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Oral history interview with Marcia Tucker, 1978 August 11-September 8

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Maria Tucker on August 11, 1978. The interview took place in New York City, NY, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: And let me say it is the 11th of August, 1978, Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Tucker in her loft at 140 Sullivan Street, New York City. You were born in April 1940 in New York City?

MARCIA TUCKER: Um-hm, in Brooklyn.

MR. CUMMINGS: In Brooklyn. Why do they say New York City? [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] I don't know. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: I see. Great. And why don't you just give me some idea about background, growing up in Brooklyn, schools? Was there interest at home in music, art, literature, things like that? What kind of milieu, what kind of ambiance was it?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't remember too far back. But for some reason, [inaudible] on West Third Street between [inaudible]. I used to think it was called [inaudible]. I may have been mistaken. And there was an Italian neighborhood which I liken very much - it's very much like the neighborhood I live in now, which is very comfortable to me. And my father was a lawyer. My mother was a housewife. And I came from a - pretty much an upper-middle-class family, but always striving to be more upper middle class. And I remember the neighborhood I grew up in as rather rough. And I went to a school, both to elementary school and to a junior high school that were a bit not - didn't have many particularly ambitious or smart kids in it, mostly --

MR. CUMMINGS: What schools? Do you remember?

MS. TUCKER: No. The PS whatever-it-was, I don't remember.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I went to a school called David A. Booty Junior High School. And I loved it. And lot of art world people had gone to that school. I remember talking to Harris Rosen's son, who worked at *ARTnews*. And he said, "Oh my god, I went to the same junior high school." [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: He said that was very funny. He just looked at me and he said, "All right. You should be a drum major, and I should be a rug salesman." [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I see.

MS. TUCKER: Too bad we weren't. But it was predominantly Italian, predominantly Catholic school. And very difficult -- I remember fighting all the time when I was a child.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because of what?

MS. TUCKER: Because there were only two Jews in the whole junior high school. So that took a --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MS. TUCKER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: In Brooklyn?

MS. TUCKER: This was a completely Italian Catholic neighborhood.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, incredible.

MS. TUCKER: And I remember the other one was Danny Cline. I think - no, that was probably - I get it mixed up. That was my other school. But there were - I remember that there was one other Jewish kid. So we were constantly fighting.

MR. CUMMINGS: For one reason or another?

MS. TUCKER: Well, we were fighting because that was the period in which the common epithet to hurl at someone who wasn't Catholic, Italian Catholic, was, "You killed Christ!"

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. My - what happened to me when I was growing up was that I began to assimilate that kind of atmosphere very rapidly. And I turned into a good street kid, smart street kid, good fighter, very good at roller derby, good at making all kinds of guns and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Zip guns.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And my - I think mostly my mother's upbringing [inaudible] growing up - I was 11 or 12. And so we moved to New Jersey, then Chicago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Were there brothers and sisters?

MS. TUCKER: I have a brother who lives - five years younger than I am. He's a photographer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was there interest in - cultural interest at home? Did you discover that outside or at school?

MS. TUCKER: I seem to recall that there were a couple of Van Gogh reproductions around. My father was always very much interested in the theater and read a great deal.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Did he go to the theater?

MS. TUCKER: He went to the theater quite a lot. And he took me at a very young age. He took me to the ballet when I was quite young and consistently took me to the ballet until he died. My mother was deaf. And so she was not as responsive to those things as she might have been under other circumstances. But I have a very distinct memory of hearing my first classical music as a very young child on a Sunday drive, because my father was very fond of listening to Mozart and Beethoven.

MR. CUMMINGS: So like you played it on the car radio or something?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But we didn't have a record player at home. I thought that was funny. But lots and lots of books. And my father prided himself on being an educated man.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. What kind of books were around?

MS. TUCKER: Well, actually, when I was - let's see. I lived still - no, I had just moved to New Jersey. I must have been between the ages of 13 and 15. I'd read all of Poe. I read Pope. I read Milton. I remember reading, not only *Paradise Lost*, but *Paradise Regained*.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I read everything Dickens ever wrote. They had those series, you know, the book?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. What were these, paperbacks? All those --

MS. TUCKER: No, no, all hardcover books.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, sets.

MS. TUCKER: Sets. And I just read through them voraciously. I read Thackeray, not that I remember very much anymore. But it was - I read - very distinct visual memories of spending afternoons reading. And music was mostly radio music. Also, my parents took us to museums, or took me to museums, because I have a recollection of being at the Modern and seeing that surrealist collection when I was quite young and arguing with my parents.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. When was that, a teenager?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, younger than that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, my first memories were from when I was about five, from the war, just when the war ended. I was born in 1940. And when the war ended, they burned Hitler in effigy just outside my window.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Nice. Just for you.

MS. TUCKER: It's a very strong visual image.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: My upstairs neighbors, the man was an opera singer. And I remember his coming down and telling me what was going on and singing to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: This was still in Brooklyn?

