasure that they would be happy to leave to a good college, or maybe their college, if they knew about it. I wish we could publicize it more.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: One of the things is I think lawyers could make that known to people-- that in their wills there might be a way of benefiting from doing that. Another thing is that some of the problems of families deciding who should have what could be decided.

I think that to find enough time to do volunteer work and serve on boards as well as being a mother and a wife and..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Mother, yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: ..social, yes, social person, is very, very difficult, if you do a good job of it. I think there are many people who accept positions on boards and then don't do anything.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Don't do anything. Well, I always think that's miserable because they could have had someone in that same seat that really would work.

Well, I was on the old people's home, the Mann Board, for 20ÿyears. I was, let's see, there were several other boards.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Children's homes?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No.
MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Was the Mann Home a state or private?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it was a private home for elderly people of a certain class. They were teachers and ministers and physicians. People who didn't want to go to a public place and wanted to live a dignified life in their old age. It was a very nice home. That was one I enjoyed. But you get stale on a board if you're on too long, I think. I found that out.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: What do you think of this? The people who are asked to serve on boards-- recently I've been noticing that one board in particular that I'm familiar with has been building and building in numbers, and each new person that comes on, it appears to me, is asked to come for the money that can be promised or traded or somehow. Do you think that's the proper way to build a board?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, no. I think the first thing a board member must have is dedication. Unless he cares about it, he isn't going to be any use. Of course a certain amount of money is certainly helpful and there are people who go on with the understanding that they know nothing about the subject but they will be helpful. They like to give money to that particular cause and I think that's legitimate. But the board mustn't be half donors and half artists or whatever. It must be a logical portion of dedicated people.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, what about the artists? Let's say it's an art museum or the Portland Center for Visual Arts. Should there be some representation by the artists?

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think so. I've always felt there should be definite representation of the artists. It's very important. And in a museum's case, the school. I think the school is the vital part of the museum. The living, acting talent of the museum is the school; the rest is just storehouse. And it seems to me that it's very important that that should be represented on the board.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: We didn't really go into the school much or at all, in fact. When you were serving on the board of the museum, was the school, at that time, under the directorship of...first, it was Miss Crocker. After that..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: No, first it was Harry Wentz. Miss Crocker just handled the museum proper and Harry Wentz handled the school for many years. And there were several other people-- Bill Givler-- several other people who were interested in the school.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I think you said also that Miss Crocker was quoted as saying once that you had to have the school because you had to have young people coming in to keep life in the museum.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, she felt that the life of art was in the hands of young people. If they aren't interested, there wouldn't be any in a few years.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Then we have a pretty good record in our art school, having turned out some very fine artists.
MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Some very good artists. I think so too.

And now what about this problem that has arisen, whether we shall continue the school under the auspices...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I don't know and I haven't heard anything about it. I just hope they do continue the school. I'd hate to see it dropped. I think it's a very integral part of the art life of the community, not just the museum.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And it's a very unusual one also, in the West, at least. This is one of the first art schools in the Northwest. And it still is one that's associated with the museum.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: They've always had extremely high quality faculty. I would hate to see it drop; I think it's very important. But they haven't asked me.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: If you were asked to go on the board again, you wouldn't?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, I hope not at 83, no. (laughter)

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think it would be wonderful if you would. Times are difficult; it would be more trying, maybe.

What about the volunteers associated with any of these groups?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it just depends what functions they espouse. After all, if they are interested... Volunteers are very valuable in every organization, whether it's the symphony, or the museum, or anything.

That's another thing. I worked for years with the Junior League handling the library for the Doernbecher Hospital. And that was fun, giving the children the books they enjoyed.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did you just collect books from all sorts of...?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was the county that sent the books; they sent them from the main library in those days, but I don't know what they do now-- it's so much bigger and everything. But in those days, they sent a collection of maybe two or three dozen books from time to time. They were changed and you had a chance to ask for things you wanted; they were wonderful about it. And of course it was such fun taking it to the youngsters.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: How long did you do that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, I don't remember. A good many years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Were you one of the first of the Junior League? Had you come from a Junior League in New York?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No I hadn't. I was selected here. And I never was very active in anything except that one branch.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That again was a very important organization here.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was, and it was an organization that really did things. They sent their volunteers out into hospitals, like this one. And they really did a lot of things. When they gave that up, and started just to give money-- well, then I didn't continue with it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Wasn't one of your good friends Mrs. Corbett, who did start the chapter here?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I think she did. She came from the New York league, when it was very small. I mean the New York league was smaller and the one here was even smaller. She started that and was very active in it for a great many years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Had you known her?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, I hadn't known her until I came out here, but I was devoted to her. She was so charming and so generous in her interests and her friendships.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And her efforts.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, indeed. She was one who first helped me get this Arts Associates started at Reed.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: She continued...

