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Oral history interview with Dorothy Malone, 1983 Jan. 27

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Dorothy Malone on January 27, 1983. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Suzanne Ragen for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

SUZANNE RAGEN: This is an interview with Dorothy Malone on January 27, 1983. We're meeting in the Seattle Art Museum, which is very appropriate because the Seattle Art Museum is about to have its fiftieth anniversary, having opened in June of 1933. And, Dottie, there are three areas, particularly, that I would like to cover with you: one is the early years-- really the history-- of the museum, and your association with Dr.Fuller, and with any Northwest artist that you and he, or you alone, may have had contacts with during those years. Could we begin with your biography-- where you were born, your education?

DOROTHY MALONE: I was born in Everett; I went through grade school in Everett, high school in Seattle. I went one year at the University of Washington 'til my money ran out and then I was married, so I never went back to the university. I had had no art training. My father was a minister, so I was a P.K., a preacher's kid.

SUZANNE RAGEN: All right. How did you come to be associated with the museum?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, that's sort of an interesting story. I met Coe, my husband, after he was out of the University of Washington. He was the "fraternity man," so when we started going together, I met his little group of brothers in the fraternity and the girls that they were going with. At that time, there were, oh, probably six couples that used to do a lot of things together. The wives were all congenial; the husbands were all congenial. And we kept up that association for many years. After Coe and I were married, I think we started the Depression-- I'm not quite sure, but anyway-- he lost his job and we had a little difficult time. It was very hard for a man to get a job. And I wasn't sure whether I could get a job or not. I had worked before my marriage at the Seattle Credit Bureau and then I was asked to go to a finance committee-- I mean a finance company-- whose account I had handled at the credit bureau.

SUZANNE RAGEN: So you had- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: So I had a little bit of that. I had quite a bit of telephoning; the reason I was hired by the finance company was they liked my voice on the phone because our communication was all by phone. Anyway, I left the finance company when I was married. So after we'd been married about two years, we were really having a tough time because he'd lost his job and he couldn't seem to find anything. At that time, Evelyn Foster, the wife of Al Foster, was working part time as a secretary at the old Art Institute of Seattle in the Henry home and we had become very good friends because our husbands were fraternity brothers and friends. She was working part time and going to the university. So, when Dr. Fuller became president of the Art Institute of Seattle-- and then his father died, and he and his mother came into this inheritance and they conceived the idea of a twofold sort of a thing, or a threefold sort of a thing: a place to house their growing collection that they had in the home, principally Oriental art; a chance to give the people in the area jobs because unemployment was very high; and a chance to use Northwest products in the building of the building. Anyway, he and his mother offered to the Art Institute of Seattle a sum of $250,000 if the Art Institute of Seattle could persuade the city to give a location and to maintain the physical aspects of the building, they would give the money to build it. And that is what happened. So, the lease was up on the old Henry home; the building was not yet built in Volunteer Park. So they went downtown to the Henry Building's office space.

Evelyn Foster by that time was through with the university and was working full time. So she was the secretary then. And the staff at that time consisted of Dr. Fuller, who received no salary ever, Kenneth Callahan, and Evelyn Foster. I didn't go down there until-- somewhere it's stuck in the back of my head it was in February of '33-- but I'm not quite so sure that it was maybe that early. It might not have been until April.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And the museum was being built.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes, the museum was being built. Evelyn was charged with the responsibiltiy of getting what other people they would have to have when they moved into this building.

SUZANNE RAGEN: For staff.

DOROTHY MALONE: For staff. Which meant that they had to have somebody at the information desk-- at that time it was upstairs inthe main lobby-- and to answer phones. She knew I needed a job and was looking for one,

and she persuaded Dr. Fuller that I should be hired. That's how it came about.

SUZANNE RAGEN: I see.

DOROTHY MALONE: And I started before the building was actually opened. We moved up into this building in May and were busy, oh, getting the books in the library, getting the slides in the slide library, getting things installed upstairs, getting things put in storage, and all that sort of thing.

SUZANNE RAGEN: What can you tell about Dr. Fuller and his mother's collection? How did their interest in Far Eastern objects come about?

DOROTHY MALONE: They went in 1919, I think it was, on a trip to the Orient. That was probably when they started quite a bit of their serious collecting. She had had an interest earlier in small things-- Chinese jade, snuff bottles, that sort of thing. And in their early life, the Fuller family-- now that would have been Mrs. Fuller, Sr., Jonathan [Duncan--corrected by DOROTHY MALONE], Eugenia, and Richard. The three children. They alternated their summer vacation, you might say, between a trip to Europe or someplace and a trip to Victoria, where they had relatives on Mrs. Fuller's side.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The MacTavish side.

DOROTHY MALONE: The MacTavish side. And it was I think in their trips to Europe and other places that they became interested in things like this.

SUZANNE RAGEN: In collecting.

DOROTHY MALONE: Right, in collecting. They went on a trip early on around the world. Mrs. Fuller had done quite a bit of traveling before she and Eugene Fuller were married.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And he was a doctor.

DOROTHY MALONE: He was a doctor, apparently a very well-known urologist. He was also very astute in investing. And he was great on General Motors.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh, good choice.