MS. TUCKER: Brooklyn. Oh, yeah. I don't think he was [inaudible]. But I had an upbringing which was very - it was very rich because it was full of - from other cultures. In other words, because I was the only Jewish kid around, I saw that in Christmas in an extraordinary way because everyone was very anxious to include me. And my friends were all Catholic, Italian Catholic kids. And they were great on food and love and lots of celebration.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] But that was very much a part of growing up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. But still you had fights with them the rest of the year.

MS. TUCKER: No, not those kids.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: That was in my junior high, which was very different. They were very tough kids. There were a lot of cruel kids, retarded kids. They had us graded into around 20 different grades. And if you looked at the yearbook from the junior high school year you could see the kids [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Wondering what they might say.

MS. TUCKER: Well, my next-door neighbor became a butcher's apprentice and then went to jail. And I grew up and saw a lot of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Yeah. I mean, real life.

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: Real life.

MS. TUCKER: Real life, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. So what did you do in the summers? You stayed in town? Did you go to camp?

MS. TUCKER: I seem to remember that - I remember spending some summers in Brooklyn because that's when we did a lot of the - we would get fireworks, and when there was a lot of roller derby and tough games going on and a lot of pea-shooting. One memory that sticks out in my mind, oddly enough, is that I learned the gold bug - I think it was called a gold bug code from one of Edgar Allen Poe's stories.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

MS. TUCKER: And I used to write it on the sidewalks. I used to write really terrible things and swear words in this code.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: to get back at the kids in my neighborhood because I couldn't actually really [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So shit, you know? [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But when we moved - I think it was when we moved to New Jersey --

MR. CUMMINGS: Which was about when?

MS. TUCKER: Right around 14. I don't really remember when exactly. Well, I was about 12. We spent the summers partly in Adirondack [phonetic], NY.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And for many years went to Strasburg, Pennsylvania, where there was a kind of resort. And a lot of middle-class Jewish families would - the wives and the children would go up there, and the husbands would commute from the city.

MR. CUMMINGS: On the weekends, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, on the weekends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And then in Adirondack it was a bungalow colony. Actually, I was in Adirondack when I was 15. I know that because my mother was - my mother became ill that summer and was in the hospital. And I have a very clear memory of being there, although while she was in the hospital. But it was an old - that was what they called it, bungalow colony. And the kids would all be out there. And my aunts, my uncles, the pond - this is very uninteresting [inaudible]. But that particular - I don't know how much detail you want.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, just keep on going.

MS. TUCKER: My mother was - when she went to the hospital that's when she got - she went for cancer and was operated on. And from that point on she - her condition deteriorated slowly over the years. So she was never the same again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And so that was, for me, an important summer.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, what - you went to live where in Jersey?

MS. TUCKER: In Upper Montclair, which was --

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Well, what happened was this. There seems to be a pattern that certain families go - that certain families did engage in. You either move to Jew Jersey or you move to Portland. So we tried to move to move to Great Neck, and the house didn't work out. They moved to Great Neck. They bought a house in Great Neck. And somehow or other, the [inaudible] house didn't work out. The basement flooded. And they went to their only other option, which was upper Upper Montclair, New Jersey. But I remember I was very amused. It was so Upper Montclair; it was actually lower Bloomfield. [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And [inaudible] is a wonderful thing. And that summer, my grandmother died. And she was very important to me. She was incredible.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way? Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, she was the kindest person I ever knew, and she was totally supportive of everything that her grandchildren did. She was amazingly - she had a very special Old World quality about her, which was just an endless amount of love. And she died of cancer that summer. And - or she died of cancer when we moved, right

after we moved. And then that summer, my mother got cancer. And somehow the cumbrances of [inaudible] area - rather difficult to cope with.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: But the family stayed [inaudible]. It was rather difficult.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But then you started going to a different kind of school, right? In New Jersey?

MS. TUCKER: Well, yeah. I went to an extremely upper-class school in New Jersey.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like the change?

MS. TUCKER: I hated it. I hated it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Why?

MS. TUCKER: Because I liked the lower-class kids better, because it was much more fun, because I felt that the kids in New Jersey had insane pretensions. They also - I had a terrible accent. They didn't speak the way I did, and they made fun of me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And so that was important because I was [inaudible] and started reading. I had always read, even when I lived in Brooklyn. I remember that my mother sent a note to the library saying that I was not to be allowed to take out more than two books at a time because I was reading now - I'm a speed reader. And I can - to an average, I guess I read about eight books in a week, just in an average week, without even - without reading. And I think I learned to speed-read because my mother would say, "That's enough."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] Like that's insane. Anyhow, I got very bad eyesight and had to get very thick glasses. So my mother kind of said, you're not allowed to take books out of the library.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you read? Everything?