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: She and Catherine Sabin.

[Tape 2; side 1]

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: We would like to talk about the business of art collecting, with the museum perhaps?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I was telling how we got started in collecting by buying a Utrillo when there had been a show of Utrillo at the museum from which they felt it was a great opportunity to buy one for the permanent collection. The committee had decided that there were two that were outstanding in quality and the committee was very torn over the question of which one of the two to purchase. The one they finally decided on is the one they now have in their collection, which they felt was more unusual, more rare-- his style as a young painter rather than his more mature work. However, the one that appealed to me so strongly that I couldn't bear to think of it leaving Portland was the second choice. Though we were a young couple of very moderate means, we made the supreme effort and bought the Utrillo, which has hung over the fireplace for 50ÿyears. We've always loved it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Do you remember what year that was, about?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was in the '30s, around '35 or '36. That started us feeling the joy of having beautiful works of art in our own home, and when we were able, especially when we were traveling abroad, and opportunities were offered, we were able to pick up various things. My collection, so-called, is a very small one, but it does have some nice things, mostly drawings. I was very interested in drawings. We have a Touslouse-Lautrec, Modigliani, and Picasso, and a few things which we treasure very highly.

Collecting is a very strange thing. It can only be done for love. It can't be done with money. The best advice that you can get from agents and galleries and others who are knowledgeable is not enough. You have to really want this and feel that your life is richer with it and would be much poorer without it. Then if you feel that way, you always pay much more than you expect to, but it's worth it. And in the end, you forget the price of it and you remember only the thrill of having it, having it there to see any time of the day or night. The people who buy as an investment are an entirely different group. They are people who approach it from a completely material sense, and undoubtedly, in time you can make money on these things-- but that's a different kind of collector. Usually they are traders. They like to buy things, sell them and get others, and probably benefit somewhat on each purchase. However, that's something that never interested us at all. As I say, we have everything we've ever bought and it's just for the pleasure of having them. As the years go by, they become more valuable but they also become more valuable to you so that it works out very well in the end.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, they become part of you, I think, don't you?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think so, part of your background.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: You know, it reminds me of a discussion I once heard with Edwin Binney who is one of the great collectors, as we know, and has been here a number of times at the art museum to talk about collecting. I remember he said once that if you wanted to get into the business of collecting, you should pick out something that is relatively inexpensive at the time and get into it heavily. He never said anything about whether you really liked it very much. I always thought that was a strange way to start collecting.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I do too. When we started, of course, drawings were not particularly popular. People wanted oil paintings or reproductions if they wanted to go in for just the pleasure of the picture itself. Reproductions are a very good way of learning what you really love most and what you want most to live with. But, drawings now are almost impossible to find-- drawings by any of the well-known painters, who all did drawings in their day. But they're very hard to find and very expensive when you do.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Why is it that they're so hard to find?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Because people didn't collect them and they were destroyed. The artists thought.., you know, there were frequently studies for other work and other things like that and they just let them drift away.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And the dealers weren't interested in collecting them either?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: The dealers didn't care a bit about drawings for many years. In about, I'd say the '50s, they began to feature drawings. Personally, I love drawings because it's the most immediate contact you have with the artist. An oil painting he can go over and over and change it and do many things with it, but a drawing is the thing he did immediately from his first impression. That's why I think it's most revealing of the artists and therefore the most interesting to have.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: His first inspiration, then, before he refines it?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Before he had time to do anything to change it. This was his first impression so it seems