DOROTHY MALONE: In those days.

SUZANNE RAGEN: In Dr. Fuller's memoirs he say at one point that his father, although he approved of the collection and made it possible, was never an active collector himself.

DOROTHY MALONE: No, it was Mrs. Fuller and really the children. And Dr. Fuller became particularly interested in jade when they were on the trip to the Orient and he had acute appendicitis.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That was in 1919.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. And Duncan performed surgery on him with the help of their father.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Duncan, his brother [Dr. Richard Fuller's brother--Ed.].

DOROTHY MALONE: Duncan, his brother. And Duncan is really the one who was instrumental, I think, in bringing him down to Seattle from Victoria where they had intended to retire when Eugene Fuller retired from the medical profession in New York. But Duncan had come down here and was in practice as a doctor in Seattle, and he suggested that Dr. Fuller come down here and go to the university and go on with his career in geology. And Eugene- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: He had a degree from Yale in geology, right? And came here to work for his Ph.D. at the University of Washington.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. Eugenia, through Carl Gould I guess it was, taught in the School of Architecture over at the University of Washington. And she and a friend of hers, Ruth Jones of Victoria, one summer, one year, I'm not sure, went to Europe where she took slides for this, a log of historical, architecturally fine buildings in Europe to build up the collection at the university.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Of slides.

DOROTHY MALONE: In their architecture department.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And she is now Mrs. Eugenia Atwood of Philadelphia.

DOROTHY MALONE: Uh huh.

SUZANNE RAGEN: This trip in 1919 seemed to be very important. It seemed almost a turning point in his life.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes, it's a turning point. It certainly got him very involved in Oriental art since he had a lot of time recuperating from his appendectomy, because then, I think, as you probably remember, he was terribly ill because of the chloroform.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The anesthetic?

DOROTHY MALONE: Something or other. And so they spent quite a length of time in Japan because he was recovering and he spent a lot of time- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: Three or four months.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah, studying about jade. And that was also when Duncan became interested in the netsukes and the folk tales of the netsukes. The collection in the museum-- and we have quite a large collection, though unfortunately nobody every sees them anymore-- is named for him.

SUZANNE RAGEN: I see. And they started card cataloging by then.

DOROTHY MALONE: Mrs. Fuller, yes. Mrs. Fuller was very good at that, apparently from way back. She kept, in her own little handwriting, catalog cards on the items that they had at home.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Did she have some advice or some instruction about this or was she- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: I don't really know how that started or whether she was just- - - I think she was just a methodical person because when her husband started in practice in New York, they bought a great big old house, and, as was the custom apparently in those days, his office was in the house. So she not only raised a family, kept the house, but she did his books and all that sort of thing. So I think she had a very methodical, well-organized mind, and I think that she probably just did it herself. When all that was turned over to the museum, and the collection came from the house to the museum, the family got, as far as I know, a professional to come in and catalog them as what they considered proper.

SUZANNE RAGEN: I see.

DOROTHY MALONE: His name was Cate-- C-A-T-E-- and I'm trying to think of what his first name is.

SUZANNE RAGEN: T. Harding Cate.

DOROTHY MALONE: T. Harding Cate, yeah.

SUZANNE RAGEN: What can you say about the opening of the museum? Was it June20- - -?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, there were really two openings and I've been trying to figure that one out myself. I'm a little confused, I think, because according to our records, the 28th of June in the evening was a members' preview which was before the public dedication the night after-- which would be the 29th. We just saw this morning, in a meeting of the Fiftieth Anniversary Committee, an old, old film taken at that time called Cornerstone. It shows the building in the process of being built, and all the dignitaries. But you can hardly make out who they are, of course-- it's sort of dark and it's pretty old. And the ceremonies were in the band shell which used to be in the hollow down by the reservoir. That's where the formal ceremonies took place with the mayor, president of the art board, and the president of our board, and people like that. And then they all walked across and over to the museum proper. But I'm sorry to say that I just don't remember too awful much about this.

SUZANNE RAGEN: There were four major institutions then. This was the fourth following the Cornish Institute, the Henry Gallery, and the University of Washington. This art museum was like the fourth major center.

DOROTHY MALONE: The Henry Gallery was built, you see-- I don't remember that one now.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The Henry Gallery-- 1926. Cornish was 1914, and the UW- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Cornish would have been the oldest one, yeah.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And the UW was 1918. I mean as far as the art department. Then the Seattle Art Museum was 1933. So by then, that was a very well-established network of institutions in the city. Dottie, I want to know more

about Dr. Fuller's style. He calls himself a "benevolent dictator." And he says, "For an amateur in the field of art, I have served as president and director and, with the assistance of my mother, the principal donor. I have been literally the accesssions committee, for after an initial meeting in 1933 that resulted in the acceptance of some insignificant items-- I wished to reject [items] as politely as possible-- it was never called again." Now that's an unusual style for a public institution.