MS. TUCKER: I read the Hardy Boys. I read *Cherry Ames Student Nurse*. I read *Black Beauty*. And I also read - well, indiscriminately, every single thing I could lay my hands on, which was why when I was 13 I was reading Poe because it didn't - I mean, I just - I had no sense of between the lines. I just read.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I read a lot of fairy tales when I was a kid. I thought they were incredibly interesting, but not fairy tales for children, just fairy tales for adults. I would just read anything that I could understand. And I was always getting into scraps because there were adults books at that time, and non-adult books.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I couldn't - Steinbeck, for instance. I could - well, I started to go through the alphabet when I moved to New Jersey and got through their library, which was kind of a nice library. So I started at A.

MR. CUMMINGS: But in fiction?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. Nonfiction never interested me very much. I never wanted to know these facts. I wanted to [inaudible] [Laughter]. So I got actually quite far through the alphabet. But I do remember that about Steinbeck. I didn't get that far through the alphabet. But that they wouldn't let me read those books because they were classified, certainly. Anyway, it was a complete life, as far as I'm concerned. I would have happily stayed put forever, as long as I had a book in front of me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Well, were there any teachers in school that you remember as being important, influential, provocative, fighting?

MS. TUCKER: Well, not until - well, I remember a third-grade teacher. But I don't know whether that would count. But yeah. When I was in junior high school in New Jersey, they had an experimental course called Art English, a

pretentious title, a very interesting course, in which the students - it was a self-directed course.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And a very odd group of students. Some - first of all, it was racially mixed, which was extremely appealing. And the students were very eccentric and very creative, as I remember it, and would go on weird field trips and take turns conducting class. And it was team taught by a man named Frank Brogen. And the other man - he was the English teacher, and the other man was Art McClasky. McClasky? McClasky? And it seemed to me that that was a very crucial period because all the kids who were in that class were - had problems. And it was the first time they had any problems which I could relate to.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I mean, my mother was dying. My father stayed away all the time because he was a lawyer and all he did was do his work. My brother was getting increasingly upset by all this. And having a parent who's dying when you're quite young is not common, and especially when they die over a long period of time. And I felt uncomfortable in that environment because people thought that that was fine. I mean, it wasn't that it was fine. But that I was abnormal because I was upset over my family situation. And the two teachers who found it very interesting - they always, always pushed the most creative, the most eccentric parts of their students. And they became very close friends with most of the students, and those friendships lasted many years. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Were they themselves eccentric or unusual from the general run?

MS. TUCKER: Well, McClasky had - must have had about eight children. And Brogen was a very sensitive - I don't think so. I think they really loved their work. I just sense that they were people who loved what they were doing and were very happy in their circumstances.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: It's hard to remember that far back. I know that they took an active interest in our lives and occasionally even interfered in our whole lives, coming to parties.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. Yeah, very supportive in every possible way. And there's another woman at that time in our high school named Molly Harter, who I think was a very important - a real prototype for me. Very, very feminine woman, quite beautiful, aristocratic, white hair, smelled good all the time. This was one of her - she always had a white lace handkerchief tucked in the sleeve of her business suit.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Right.

MS. TUCKER: And she smelled delightful and was just sharp as a razor.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And had us reading all kinds of things. But she --

MR. CUMMINGS: What did she teach?

MS. TUCKER: She taught English. And she, I think, was one of the very few people who I remember in my life. She felt that I was very competent. And she was at pains all the time to tell me so. But I can also remember that she told me from time to time that I looked nice. She would always say incredible things. And I think she got me through maybe the last year of high school. It was probably the worst year of my life that I can remember. And she - I don't know how. But these people got me through it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And my mother by then had gotten really very ill and had gone off the deep end and had begun to - she was staying alive by will. But I don't think that she was any longer quite sane.

MR. CUMMINGS: But she was still at home?

<>MS. TUCKER: Oh yes. Well, I took care of everything, you see. I mean, she couldn't do anything anymore. So I did all the cooking and all the cleaning, and I took care of my brother, and I took care of my father and my father's business problems.</>

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And by the end of that year, my father had developed psychosomatic asthma. And so I would have to listen to his breathing also and take him to the hospital when the breathing went funny.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I got in the middle of all of them, of all of their hatred and tension. It was very painful.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I really don't know how I managed. But it got worse. But when it got worse, I went - the next year I went away to school, to college.

MR. CUMMINGS: Which was where?

MS. TUCKER: I went to Connecticut College. I wanted to go to Cooper Union.

MR. CUMMINGS: To where?

MS. TUCKER: Cooper Union.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. How did you find the - when did you - did you start drawing ever? Because I know you paint.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I started drawing very early.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. They encouraged that or you did it surreptitiously?