to me you always get a certain freshness, a certain feeling of the spirit of the artist in the drawing, which you don't always get later.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That reminds me of lithographs and serigraphs and so on. What do you think about them? They're doing so many, many posters and issuing a hundred editions or hundreds of one particular thing. Do you think that's going to change the market or the value of the original?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, not too much, because the things that are sought after are the work of the important artists and I don't think that will ever change. If they're important in one medium, they're important in others.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: For instance, you have some drawings of, you said, Picasso, and I've forgotten who you mentioned also. Are these things you've seen other works of in the meantime? Later on, you've seen paintings or further studies?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No. We never were able to go into anything more, but with these things that we've collected from time to time as the opportunity offered. One great opportunity was in Germany in 1930 when inflation was rampant and people went to the grocery store with a wheelbarrow full of bills. At that time, we happened to be in a shop that quite unexpectedly showed us a few pictures, one being a Rembrandt etching which we were able to purchase. And of course that is a real treasure because it's a very good one. They had used that plate and drawn copies off the plate until there was practically nothing left. But the one that we had was one of the first ten off the plate, because it has the collector's stamp, and the collector's stamp is identified for us by the Metropolitan Museum as belonging to an Austrian nobleman in the 17th century-- 18th century perhaps, early 18thÿ-- who only bought things that were the first ten off the plate. That was his distinguishing characteristic. It is a very clear one, easily seen. So that way, of course, if you have your eyes open and are looking for things, you do pick them up from time to time.

It's wise, however, I think, for a young collector to fasten on either a theme or an artist for which they have great enthusiasm, and then go after whatever they want in that line. In the end, he will have a kind of homogenized collection and it will all fit together.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: You think that rather than to pick a little of something here and something else entirely different..?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it just depends how you enjoy it. If you prefer to have a variety, that's good too.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think of the Monsens in Seattle who collected in, as you said, categories. I think first they did a large collection of ceramics, and then-- oh, they had Oriental art first, and then photography.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: But that way, certainly, you can make a very full collection in the medium that you like. Well, what of your categories do you think you enjoy the most?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, I have so few that I enjoy each one of them for its own sake.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: You have some lovely sculptures..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: We have them right out in the room so we can see them at all times.