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, you must remember that I think it's quite unique-- it was in his time-- quite unique to have someone give a museum to a city, run the museum, really have complete say over it, and finance it, which is what Dr. Fuller did in those early years. And he made no bones of the fact that he wasn't a professional and, basically, none of the people that were on the staff in those early days was what you would call a professional in the museum field. We did have a librarian who graduated from the University of Washington librarian school, so she was a professional in her field, but certainly Edith Young, Evelyn Foster, Kenneth Callahan and I weren't what you would call professionals. Nor was Dr. Fuller-- and he would be the first to say that was so, because geology was his field. He had what you would say was an instinctive good mind, a good eye and a photographic mind. He could remember where he got almost everything in the collection, when he got it, and what he paid for it. He had a wonderful association with dealers because he could say right then, "I will buy this." He didn't have to take it back- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: To an accessions committee- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: To a committee. Sometimes it takes several years for that to happen. Therefore, he was able to get things for much less than other museums might get them because they knew, the dealers knew, that if Dick Fuller said he would pay for it by such-and-such a time, he would pay for it by such-and-such a time. And- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: He could decide instantly.

DOROTHY MALONE: He could decide instantly. He was accountable to himself; and as he said, he didn't want to bother with an accessions committee. And I don't think that's ever happened-- not that I've heard of, anyway-- in other institutions. But, he'd been brought up and been exposed to good things all his life. And I'm sure that, wherever they went, they spent a good deal of time in museums. And as he grew up, he didn't really have what you'd call a hobby. His hobby was improving his mind. Reading. At one time he was very interested in horses, and he did ride a good deal. And he and several well-known men in town did have a young race horse at one time. He read a good deal. He liked to do things with his hands, too. And he was happy as a clam when something that had been damaged came to him to repair it. He was very good at that. He'd sit at-- there's a big central table out in the museum basement; I don't know, it's sort of a work table-- sit on a stool. He had magnifying glasses that he wore which extended from his regular glasses, and he had dental tools; that is what he used. And he'd sit out there and just hum away as happy as a clam.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Had the best time- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Mending. And he did a remarkably good job of it. But that was mental relaxation for him, I think. You know, he would just be completely absorbed in it.

SUZANNE RAGEN: As I understand the finances, his parents really lived on Margaret MacTavish Fuller's inheritance and he [Dr. Fuller, Sr.--Ed.] was free to invest his money.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And then, when he died, they were left-- the mother and, I think by then, just two children- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes.

SUZANNE RAGEN: - - -with enough money to be able to donate $250,000.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And began purchasing, which was a fortunate arrangement. What about Kenneth Callahan? How did he come to be associated with the museum right from the beginning and what was his role? I know he was curator for twenty years-- '33 to '53.

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, he came on the scene really before I did and so I'm just not too clear, except that he was a struggling young writer and I would assume that his path and Dr. Fuller's path had crossed in some way. Kenneth had a younger brother who he was a bit responsible for-- and whether this was before he and Margaret Bundy were married or not I'm not quite sure. If I remember right his brother was considerably younger than Kenneth.

SUZANNE RAGEN: So he needed to raise him.

DOROTHY MALONE: He had to raise him. And I don't know whether the name Horton Force means anything to you or not, but anyway the Forces were connected with the museum in the early, early days, and I think even went back to the Art Institute; Horton Force was a lawyer and was secretary of the museum in the early years fora long, long time. They had a daughter-- an only child-- and they thought it would be nice if she had a friend her own age. So they sort of adopted Kenneth's younger brother. And he lived, and was brought up, to a certain extent, by the Forces. Now, when that really came to pass, I'm just not quite sure. But I think that somehow or other Dr. Fuller's path and Kenneth's path came to cross somewhere in there, and I just am not familiar with it. But I know that Dr. Fuller was very supportive of the local artists, and Ken was doing longshore work, I guess. Worked on ships. And so, some of his early work was murals of people on the waterfront-- the ship workers- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: I think he did some WPA work.

DOROTHY MALONE: Some WPA, yes; well those dollars were good. But that would have been a little after he became associated with-- no it couldn't either. He would have done that before he started with the museum I think. Anyway, he apparently was given a job by Dr. Fuller and he was going to be sort of "keeper of the collection" you might say, helping install shows, packing and- - -

[Break in tape]

SUZANNE RAGEN: We were talking about Kenneth Callahan. Could you tell us something about what his role was at the museum for those twenty years?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, originally he was responsible for shipments that came in when we were having traveling shows, something like that. He would do the arranging of objects in an exhibition. But Dr. Fuller was the one who would have the final say as to whether that arrangement was right or whether he wanted it changed. Dr. Fuller, in those early days, did a great deal of installation in the actual placing of objects; then Kenneth and generally one or two other people-- artists that were hired on a part-time basis to sort of spread the work around and give more artists work would help in the actual hanging, the physical work of hanging paintings or arranging cases and that sort of stuff. He also wrote for many years a weekly column in the Times.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Callahan did.