MS. TUCKER: No. I suppose in some odd way they must have encouraged it. But I also wrote poetry, and I know my mother did not encourage that at all, because [inaudible] poetry. My father, on the other hand, would sneak me off and he'd help me with it. But after awhile, I realized I couldn't show my mother anything at all and that my father was the one who would support me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But thinking back on it, my father wanted me to be a lawyer and felt that his - I was the chance in the family. And they gave my brother clarinet lessons and hoped - I mean, it was almost a reverse situation - and hoped he would be all right - and nurtured my intellect. And that's why they didn't want me to go to Cooper Union, although I got in. They didn't want me to be an artist. And they did not want me to live with all the [inaudible]. And my father 20 years later [inaudible]. But I didn't have a choice.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you pick Connecticut College?

MS. TUCKER: I didn't. They picked Connecticut College.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, how?

MS. TUCKER: The second choice was Smith, which I didn't get into. I have what I think now is known as dyscalculia. I have heard that Thomas Milburn?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And - I can't - I don't add, subtract, divide. I was going in. I had to be tutored all my life in those things. On the other hand, my grasp of grammar and spelling was near perfect. And when I took the college boards, I got the lowest scores they had. It was the lowest score they had ever seen in the history of the high school in mathematics and a perfect score in English.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So schools were very wary of me. And also, I was a disturbed kid. I mean, there was no doubt that I was a disturbed kid, because how can you not be a disturbed kid when, I mean, my father was waking me up in the dead of night and waking me up and taking me out for black coffee to an all-night doughnut shop to tell me about his business problems?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Um-hm. I didn't know that he talked.

MS. TUCKER: Well, nobody. But he was also telling me - he was telling me about stuff that I - I mean, it was fine. But I had literally no childhood, in that sense.

MR. CUMMINGS: All of a sudden you were responsible.

MS. TUCKER: For everybody.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And my mother would complain about my father to me. My father would complain about my mother. They would both complain about my brother. My brother would scream and cry. Doing a full load on top of the cooking and the cleaning, plus trying to have - I mean, it was essential that I get A's because otherwise my parents wouldn't speak to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Oh, I see. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, I had to be a perfect student. And there again I had to be perfect looking because my mother thought I should marry somebody who was a wealthy orthodontist or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: So the strain [inaudible]. But they --

MR. CUMMINGS: But where did the drawing come in now? How did that - what did you do? What - just drawing-drawing in school? That was in high school? Was it in an art class?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, no. I drew just to pass the time. And I don't -- in high school, I was really gravitating towards that. I won an art contest for a cover of the school magazine by stealing. I copied the design from a greeting card. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I never told anybody that before.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you did.

MS. TUCKER: That's right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow. The execution was good, huh?

MS. TUCKER: It was good. I won, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I think that's when I started cross dressing.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: When I was in high school I also did other things. I was a very avid dancer and did a lot of choreography and a lot of acting and stage sets.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. With the high school group?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But it was just - Art English class was great. So I didn't have - oh. I think the most imaginative things I did when I was in high school, I hooked up with a couple of other students who were very eccentric. And we formed a club called the Ugly Club and held periodic contests for the ugliest. And they were quite amusing contests.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And we had membership cards, and we had some of the teachers who joined the Ugly Club. We had Ugly Club parties and theme songs. We had rituals.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why that name?

MS. TUCKER: Well, because we were not accepted into the usual standards.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: We were just weird. One of the women turned into a religious fanatic, and another one was highly favored because his father was dying at the same time my mother was dying. And another one was an actor - became an actor. And she - well, she lives in Hollywood. As a matter of fact, she wrote me and said she was going to come into town soon. But the four of us got together in a total - it was total defiance - and had a wonderful time. And I think that that made a lot of high school lives quite tolerable. We also - I was a teenage alcoholic myself. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I drank more when I was a teenager than anybody else I knew.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: There wasn't any dope around, so nobody did that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But we all were, I think, well on our way to alcoholism. And I know I was about 18. It was quite serious. It wasn't funny. And so I stopped drinking. But I crashed a car, you know. But life was quite tolerable for us, without boyfriends, without - we all wrote. We wrote, kept, all of us, very extensive journals. And I still have journals from the time I was 12.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do so many women do that?

MS. TUCKER: Obviously because there was no one to talk to, because your parents say to you that if you ever want to live a normal life, "Don't be too smart. Just shut up."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And imagine they're telling me all the time. And if I ever want to have dates - because I never had dates. And she'd tell me, "The reason you don't have dates is you talk. Just shut up," you know. "Don't" - that was it. I think because, also, well, women are trying to join a world, I mean, at least at that time, that they weren't part of. I don't know whether there's any inherent difference between men and women. I suspect that there's a difference in training and expectations and so forth. I'm not so sure that there is a difference in any kind of biological or character difference that's anything more than the differences between people. But the way you were brought up and your expectations that people have of you are quite different.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm. Then what was Connecticut College like? You went there, what, seven years for what, art?