I wanted to tell you a little about my venture into archaeology. This was in 1922. I had just graduated from college and one of my friends was tremendously interested in archaeology. Professor Peabody of Harvard spent his summers in Europe. He had a second family in Europe, and he used to go every summer. He had taken Harvard students with him. In those days, they were all men of course. He usually took a few with him who were interested in very early French archaeology-- really way back; this is pre-history. So he invited Smith to send some students if they wanted to come. Well, it was a summer when my parents were going to a spa, which didn't interest me at all, and so I was delighted to have an opportunity to do something which intrigued me very much. I joined with this friend. There were four girls and three men and we were in a little French town called Villebois-Lavalette in the Charente, and we were helping Dr. Henri Martin who was the grandson of the man for whom the boulevard is named.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: The Boulevard Martin in Paris?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: In Paris, yes. And he had lost so many of his students; he had quite a group of students but so many had been lost in the war that he had invited Professor Peabody to bring over some American students to help him. Because what we did was actual digging; we really went out and worked. I worked in a group that was working with little combs, pocket combs..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Oh, yes.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: ...to find these tiny bones of rodents, because by identifying the rodents they could place the time of the glacial age when France was covered with a glacier and there was very little human life. Then from there, on his property which he had down there and they used as a summer home, he had found a child's skull. That was the first indication that there had been a human life in that district. He had written a paper on that for which he was invited to the Acade 'mie Francaise, which is a great honor. He was delighted to have some young people come and help him. So we had a wonderful summer there, working, and finding..it's like a treasure hunt because every day you go out and you think you're going to find something wonderful. Sometimes you do. You find very simple implements and very simple, well hardly any shards of pottery or anything like that because it was too early for that.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So they would only be finding little pieces of rodent skeletons or human.?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, bones, human bones, too, and that gave them some idea.. It was fascinating.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did he ever go on to establish the time?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes. There were four glacial periods that were known to have been in France at one time or another. It was the Acheulian, the Mousterian, and the Aurignacian. And the period that we were working on was the Mousterian, and that they thought was something like 30ÿmillion years ago. Well, I may not be accurate on that; it was a long time ago.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, I'm afraid I'm so ignorant on the subject.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: But it was really very interesting. And I was able to make a small collection-- you see, I was collecting them, things which I gave to Smith College from those four periods.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did you think that this might be something you'd be interested in continuing?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, I was fascinated by it. I came back and this friend who I'd gone with, whose name was Ann Axtell, married Earl Morris, who was the discoverer of the Temple of the Warriors in Chiche 'n-Itea ', Mexico. And he and she both have written good books on the subject. But she had this interest in archaeology and they wanted me to come with them the next year to Mexico. But I got married instead. (laughter) Well, that's what happens, I think sometimes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: That is interesting; you probably could easily have gone on with the digs the-- probably would have interested you.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, I think they have. I haven't kept track of what they've done but there have been books published on those diggings since then.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Did Professor Peabody every publish his findings?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I don't know, he might of. If so, they'd be in the Fogg Museum because he worked with the Fogg.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, that's very, very interesting because it's certainly all connected with art.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, it was almost before there was any such thing as.. Afterwards, I was fascinated when we went to Les Eyzies, which is a place where they had underground diggings with simple forms of art-- drawings, wall drawings, cave drawings-- and those, of course, are marvelous.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Tell me about these. Were you allowed to go in without any special permits?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, you see the first work that we did in this very early stuff was on Professor Henri Martin's property. So there was no problem there at all because the more we could find the better he liked it because he could write about it. But later, of course, when they made it a tourist trap, they had rules.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I'm told that in the wall paintings in the caves, it's very difficult to.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: They're hard to see. The first time we went to Les Eyzies, we crawled in on our stomachs to see these drawings and you could only see them by candles which you held as you went in. But now, I understand that most of them have been put into a museum, taken out of the caves, which is kind of too bad. They've lost something there because you had the feeling of how people lived in those days and the fact that even then they wanted something on their walls.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well yes, that's what I was thinking about the discovery of all those early, early civilizations. They were concerned with art as opposed to just survival.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, they apparently did.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: They cared about having or maybe there were other reasons for reproducing themselves in drawings but..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: But they're very beautiful. They're strong and simple lines but great strength and great power in some of them. They were beautiful.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: They showed their life with the animals and the hunt and the ways of cooking. But I think, as you say, it must have been for enjoyment.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That was later. Then I went back the following year with a group that went with Professor Hdlicka who was a Czech who had come to this country and who became head of the department of anthropology at Johns Hopkins. He again wanted some students to take and show things to and he took a group of six with him one summer. We had a really interesting experience. He took us back to his native Cxechoslovakia. This was the period after the war [World War I--Ed.], you see, and Benes was the leader, the president, and he had a little group surrounding him who were extremely intelligent and interested men who wanted to build a kind of United States of Czechoslovakia. They picked our brains. They were just delighted to have college students come and tell them about the curriculum at the colleges, about things that were important in our lives as students. I was very happy because we enjoyed meeting them-- they were such delightful people. And they got something out of it. Of course, Benes was a wonderful man. He was the early president; he was followed by Maseryk.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So this was before they were divided; they were still independent.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh yes, they were very independent and so eager to build up a fine republic of their own.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Were you there on a dig?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, not there. There we went just to study the things that had been brought forth and that were interesting and important in archaeology. They have a fine museum in Prague. Also, there was a friend of Professor Hdlicka's in Belgium and when we went to Brussels, he took us around and showed us his museum, which again was a very outstanding one. It has wonderful things there. It was a fascinating thing and I often wish I could have gone on with it because it was so exciting and so.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It would be, wouldn't it, especially if you think each day you're going to discover the great finds.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, Edith, you mentioned buying some of your art while you were traveling in Europe. Would you say that you were more drawn to French, German..?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I think French because my ancestry is French and the Utrillo, for example, I'm sure my grandfather came from a little town that was much like that. I don't know, somehow or other, it always intrigued me most. Most of our things are French.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: From the impressionist period?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Post-impressionist.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, we were talking about the shows that the associates at Reed have put on and those are all contemporary.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: They're contemporary. Today, not only because the costs of things are so prohibitive, but also because when I first started the Art Associates, when I went on that board, I realized that there was very little emphasis put on art. Reed was more scientifically oriented and they hadn't really gone very far. Dick Sullivan was president at the time and I told him I felt that we needed something of that kind. He said, "Go ahead." So we started on the first season-- didn't I tell you this?