DOROTHY MALONE: Mostly about exhibitions at the museum, but he used to cover other arts events too. He wasn't an awfully good lecturer at that time, so he didn't really do anything like that. He did try to catalog, to a certain extent, things as they came into the collection. But, here again, his knowledge, particularly of Oriental work, didn't go too far, so that he would have the information that came from the dealer or that Dr. Fuller gave him, but some of the important things like where it came from, how much it cost, the dimensions, the media, and all that sort of thing, he would put on the catalog cards. But he did start. So, at one time we had Mrs. Fuller's catalog cards, we had Kenneth Callahan's catalog cards, and then our first registrar was Emily Tupper. So we eventually had hers. We've had sort of a series of catalog cards in here. Now I think they're all sort of combined into one and the system has been changed, which I guess is natural after many years. But what else did he do?

SUZANNE RAGEN: Well, in the first year the museum was opened I read that he had certain galleries reserved for the Oriental collection, but then there were one-month shows that turned over constantly. And it says that in the first year in 1933, there were 37 changing exhibits-- often featuring Northwest artists-- which is just incredible.

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, we had originally in the north end a small gallery which is now part of the Kress Collection. That was called a one-man show. And so we had the Northwest artist one-man shows. And most of our shows ran for a month. Then we would have-- because in the early days we neither had the funds nor did we have the collections, Dr. Fuller got a large collection of what we call facsimiles, which were really exact.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Reproductions.

DOROTHY MALONE: They were awfully good. Most of them were from Braun & Company in Europe. He had them framed by the Pacific Picture Frame Company and they were put on a board and they were given a coating of some sort and framed nicely so that they really were terribly good reproductions. We used those an awful lot in our galleries, making no bones about the fact that they were reproductions. But, for the benefit of students who could not see the originals it was a good educational exhibit. Then we got what you might call lightweight traveling shows-- could be photographs, watercolors, mounted things, etc., from College Art Association and the American Federation of Arts. And there were Guy Anderson, Morris Graves, Jacob Elshin and Clifford Wright, who worked at the museum on sort of a one-week-on, two-weeks-off or something like that, for quite a number of years during the Depression. So that there was always more than just Kenneth around.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And this was Dr. Fuller's way of giving financial support to the artists-- not just buying their paintings.

DOROTHY MALONE: Not just buying-- which he also did, of course-- but also it gave them a meager livelihood and they could still continue to do their painting or whatever.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That's something that really interests me about Dr. Fuller-- the support that he gave early on to these artists.

DOROTHY MALONE: Very early on, yeah.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Maybe it was the combination of the Depression and of his generous feelings of support.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes, and he was a terribly kind person. It wasn't just the artists that he supported, either. There were lots of people that he contributed to on a regular basis.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That first year, in 1933, what I think is the Nineteenth Northwest Annual was held up here and Morris Graves- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Moor Swan- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: Had the Moor Swan and- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Caused quite a furor.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Did it? That's what I'm wondering. Do you remember what the reaction was?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, I think I remember more about the reaction to Tobey's Modal Tides that was- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: In that same show?

DOROTHY MALONE: That I'm not just quite sure about. I don't know whether he had anything in that. It was later. Well it was pretty, how shall we say- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: Controversial?

DOROTHY MALONE: Controversial. At least it wasn't anything they could turn upside down-- which is what they did to Tobey's, of course. And you know, how could you tell what was up and what was down?

SUZANNE RAGEN: There are no provisions to add onto this building?

DOROTHY MALONE: You can't go up and the board and people on the staff seem to think that the neighborhood and the city fathers don't want us to go out. I still think that there could be some equitable, happy solution. I think one reason that the city probably doesn't want us to go out is that it would be more building for them to maintain. As far as some of the property, I mean some of the place up here, it's not really used. And what about underground?

SUZANNE RAGEN: We're sitting half underground right now.

DOROTHY MALONE: So, I don't know. That's just my personal feeling; I would like to stay in the park. But everyone keeps saying that this building will not be abandoned. It would stay.

SUZANNE RAGEN: To hold Oriental art or something like that. Let me ask you another question, Dottie. There's often talk about a "Northwest School," especially flourishing in the '40s and '50s. Do you have any feelings about that, any thoughts?

DOROTHY MALONE: Everybody talks about it and I suppose that the artists were painting in muted colors, which is the color of our environment. That's the only connection I could see with the Northwest School.

SUZANNE RAGEN: I have a list of artists that I thought I would just ask you to look over and see if you have any thoughts about their relationship to the museum or to you or to Dr. Fuller.

DOROTHY MALONE: Willing Cumming, he was certainly very visible around the museum in the early days. I'm trying to think whether he actually worked on the staff.

SUZANNE RAGEN: William Cumming?

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah. I'm not quite sure. His son is the guard here. Jacob, of course, worked at the museum.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Jacob Elshin?

DOROTHY MALONE: Jacob Elshin. Richard Gilkey had an association for a long time. Boyer Gonzales-- when the School of Art was looking for a new head of the art department, they were awfully good about bringing over likely candidates to meet Dr. Fuller and to have him take them through the museum and gauge his reaction to them and their reaction to the museum. So Boyer and Dr. Fuller seemed to have hit if off and they were good friends, certainly. And Paul Horiuchi, of course, goes way, way back.

SUZANNE RAGEN: In what way?

DOROTHY MALONE: His father had a shop and I think did a certain amoung of restoration in his own shop.