MS. TUCKER: I went to study art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I hated it. They were rich, very elegant. I was a complete recluse. I was a near crazed recluse the first year or so. I can't - I found a lot of anti-Semitism there. And hooked up with a young black woman who was in school who quit. She couldn't cope with it. But I just kept to myself, did a lot more reading and a lot more writing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And got interested in motorcycles and took up with people who were on the fringes. I mean not regular college kids. I also got very close to a couple of teachers there. One was James Baird who wrote a book called Ishmael. He's quite an incredible man who I thought was - there are a few teachers in one's life, I think, who don't deal with you as a kid, but who respect the quality of your thought and who are interested in how far you can think outside of their interests.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And he was one of them. And I respected him a lot. He's not someone you could ever get close to. But he's someone I always admired and thought highly of. There was also an art teacher who made a big difference to me, but in a perverse kind of way, which I'll tell you about. But I was in the - I was - the first two years in college, I was so miserable that I could barely breathe. And I did the same thing as I did in high school, found a group of equally unhappy people and just made a mess, I mean made a mess, did absurd, terrible things.

[SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, acted so. Did - I have always been interested in cutting up. I still am interested in cutting up, as you might follow.

MR. CUMMINGS: Sure. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] and so forth. But - well, actually, what I did in high school, we'd have days set aside. For instance, we would have a typical day when we would dress up to be typical teenagers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: That was very, very good. Or we'd have a black day, which we'd come in totally clothed. So I started doing things like that when I was in college. But then it got more serious because my family situation was getting out of hand.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. But they were in New Jersey and you were in Connecticut.

MS. TUCKER: That's right. But then there's a telephone. And there's also guilt, which can travel --

MR. CUMMINGS: Ahead of you.

MS. TUCKER: Oh yes. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Ahead of you even. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I just couldn't stand it after awhile. I decided that I had to leave. And I transferred to go to art school in Pennsylvania. And I did something that I thought it was very smart and very logical for me, which was that I applied for a junior year abroad program in Connecticut, got accepted, and then told my parents why I didn't want to go. I mean, nothing they would or could do could convince me that I was going to go to a foreign country. And of course, they wanted me to go.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: So that's how I got to go to France.

MR. CUMMINGS: Aha.

MS. TUCKER: It was the only thing I wanted to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who else - were there any students who became particular friends at Connecticut College?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Depending on what year. One of them I just saw again recently. Her name is Sue Whalen, who was Roman at the time. But she's now a psychologist and written a couple of books.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was the art teacher?

MS. TUCKER: There was a woman there named Margaret Hanson. And she was the only woman in the department. She was old and rather stern, severe and strange. And she told me, she took me into her office at one time and asked me if I was very serious about becoming a painter. And I said yes I was. And she said, "Well, then, I must give you some advice." She said, "Stop all this other stuff you're doing." By that time I'd gone mad. I was in the debating team. I was doing stage sets, building sets. I was acting in all kinds of plays. I was doing choreography, taking dance classes, learning - I would play guitar and singing one Sunday, and then I'd go up to Yale with a group of friends and mess around with them. And she said I just had to stop it. I was writing poetry. She said, "Stop. You must stop because you must devote your energies to your art." So I said "Okay." And I stopped and devoted my energies to my art. And it was a terrible, terrible mistake.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why?

MS. TUCKER: Well, because now I had to learn to play the guitar all over again.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] I mean, you know, you have a standard now.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's right.

MS. TUCKER: It took me all those years to get to where I said energy brings energy. The more you have, the more you do. Life's very short. If you don't do what you want to do, then you might as well not live. And everybody was always busy telling me what I should do instead of what - to do what you want to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, were you taking courses in theater, dance, or music, or was this extracurricular?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yes. No [inaudible] except for dance. One of the things I hated most was sports. You know, if you've seen this -played sports - no, you wouldn't have played women's sports [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Women's field hockey. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] [Inaudible] bowling?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I learned to swim or I'd drown, you know? I mean, the only thing I could do was dance. And I had to take all that other stuff. But I wasn't going to do tennis. Hated sports. The only kind of sports I like are - I love motorcycle riding a lot, which made me real popular. Between the first and the second year of school I turned into a complete renegade, total renegade. I stopped bathing. I stopped cleaning up anything. I started - I let my hair grow so it was out like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: I wore the same clothing all the time. I threw out [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, this is sort of getting really into the '60s now, aren't we?

MS. TUCKER: No, I - yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I went through - I graduated high school in '57.

MR. CUMMINGS: Sixty.

MS. TUCKER: So yeah, '67.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I got to be a really strange person. I wore a black - I wore a blue sweatshirt and jeans and boots in the wintertime, and a blue T-shirt and jeans and sandals in the summertime. And it really was out of hand. I met Suzy Craw, painter, when she was going with Tools on Whiskey. I met her at a Thanksgiving dinner. And I didn't know who she was. I couldn't remember. And we were looking at each other and looking at each other. And she finally, in the middle this dinner, she screamed [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] It was very [inaudible]. Oh god. I never had kids. But you know, she was another renegade. But I think our first time - well, I took up with some men from Yale who were musicians and also with some - no, but the motorcycle riders was my last year, I think. I think all that was my last year was - I got suspended. Oh god. Yeah, it must have been the last year, my last year. But anyhow, I decided to go to Europe. And I took off and I went to Paris to take painting, and I waved goodbye to my parents from the boat. And then promptly went inside the boat, The Mauretania, and got - stayed.