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Yes, we did talk about some of this. But I was wondering if you ever met some of the artists, because all of those shows were of contemporary artists. Did you ever have any association with the artists themselves?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I frequently met them because quite often, among these contemporary painters and sculptors, they liked to come with their shows and to introduce them. I've always been very interested in the artists themselves because that's the basis of their works. We've been fortunate in being able to show some very good ones. But, nowadays, it's really big museums that have to handle the older things.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, I think that sometimes people are carried away by an artist, let's say a living artist, I'm talking about now, and you can be very swayed by the personality of the artist before you make up your mind about the value of the art.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, that's true.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: We've had some shows at our museum, I think-- at least I feel that way about them.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It's hard to communicate. After all, art is communication. It's an artist trying to say everything he can, more than he can put into words, and that's his way of expressing it. Sometimes it's hard to follow him. They can be very difficult. I find a great deal of the modern art rather difficult to follow. And still, once in a while, you can really see through to the..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think you're absolutely right, but I wonder why it is. Because artists always, painters of the post-impressionist time were also trying to express themselves without words. The same thing is true today and yet, we have a harder time understanding. I think everyone does. These painters, let's say, the pop art painters or the minimalists, why do we have a harder time than we did before? They're still expressing themselves.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, you grew up with the others. You saw them from the time you were young and you understood them. You knew what to look for. Whereas the things that are being done today, you come to unprepared. I think that's really the secret of it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Familiarity, you mean.. Well, someone said this about the opera. We've never really talked about opera here in your background, connected with the symphony. I was going to say of that opening, brand new opera, which premiered in Portland recently, Wuthering Heights-- the comment was made of course that no one has ever heard it before, no one is familiar with the music, so you don't know yet whether you like it or not. Most music you like or don't like, depending upon whether you're familiar with it.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I think that's very true. The familiar things are always the most popular. But, I didn't see Wuthering Heights. I understand it was very nice, beautifully done. I was told it was lovely.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Do you think that's true for the symphony, for instance, if they're playing new work versus old work?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It seems to me that we owe the artists of any kind-- music or whatever, opera-- a hearing. After all, the people in Wagner's time had a hard time with him first. Many of them didn't like him, but they learned to and I think the same would happen with us. I'm sure
that some of the contemporary things that I've heard more than once, I enjoy very much more than the first time.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Think how the audiences used to, way, way back, they would boo and hiss if they didn't like the composer's..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Exactly. At least nowadays, we accept them more peacefully. But, it just seems to me that a great deal of it comes from familiarity. We hear it a few times, we begin to see things in it that we hadn't seen before, heard before, either way.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Well, yes, in painting.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: The same thing is true with painting.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think so. And some of the very contemporary sculpture, for instance, maybe you can explain to me about some of the sculpture that is so, I don't know whether to say minimal or modern, but that it's just really lines. It's suggestive. How do you evaluate that? Is it your just instinctive feeling?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think so. I think there's a great deal of your natural sensitivity to what the artist was trying to do-- it either comes through or it doesn't.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: For instance, I believe that's a Bruce West over there?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Bruce West, yes.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: How did you happen to acquire that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, I got that through the Art Advocates. They gave him a year. You know the Art Advocates tries to give an artist a full year free of financial worries.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Could you describe the Art Advocates just a little?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, surely. It was a group of people. First they were the pupils of Manuel Izquierdo who did this one. They wanted to give to him, because he was sp pressed by financial worries that he didn't have time or he wasn't able to give his full efforts to his work. So his pupils decided that they would raise the money and give him a year free. And from that, they decided if they did it for him, it would be nice to do it for others. So they've been doing it for, oh I should think, 15ÿor 18ÿyears, and giving different artists-- now that was a Bruce West-- then if you subscribed the amount of money that is required to give him this free time, you got a piece of his work at the end.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Each of the members of the Art Advocates would get a piece of his work?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, usually. They made an effort to see that everyone got something.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think that was a marvelous idea.
EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Sometimes you didn't take it, some that were either too large, that you had no place for them or you didn't like them or want them around. But usually, the people who wanted them got a piece of the work of the artist.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Absolutely wonderful idea.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think it is too. I think it's a good idea. I wish they'd continued it. They still are going but to a much lesser degree.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: You mean they do it less often or less money?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Much less money and they don't choose artists who give their whole year to it-- just choose people who do it on the side.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Do you know who it was that began that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, I don't.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I don't either. I know it's a group of maybe 20 or so people. Or is it more?