SUZANNE RAGEN: For the museum?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, I don't know that he did it for the museum, but we could refer people to him to do that sort of thing.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh, I see.

DOROTHY MALONE: And of course Walter Isaacs we'd call up at the UW Art Department in presenting lectures. William Ivey, I don't know. I know he's been a name for a long time and I know he's worked, but I don't know him personally. And Alden Mason, of course, because of his position at the university. But again, I don't know him personally. Of course Neil is on our staff.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Neil Meitzler.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. And he was absolutely devoted to Dr. Fuller and he left when Dr. Fuller stepped down, I guess. He didn't like the way things were changing. The Fullers have one of his beautiful paintings-- rocks and waterfalls. He's just a dear, sweet person. He [Fuller] was very fond of Neil. We still correspond. He's living in Georgia, I guess it is. Spencer Moseley I don't really know too well at all except for his position at the university. And of course Ambrose Patterson was an old, old timer. He was a good friend not only of the museum but of the Fullers. And he did teach one of the classes here early on.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The children's classes.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah. And of course Mark Tobey-- now I never really knew Mark Tobey personally. He didn't come to the museum an awful lot. And when he did, he certainly wasn't interested in talking to me. But a good friend of the Fullers and they certainly supported him. And Philip McCracken. I'm trying to think whether it was Betty Bowen who was instrumental in our knowing Philip McCracken and Richard Gilkey.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That could be Betty Bowen.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah, and of course George Tsutakawa I suppose you'd say he's the leading Asian artist in the area and has been on our board now for quite a number of years. And his wife has been and is very involved in the Asian Arts Council.

SUZANNE RAGEN: What about Morris Graves?

DOROTHY MALONE: He was a very kind and thoughtful young fellow. A lot of people thought he was eccentric and he probably was, like coming to a preview with a tux and tennis shoes. And I know that when he was working here one day, Dr. Fuller said to him, "Morris, if you're going to continue to work here, you're going to have to shave your beard. I can't have you startling people when you open the back door." He did look a little bit like Jesus Christ to me with his beard. But he was always very kind and considerate and even after he moved down to Norman [meant Loleta--Ed.], California, and built the house he has down there, he would come up on a regular basis to visit his mother as long as she was living, and he always made a point of either seeing the Fullers in their home or coming up here to see Dr. Fuller at the museum. And when Mrs. Frederick was living, of course, she was a good sponsor of his, and helped him quite a bit by collecting his paintings. But he was very thoughtful and considerate to go up and see her. Really a very kind, gentle person, as so many of these artists are-- Richard Gilkey, Guy Anderson. I don't know whether it's part of being an artist or whether it's the Northwest School.

SUZANNE RAGEN: They were treated with respect here. And one responds in kind, I think.

DOROTHY MALONE: And of course they've all been really good to me. I started my Northwest collection because quite a number of the artists gave me things. I remember when Morris had his first show in New York-- that was his "Chinese Bronze" series. He told Marian Willard that one of the paintings was to be set aside for me and he autographed it, which was very sweet of him.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Wonderful.

DOROTHY MALONE: And when Kenneth Callahan had his first one-man show, in '34 I think it was, in the museum, he let me have my pick of his paintings. Of course I've since bought a number of his paintings, but it's one of my favorites and it's one that a lot of people don't realize is a Kenneth Callahan because it's not terribly big. It's a figure of three sailors- - -

SUZANNE RAGEN: Waist up?

DOROTHY MALONE: Waist up or shoulders up. That was the type of thing that he was doing-- sailors and loggers-- in those days. So I do have some personal things. I have a wonderful mountain landscape drawing-- pen-and-ink-- tha Kenneth gave me for a birthday- - - [Break in tape] In '42 we sent 650 items from the collection to Denver for safe storage during the threat of bombing of the West Coast. And Dr. Fuller was-- I always thought this was sort of funny-- he was Procurement Officer for the Army Special Corps for about six months. Mrs. Thomas Stimson was acting director and I think it was during her regime that she started our monthly newsletter that went to the members. She was a very different, dear friend of the Fullers and was very, very generous to the museum-- a very good, generous people-oriented person. I was very fond of her. She went on a number of trips with the Fullers in those early years and started collecting too. Of course, the Thomas D. Stimson Collection in the museum is quite extensive.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Dr. Fuller seemed to have a knack of working with patrons-- with people who would give things as memorials or donations or whatever.

DOROTHY MALONE: I don't think he went out of his way to get that sort of thing, but a lot of his friends had money and were amenable, I guess, to giving money or objects. Of course she was a real old friend. I don't think that Mrs. Frederick had given very much to the museum before Sherman Lee came. I think he's the one who was responsible, basically, for a lot of things that she gave to the museum.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And then there was Mrs. [Reginald H.--Ed.] Parsons?

DOROTHY MALONE: Then there was Mrs. Parsons. Her sister was Mrs. Taylor who gave the Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

SUZANNE RAGEN: There's been a close relationship between the Goulds, I gathered, and the museum.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. Carl Gould was president of the Art Institute. I guess he was in a way responsible for Dr. Fuller becoming a board member. And then when the idea of a building became apparent, Carl Gould stepped down so that he could be the architect of the new building. Dr. Fuller was the president. I think that there was a pretty close relationship. And Carl Gould, as I said, was responsible for Mrs. Atwood coming to the university and teaching classes in architecture for a year.