MR. CUMMINGS: At the bar?

MS. TUCKER: Drunk for the whole trip.

MR. CUMMINGS: What year was that?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: What year was that?

MS. TUCKER: Fifty-nine. That's when I stopped drinking. At the end of that trip, I said, "Well, I've had enough."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] The ship was quarantined in France.

MS. TUCKER: Right. And that's where I met Tim, too, because Tim and another woman - Tim, a woman, and a man named Richard Greenman who turned out to be --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible], yeah. Richard Greenman was very active in the Columbia riots. He teaches French at Columbia, and he was one of the leaders in the Columbia riots.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: The four of us were the only kids who sat at a table and had the wine steward around all the time. And I disposed of most of my savings for that year.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] That week, killed, ten days.

MS. TUCKER: Right off the boat and was utterly happy, utterly happy to be in France. I have never felt in my life that I was so completely at home in any place.

MR. CUMMINGS: Let me backtrack a second. What kind of painting were you doing at Connecticut College?

MS. TUCKER: Figurative, stylized, heavy into one-eyed prostitutes with acid-etched figures. I did a lot of portraits for people. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] Who were you interested in?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the kind of artist I was interested in at the time was either a Ben Shahn or [inaudible]. I mean, terrible, you know - I mean, not that they were terrible painters, but that was the humanism of the '50s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But [inaudible]. And something --

MR. CUMMINGS: So oh-my-tormented-soul kind of situation.

MS. TUCKER: Exactly, exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I think that changed very much at a certain point.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I was never a good painter. I was very hardworking, and I was smart, and I tried to put things together. But I was not good.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was the art teacher at Connecticut?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, at that time that was Bill Fordham. He's still there, too, I think, really nice [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Can't think?

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] and Sylvia, and I still have to think. And there was another man named Fasinelly [phonetic], Jim Fasinelly, who is - I understand now [inaudible] art historian, teacher, who was great for me. He was a young kid at the time. But in art history, he was always telling me what I didn't do. And he was handing back my papers, C-minus, and go over. And I got an [inaudible]. But he just always figured he should put you much lower than you deserved so that --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible], yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] I liked them, now. I mean, I never minded that stuff. But when I got back from France --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, not too --

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: What happened? You went there to go --

MS. TUCKER: I went there to paint.

MR. CUMMINGS: And you went to the Louvre and L'Entremeur [phonetic]?

MS. TUCKER: I went to L'Entremeur. I had a studio. I studied with somebody named Nette who was a transvestite, transsexual, I don't know - a very strange woman dressed as a man who taught lithography.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where?

MS. TUCKER: Academie du Nord or something. I don't remember - and who could do things quite well to get money. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did you live?

MS. TUCKER: First I lived with a family in Etienne. They had 16 children. Monsieur, Madame De Segrave [phonetic], a Spanish woman named Alysia to take care of the food. And then they had six Americans boarding with them in the 16th Arrondissement. It was very interesting.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] So it was in a hotel?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, man, it was - Gabrielle Yablonsky [phonetic] was one of those people. And her father is quite famous; you know, Philip Yablonsky [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, Gabrielle was even stranger than I was. And there was another woman named Sheila who had decided to become an overnight Jewish gypsy with a trail of musk. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I was with my boyfriend. We were sharing a room, you know. And I'd wake up staring across in the eyes of some real hostile Arab to start my day.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] That's very easy to do in Paris

MS. TUCKER: I guess. But - well, first we went to Tulle to study the language.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, six weeks. [Inaudible] how fast we could speak. And in Tulle, I lived with a very old woman and Sheila the gypsy in this house. And the woman - oh, the woman was odd. She was just odd. She didn't like us very well. But I met a Frenchman, I guess about the first week I was there. He was absolutely wonderful. He didn't speak a word of English except that someone, some soldiers, and she actually taught him that, if you wanted to call for the raider in English you yelled "Fuck you."

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, okay. [Laughter] [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] She had a real monocle, and it was very - and he was incredibly poor. He was a count. And this was this penniless count.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yes. Of which there are so many.

MS. TUCKER: What?

MR. CUMMINGS: Of which there are so many.

MS. TUCKER: He was very young and very sweet, and I learned to speak French very, very fast.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] Del was very romantic because he insisted, I guess the first day I went out with him for coffee, that we should become romantically entwined for the rest of our lives. And I said, "Don't be silly. I'm

American. This is ridiculous." And he went and sat in front of the house I was staying at for what must have been 48 hours, all through the night and to the next day.