[Tape 2; side 2]

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Excuse me, let me put the question again.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: You ask the question and then I can tell you a little about it. Then after I've said that, ask me something about the art committee at the museum and I can simply say that I've worked on it and enjoyed it and something like that. Then maybe we can draw it to a close, and say this is about all I have to contribute.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: To finish up what we were saying about the Art Advocates, you did say that they have really cut down their activities to a great extent so that they're not doing as much now but they are still sponsoring some artists, you think. Do you remember some of the ones they've sponsored in the past?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I do. There have been quite a few. It began, of course, with Manuel Izquierdo, and we also sponsored Bruce West and Tom Hardy and Al Goldsby.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Was this when Tom Hardy, who is now a very, very well known sculptor, was beginning?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, it was some years ago when he was not as well known that they gave him a year. At the moment, I can't think of the others but there were some every year for a good many years.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It would be a tremendous boost to somebody's career.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: It was a great help to the artists and it was well worth doing. It was written up in the Wall Street Journal and I was hoping that other cities would adopt the idea. It really is a helpful idea both to help encourage the collectors as well as to help encourage the artists.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Something like that was suggested by the director-- I've forgotten his name-- of the San Francisco museum, who suggested that the state provide a grant or an arena to show their work for the very

beginning artists, because when they first graduate from school, there's no place for them to go. This is a comparable idea. But Al Goldsby now has achieved a great name.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, he's done some beautiful things, and of course, Tom Hardy is known from coast to coast. He has a great reputation.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And Izquierdo, I noticed has a show right now at the Fountain Gallery.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes. A beautiful show, by the way-- stunning.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I just saw it. It's quite different work.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, very different. He's gone in for lithographs, very handsome, very Spanish.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Very. Yes, I thought so too. The metal on his sculptures is different-- it seems to me it's polished now.

Do you think the taste or trends, let's say, in art is determined by the economy, the state of the world or what's being taught in the art schools? Why is it that we go into a period of pop art or something?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, just a guess, because I really don't know. It's one of those things that no one can really tell what does it. I think it's the talent of the individual artist. I think talent springs up from the least expected sources sometimes and can be found in various places in various ways. And that is the thing that art trends will follow.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: So it's the artist himself or whatever he has to say..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think so.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: ..rather than what's going on in the world?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, because usually the artist, they say, is 20ÿyears ahead of the public and that's very true because many times you've seen the public catch up with a type of art that they had turned down radically at first. And in 20ÿyears, they've come to appreciate it.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And the same with music.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes indeed, exactly the same with music.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It's extraordinary some of the music we accept so easily today that was shocking..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, some I remember disliking intensely. Hindemith for example, whom I'm now very fond of. At first, I didn't enjoy it at all.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It does take some familiarity.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes indeed.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: What do you think about the Moog music, electronics?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Well, that's something I'll have to grow up to. (laughter) If I have time, I think maybe I'll enjoy it in the end because it does reflect moods. But I find it hard to have my mood coordinated by a machine.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I certainly agree; I find it very disconcerting to listen to. But, as you say, we'll probably learn to.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: We probably will in time.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: One other thing I was just thinking of when you said the artist who has talent will come out, express himself.. A controversy that we've had in our family for many years has been if a person is talented, has a real gift, whether it's for music or art or some other field, do you think it will come out whether it's nurtured or not? Do you think it depends a lot on how carefully the family trains and nurtures that?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think it's a very individual matter, not only for the artist but for his family; and sometimes a school will be a great help and other times a school can ruin an artist, absolutely. So that these things-- there are no general rules that can be made for anything in the world or art. That's what makes it so fascinating.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: And the genius, probably, will do something whether he's taught..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, a really great talent can be recognized and used. But even that, I think, can sometimes be overlooked. My 50ÿyears on the art committee has been a great education to me. I've learned so much.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: This is the art museum?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: At the museum, yes. And that has proved to me that art movements come and go and usually there's a leader that makes it either come or go.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Would the leader be a dealer maybe?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Sometimes. I think some of the great dealers have had a tremendous influence. For instance, Van Gogh depended very largely on his-- oh, I've forgotten his name now. He was a great Paris dealer who recognized him, way ahead of the rest of the world, and really brought him out. Either a great patron or a great dealer or a great educator can bring art out into the world, where it wouldn't be otherwise.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Yes, and someone like the man from New York who was here recently who brought Andy Warhol..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Castelli. He has been a great influence with the very far out, what seemed like very far out to us now, artists. But at the same time, I really don't know how great his influence was. That again is a very personal matter. In fact I must say, to end it-- because I've told you about all I know about the art scene in Portland-- art is more than almost anything else an individual assessment, a philosophy, an adventure and probably more than anything else, a joy..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: To the people involved.