SUZANNE RAGEN: You and Kenneth Callahan were at Long Beach, Washington, once.

DOROTHY MALONE: Uh huh. And he brought his tape recorder along. Now I don't know what he's ever done with that. But anyway, Ken and I were reminiscing.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And Don Foster taped this?

DOROTHY MALONE: He taped it. And some things I could remember and Ken couldn't, and vice versa. But we could put things together because he could fill in gaps for me and maybe I could fill in gaps for him. And if I get talking with someone who starts reminiscing, then things might come back to me. But I just cannot seem to manage to do it by myself.

SUZANNE RAGEN: I wonder what did happen to that tape. When was that?

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, it's been since Arnold [Jolles] came, because I went down with Arnold and Carol and their young son Christopher. It's probably been two years. I don't know whether Arnold knows about it; or you can just ask Don about it- - - Once we had a regular film program. We didn't have a regular operator of this large machine or projector of film; Edith Young and I would take turns running it. And then during the war, the Office of Inter-American Affairs had films on Central and South America. They picked certain places throughout the United States to circulate films through that geographical area. Our museum had theirs and I booked them. I had to check them to see if they were in good condition. I had to ship them, see that they got back. That kept me busy for quite awhile. We had benefit concerts for the Red Cross with Francis Armstrong. I think he started those. They got quite a little bit of money that they were able to turn over to the Red Cross. And from those, our chamber music concerts evolved, you might say, after the war. And Ronald Phillips has been running those now for many years. Also, during the war years, the building facilities were used by the Air Raid Warden.

SUZANNE RAGEN: For meetings?

DOROTHY MALONE: Whatever zone this was in [the east central zone--Ed.] had their headquarters here. Now that was before the Activities Room was built. What is now the Norman Davis Gallery was what we called the study gallery and at the end of that there was a room that was what we called the printing press room. We had a lithography press and it had its own exit to the outside. So it was an ideal setup for them because it was just that little area of the building they could use for their Air Raid Warden. And the FBI had installations on the roof. I suppose now that it's over I can say that.

SUZANNE RAGEN: It was secret then?

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. So we cooperated in the war effort, that was for sure. And it was during that period that we discontinued having admission days. Because when we first opened, we had two days a week when we charged admissions-- twenty-five cents on Wednesdays and Fridays. And then when the war came along, we lifted that. And it was-- how many years has it been now since we've had an admission charge?

SUZANNE RAGEN: Now there's one free day- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: There's one free day and evening and the rest require a fee. And I notice that Bellevue is doing the same thing now, the same amount as ours only their free day is Tuesday, which I thought was interesting. They all have to come to it. Also under Mrs. Stimson, we were very involved in the American Red Cross Arts and Skills Project. And we trained people to go to the different base hospitals in the area-- like Fort Lewis and the Veteran's Hospital-- to teach the men who were injured or disabled how to do the arts-and-crafts kinds of things. Mrs. Stimson basically was responsible for that and I think it sort of evolved out of the gray ladies, you know, the hospital helpers. I have a note that over 100 artists and craftsmen gave over 8,000 hours of instruction for nearly 2,000 servicemen at the three principal service hospitals in the area as occupational therapy. In 1945 there was Emily Hartwell Tupper.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The first registrar.

DOROTHY MALONE: Uh huh. Up until that time, you see, Kenneth Callahan had been doing that sort of thing, with Dr. Fuller's help to a certain extent.

[Break in tape]

DOROTHY MALONE: I did nearly a thousand bookings for films from the Office of Inter-American Affairs. And the guild started Christmas parties for children from the Seattle Children's Home. I wonder if that's one of the pictures I ran across the other day with Dr. Fuller in the Santa Claus outfit and small fry around him. Then that sort of wore its welcome out and then the Guild had a party for foreign students and the different colleges and universities in the area. And then that sort of faded out and we started having a holiday party for children and their parents in the area, which the Guild continues to do. The architectural tour was a product of the guild. It sort of evolved from a guild lecture series on architecture. Dorothy Brink was the guiding genius behind that. It was under the auspices of the guild for a few years-- I can't remember exactly how many; I've been trying to look that up but I can't seem to find out yet-- until it became sort of an independent committee under the auspices of the museum. There are lots of guild people that worked on it.

SUZANNE RAGEN: The tour started in 1949 and it was not held last year, right?

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. It was not held last year and I think that those days are over. It became terribly difficult to get houses. If somebody could come up with a great new money-raising project.

SUZANNE RAGEN: We need it.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah. It's awfully hard to find something that hasn't been done by somebody else.

SUZANNE RAGEN: And it's harder to get volunteers now than it used to be.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes, yes, because more people are working. In 1951 Dr. Osvald Siren-- he was a great scholar and you probably know his books-- anyway, on a visit to Seattle he said, "Your Seattle Art Museum is a remarkable institution. It has made the most notable advance since 1939, especially in Chinese and Japanese collections, of any museum in the U.S." That was the year Ed Thomas became Curator of Education.
And Emily Tupper "retired" so to speak, although she was still on the staff for a little while.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That was 1951.