MR. CUMMINGS: How very French. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was very French and very romantic. I resent it. But he saw me pass. And what happened was that it was, he - these people that I lived with, the Enielles [phonetic], were incredibly kind. And Roger, we were very much in love, and he had no place to stay. He was staying in my studio. I studied at a placed called Chez Zabo with a mad Hungarian who had a goose laying around in the studio. And it's freezing cold. And so this man always stayed in my studio, but had to get up before 5:30 in order to get out so no one would know he was staying there. Well, he got frostbite.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where was the studio?

MS. TUCKER: Now I can't remember. I can't remember. But there was a funny restaurant near there where we used to eat all the time. I absolutely can't remember - not far from Granshomire [phonetic] up the street. So these kind people said, "Listen. This is impossible. You can't stay here with frostbite." So they moved him into the bathroom.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And he lived in the bathroom. So the last time it got really out of hand because Wendy, this other American, her mother had arrived. So Wendy's mother was also staying there. It was total madness.

MR. CUMMINGS: How big of an establishment was it? Six rooms?

MS. TUCKER: It had three floors.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. It was a house.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] But we were just crammed in, you know. So Henri and I decided that we needed some privacy. And we went and rented a chambre on the eighth floor - you know, near 15th. It was right near the prefecture de police near Boulevard Haussman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And it was 12 dollars a month, and it was this tiny room with a toilet at the end of the hall. And we moved in. And the Enielles protected me against my parents because whenever somebody would call, whether the directrice of the school would call, she would say, "She's sleeping. Just a minute." And then she would get in her little car with one of the 16 children or more, and drive all the way across Paris to where I was staying, run up eight flights of stairs --

MR. CUMMINGS: "Telephone!"

MS. TUCKER: -- and tell me it was the telephone. So I'd go back.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I loved her. I mean, I love her [inaudible] forever, forever. The other thing she did was very [inaudible] - was that she was able to rent out the room I was staying in. And she gave me back the money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: Ah, want to talk about real sneaky.

MR. CUMMINGS: I thought [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: This woman was an angel beyond belief. So that meant - well, my parents found out I was living with this guy and cut me off. So the hundred dollars a month was what he and I completely survived on at that time, which was out of the question. So I got very thin and very sick. And when I came back to America I had jaundice. I had lost about 30 pounds. I was a mess.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, you spent what, a year there?

MS. TUCKER: Uh-huh.

MR. CUMMINGS: What was it like? I mean, what happened besides --

MS. TUCKER: Well, it was just totally impoverished.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you go to school? Were you learning things?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, no, I wanted to be a [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I studied ferociously. I did very well. I really did well because I left speaking French. I wouldn't speak English. I just loved speaking French. And my French by that time was so good I was dreaming in it. And I liked the studying very much. I liked it better than the art.

MR. CUMMINGS: What were you studying, art history?

MS. TUCKER: The history of art, yeah. I mean, with the Louvre right there. And I couldn't get enough. It was just amazing. And then I studied another course, which was [inaudible], a modern course, which meant, you know, the Impressionists. I really did well at that, the academic stuff, and I never thought I would. And the art part, not so interesting. I took up with a - because we were so poor, I took up with an English singing group. I was their hat girl for awhile. I just passed the hat. And I met --

MR. CUMMINGS: What did they - did they perform or they'd do the cafes?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, do the cafes. But the people I met who were quite interesting - I met Jack Elliot, otherwise known as Rambling Jack Elliot. In Paris at the time was another man, a Scotsman named Alex whose last name I can't remember. And Alex was dying of cirrhosis of the liver. He was a great singer. And they all performed at - oh dear, it's all so long ago. It's a small café that specialized in music. I'll remember it in awhile.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But Jack Elliot and I got to be friends at the time. And I used to come around a lot and listen to them sing. And I think that that's how some of my interest in those folk songs, when those early ballads came about. Oh dear. It's - I remember - it's right on the edge of my tongue and I can't remember it. There's Garning Street. Get money and being the hat girl for these guys.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you get any money from doing this?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: What would you make on a day?

MS. TUCKER: I can't remember. You know, enough for a couple of beers. I don't remember eating anything but beer and French fries all that year. But a couple of quite amazing things happened that year. One of them was that there was a - in America there was a wave of anti-Semitism that hit in 1960 - in '59-'60. Some synagogues were desecrated. My parents got very nervous and started to tell me - they'd call me up, "Come home, come home." And I remember going out of my house one morning and seeing on the walls - seeing Swastikas drawn in chalk and signs that said [inaudible] Israel and a whole - I mean, it got very scary. And my parents really wanted me to come home. And I - I wasn't going to come home. But two very strong, very powerful anti-Semitic things happened that year that I think must have been important. And one of them was that one night Henri and I went to eat at a restaurant in Odeon [phonetic]. When we walked downstairs - this very cheap restaurant - and you all sit at the couissant [phonetic], those long tables together. And the only thing we ever were eating, we were eating French fries and beer, drinking beer. We sat down at this table, and I couldn't face any more French fries, and I just burst into tears. I was inconsolable. And there were two very fancy women sitting across from us. I just told Elka this story from the Jewish piece. But --