That's a very nice ending and I thank you very, very much for all you've had to say.

[The tape did not end. After a loud buzzing sound, it continued with these afterthoughts:]

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: C. S. Price?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Has all the strength and power and beauty of the Old West. I felt that he really expressed it better than any other painter that we have here.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Yet his reputation hasn't grown outside of Oregon, do you think?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That I don't know. I'm not sufficiently familiar with other museums..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It seems to me like Graves..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: ..but he [Price--Ed.] didn't paint a great deal. He painted, I was told, very slowly and the only time that he painted to any great extent was when he was working for the WPA and that was during the Depression. He was one of the painters who received help from the WPA, and at that time he turned out quite a lot of very beautiful work. But before and after that, I don't think he worked awfully hard. No, he worked very slowly. There isn't too much of his stuff available.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: No it seems not. There were a few people who were wise enough to buy some..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, I should say, because they were bought for so little. He didn't want very much, he didn't need very much, and people who were wise..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: He wasn't seeking a big reputation; he wasn't after fame.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, not at all.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It strikes me as true of someone like, for instance, Amanda Snyder, who I understand is also very private. She doesn't go after selling her work or showing it even.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh, yes, she showed at galleries. I think she had a show at the museum once. But I think she is in the same class as Heaney [Charles--Ed.].

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Not exactly the very top.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: But I think some of the Northwest artists that are, like Graves from Washington, and Tobey, haven't really a national reputation.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Oh they, I think, reached the top. I think both of them did magnificent work. It was recognized all over this country and other countries. Tobey, you know, was given the retrospective show at the Louvre in Paris and Graves, of course, painted in quite a different vein. But he was well recognized. He was represented at the Metropolitan in New York and he has had shows abroad too, I believe.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Is that true for any Oregon artist that you know? Have we had any who've been shown in the East?

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: No, I don't know of any.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I really don't know either. Perhaps Carl Morris..

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Carl Morris comes as close to it as any..

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: ..who I think is a very great painter.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think so too. I love his work. It's, to me, very exciting. I think it's very beautiful.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I think it is. . .very vibrant, lyrical almost. I think he has had shows in New York. We must have others, but it seems Oregon is a little bit behind when the West Coast painters are represented.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I think that's true. We haven't the painters they have in California, for example. They have some very top ranked people there, but I think Morris is probably as near that level as anyone I can think of.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Maybe Tom Hardy has had some shows. I don't know.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, but his work is variable. Some of it's very good and some of it isn't.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: It makes me wonder, you know. The museum school, the art school, with all the discussion that's going on now, about whether it should remain at the museum. We've turned out good artists, I think, at that school. But they seem to stay here and teach.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: That's true.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Louis Bounce, I suppose, is one who has a New York following.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Very small one, I think. I don't think his reputation is very great outside of Oregon. Personally, I like Sally Haley. I think she's a splendid artist. I like her work immensely.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: Yes, and she's still painting.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: I haven't seen her work lately.

MARIAN W. KOLISCH: I saw some at the Fountain Gallery just today.

EDITH FELDENHEIMER: Yes, they handle her work and it's very nice.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Last updated... September 19, 2002