DOROTHY MALONE: 1951, yes. Then Sherman Lee left in 1952 to go to Cleveland. And it was also that year that we got 25 paintings and sculptures from the Kress Collection, and the Manson Backus bequest of 20 drawings

and two paintings. Much earlier we received the Manson F. Backus collection of drawings which is really a fine collection. Nineteen-forty, that was when they had the big official Japanese exhibition of painting and sculpture. That was a big, big show. I noted this now: let's see, over 73,000 attended, which was larger than any other participating museum charging admissions. The reason I put that was that when these shows open at the National Gallery, they don't charge admission. It was the largest publicity effort of the museum, including billboards, bus posters, 100,000 letters to parents through the schools, fliers and notices at major banks and businesses, downtown lampposts decorated with plywood shields and flags, hotels, airlines, railroads, steamship lines, tourist agencies, all of this kind of thing. That was really an all-out effort.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Almost like King Tut.

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. We have a wonderful photograph and one of the things we want to do for our fiftieth is to do sort of an historical survey of these pictures with captions from the early days up to the present time. And just leave it up permanently in the Activities Room. I think it would be interesting for a lot of people who don't know anything about it.

SUZANNE RAGEN: It would be fascinating.

DOROTHY MALONE: One of the pictures is this great big truck with a big sign on the back of it-- "Great Japanese Exhibit"-- or something like that and there's a picture of Dr. Fuller and Betty [Fuller] and I think it's the Japanese consul standing there by the back of the truck where the sign is. The truck looks like it's down near the waterfront or something. We also had the Kempe Collection of Chinese gold and silver. That was-- I'll never forget that exhibition because Coe and I were housesitting for the Fullers on Federal Avenue. Watsons live there [now--Ed.]. We were coming up to the museum to help Millard Rogers. He was working on the installation for the Kempe Collection. It had been very cold and had been snowing and whatnot, and as I came out the back steps of the Fullers to get into the car in the driveway, I hit a piece of ice and the next thing I knew the driveway came up and hit me in the face and fractured my wrist.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh. You couldn't type.

DOROTHY MALONE: I found out that I could type with one hand. It takes a great deal of concentration.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That's amazing.

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, I didn't tell Betty about it. I didn't tell them what had happened. Betty said she was wondering why all of a sudden they were getting typed letters from me. I could type but I couldn't write. And the wonderful Betty Bowen joined us then. She was the neatest person, know her?

SUZANNE RAGEN: I just had met her, I didn't really know her.

DOROTHY MALONE: She really was.

SUZANNE RAGEN: What was her title on the staff?

DOROTHY MALONE: She was public relations. She majored in journalism at the university and she worked on the newspapers locally. She was a product of Mount Vernon [Washington], I think. And at the same time she worked for us, she was doing work for Trader Vic. So she really didn't have a full-time job with us. Because at the time we didn't really need it. And when the time came when we really felt we had to have a full-time person, she just couldn't fit any more time than she was already doing; then Jeri McDonald became available. She'd left her job with the symphony. So then she came on to work full time. And it wasn't too terribly long after that that Betty really became rather ill.

SUZANNE RAGEN: She was with the Times wasn't she?

DOROTHY MALONE: Yes. And I think she worked at one point on the old Seattle Star. I think I heard her say that- - -

In 1956, when the U.S. Information Agency asked us to assemble two contemporary exhibits, we picked out the artists for the East Coast as well as the ones for the West Coast and we just had to assemble the things. We were responsible for selecting, borrowing, assembling, photography, insuring, packing, and writing the catalog. I made a note that all of the 25 items went to the Chinese Sung Dynasty exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum. It was my job [meant Ed Thomas' job--DOROTHY MALONE] to write the educational guide for their exhibition, "Life's Illumination"- - -The twenty-fifth anniversary celebration [in 1958--Ed.] at the Olympic Hotel was in the Grand Ballroom. Lorene and Joe Gandy were co-chairmen of it, and Vincent Price and David Brundage were the speakers. The Board of Trustees started a Richard E. Fuller building fund at that time. I don't think it ever got to really increase much but anyway, it was started. In 1960, to commemorate the centennial of the establishment

of diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States, there was a show called "Treasures of Japan" from the Tokoyo National Museum and the Honolulu Academy. We had billboards and fliers and that sort of thing. We did our catalog of Japanese art in the Seattle Art Museum that year. Her Imperial Highness, Princess Michiko of Japan was there; there's a picture of her and Dr. Fuller.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Now about the mural at the Fuller's house on Prospect Street.

[Break in taping]

DOROTHY MALONE: Well, that house was built for Mr. and Mrs. John Baillargeon and Mrs. Baillargeon's mother, Mrs. Watson [meant Mrs. Edgar Ames--Ed.], commissioned Tobey to do the mural. I think it was sort of like a wedding present to them or something. So when the Fullers bought the house, naturally the murals, called Moving Forms, were part of the house, which was very unique, because the Fullers were interested in Mark Tobey too. Well, then when the Fullers were going to sell their house and move into a one-floor house in Broadmoor, they had Jack Lucas, who is a very well known restorer in this area who has a shop/studio, in Vancouver, Washington. He and his group came up and took those murals off the wall, and Dr. Fuller had them mounted so that they're in sections as they were on the wall but now they're on panels and they are here in the museum. Now, just exactly what's going to happen to them- - - I think that Betty had always hoped that if there was a new museum that there might be a room that would be similar to their drawing room, and murals could then be put in place. But whether that'll ever happen, I don't know.

SUZANNE RAGEN: But they're here now, somewhere in storage.

DOROTHY MALONE: They are here. Millard Rogers resigned as associate director to become director of the new Center for Asian Arts. It was under a grant from the Ford Foundation.

[Break in taping]

DOROTHY MALONE: In 1964, the Ford Foundation sponsored our fiftieth annual exhibition of Northwest artists and purchased twelve paintings and sculptures from the exhibition. In 1965 was our official opening of the new Seattle Art Museum Pavilion. It was made possible with the grant from the R. D. Merrill Foundation and PONCHO. Also in 1965 the Portland Art Museum featured the Seattle Art Museum in an exhibit called "The Gift to a City." We sent down 154 items in our Far Eastern and Indian collections. For Mark Tobey's eightieth birthday in 1970 we had hoped to have enough paintings in our own collection to match his years. We didn't quite make it but we got up to 73 and then we borrowed seven. There was a catalog for that; Betty Bowen wrote it.

SUZANNE RAGEN: But there were 73 from the museum's own collection?

DOROTHY MALONE: That includes all of his Pike Place Market sketches too. And we have quite a lot of those.

[Break in taping]

DOROTHY MALONE: Joanna Eckstein was the one who started art museum tours for members. The one that went in 1970 to Russia was the second annual one. And Tom Maytham was there. The different councils sponsored foreign tours for their own. Like the Asian Art Council had the wonderful one that I went on last fall.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh, you did go to China?

DOROTHY MALONE: That was just great.

SUZANNE RAGEN: In 1972 and '73 we got our first full-time business manager and development officer. We established the development office with a grant from PONCHO in '73.

DOROTHY MALONE: Like getting into the big league.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Yes. Henry Trubner and William Rathbun put together a hundred masterpieces from Japanese collections-- "Ceramic Art of Japan." There was also the retrospective of Norman Rockwell. And the guild served--what was it?-- clam chowder and- - -

DOROTHY MALONE: Apple pie.

SUZANNE RAGEN: What about the fortieth birthday party?

DOROTHY MALONE: The fortieth birthday party of the Seattle Art Museum in 1973 was when we had those 18-foot red candles all across the front of the building, you know. That was the year that the Rentaloft became a fact, down at the Pavilion. Jackie MacRae was instrumental in that. She went down and picked Portland Art Museum's brain. And then she worked out all the details, all the forms, and all that sort of stuff, and you know,

people around here weren't terribly enthusistic about the idea. When we finally found space for them, and they really were permitted to get underway, they made money from the very first year.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That's wonderful. And they're still making money?

DOROTHY MALONE: And they're still making money.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Well, that was an excellent idea.

[Break in tape]

DOROTHY MALONE: We organized the Skagit Valley artists show. Basically that was Jeri McDonald and Neil Meitzler. Robert Sund came down and read poetry at one point, I think, and I've forgotten what all else. Remember that one?

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh, I do. That was lovely.

DOROTHY MALONE: Gosh, sending out those invitations and stuffing sunflower seeds in them?

SUZANNE RAGEN: Oh, that's funny. I had forgotten that.

DOROTHY MALONE: We also established-- formally established-- the Modern Art Department with Charlie Cowles. And CAC [Contemporary Art Council--Ed.] and PNAC [Pacific Northwest Art Council--Ed.] contribute to that department.

[Break in tape]

DOROTHY MALONE: And in 1976 or 1977 we had a museum week. Remember that? We had a week in November. Andy Warhol came. That was really quite successful.

SUZANNE RAGEN: That Tut show was an amazing experience for the museum.

DOROTHY MALONE: Oh, it sure was. What do you call it, connected with the king's tomb? The terrible things that happened to people?

SUZANNE RAGEN: Superstition?

DOROTHY MALONE: Yeah, superstition.

SUZANNE RAGEN: There were whole busloads from everywhere for the Tut show.
DOROTHY MALONE: Yes, even coming down from Alaska. Coming over from Hawaii. Just remarkable.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Do we have any figures on how many came?

DOROTHY MALONE: Sure. Three hundred thousand visited Tut. Fifteen hundred volunteers, seven days a week, four months. A hundred and forty thousand school children were toured without charge. The docents gave 410 slide presentations in area schools to over 37,000 children. There were about 3,600 wheelchair visitors. And the docents toured nearly a thousand visually impaired persons on those four special evenings.

SUZANNE RAGEN: Dottie, thank you very much for giving your time for this interview. It's been interesting to talk to someone who's been associated with the art museum since the day it first opened in 1933. Thank you.

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