MR. CUMMINGS: Solomon?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But very clearly very fancy women. And they were all upset because I was weeping so copiously. And they said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" And my Frenchman tried to explain to them that I was tired of eating French fries and that's why I was crying. [Laughter] And they were very, very sympathetic, and they bought us this wonderful meal.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And during the course of the evening, I thought one of them put her hand on my leg. And I thought, "Oh my god." And she - we each had - we used to wear stockings with garters in them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And she put something on the top of my stocking. And of course, it was money. And they were Tunisian prostitutes, Jewish prostitutes from Tunisia and started talking about being Jewish. And I'm just incredibly interested in these women.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, I had never met any Jewish prostitutes before, and not to mention the fact that my stomach was full for the first time. And I just thought they were the most loving people I had ever met. So we finished our meal, the wine, the coffee. I had some money in my stocking, you know. And we got up to leave, and some people at the next table had overheard the conversation. And the whole goddamn restaurant got up. And they put their paper napkins - they balled them up and put them in the water glasses and started throwing them at us and screaming, "Get out, Jews, get out, Jews!"

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Fantastic.

MS. TUCKER: I was shocked, absolutely shocked. I was just - I didn't believe it. And Henri grabbed me. We raced upstairs. He wasn't Jewish; he was Catholic, you know, his dark hair. And I have this clear image of this woman standing in this fake fur coat with a paper - wet paper, smashing at her face, and this look of complete dignity on her face and saying, "I'm so sorry you feel that way. Someday you will learn to feel differently" and marching up the stairs. I mean, it - I don't know. When I reached - when we left them and I reached in, I found this slip of paper with their address in case I needed work. And it was. That was what it was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It was a very strange [inaudible]. And a thousand francs, which at that time was two dollars. And we changed it, and Henri gave half of it to the first bum we saw because he was always like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And [inaudible] and we went home. But my life changed from then. I got a job translating for the editor of the Christian Book Club, the [inaudible]. He was doing a book of spirituals. And I was translating, if you can imagine doing that, bad spirituals into French, which was very interesting. They were very nice to me. And Henri got some kind of clerical job for awhile. And so we were able to live in some - oh, and we also met some older American friends, some people named - whose last name was English. And they kept helping us out with little things here and there, a meal here, plastic dishes here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Something, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I've never been so poor.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you know any other Americans while you were there?

MS. TUCKER: I met Steve Rosenthal, actually. He doesn't remember that. But I was knowing - I'm really cursed with a visual memory. I went to his studio in Paris. And then I didn't think anything of it. But about a year and a half ago, I went to his studio here in New York, and I said, "You know, sir, I met you in Paris in 1959, 1960."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And he said, "Oh my god." I described his studio to him.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I went to Hader [phonetic], to visit Hader. I wanted to join his workshop and he didn't want me to.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? He wouldn't take you?

MS. TUCKER: He wanted to use it - what is that wonderful - Andre Noltes [phonetic]?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I wanted to study with him. We had a long talk. He didn't think I had [inaudible] to do his thing. So I didn't.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you really got around, though, I mean, figured out who was who and what was what.

MS. TUCKER: Well, no, I don't think so. I think I fell into a lot of things. But I was very interested in music, and so that's how I met those people. And it's very - I was very happy. I was very happy to be there and very poor. And there's something about - those are the [inaudible]. It was a terrific year for me, it was a terrific year. I mean, I left the kid, and I came back. I came back to a nightmare in the States. But at least I came back as a grownup and better - much better equipped to deal with --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like leaving? I mean, you know, there you were at 20, and you had this --

MS. TUCKER: Of all the moments in my life, outside of the - I mean, some of that came out of it was, leaving France was maybe the most anguish, I mean real palpable anguish that I've ever been through. Henri and I went on a trip. We had very little money, but we went on this impoverished trip to The Netherlands. And then he took me to the boat at - it was either at [inaudible] or Shabul [phonetic]. And I just thought my heart would break. I mean, I never, never have experienced a parting like that. We tried to get married, and I was very much underage and a different religion.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: But his parents were - his parents actually were quite important to me. They had been resistance fighters in the war. And their house in Tulle had been an underground for getting Jews out, actually.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I'm very interested, this interview. It's very funny. I don't think I have ever felt - found so many threads about my ethnic background before now, you know, they are not religious at all. But they met me. And they absolutely - well, my parents, when they heard I was involved with a Catholic, immediately withdrew all their money, not to mention their love. His parents took one look at me, threw their arms around me, and said, "Hello, hello, hello." Right? "Come stay with us." I mean, they were the most wonderful. His grandmother made me a hand-worked slip, which I still have, in one of those drawers. I could actually show it to you. That is just amazing.

MR. CUMMINGS: A little [inaudible], yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Yeah. It was a love that I hadn't really --

MR. CUMMINGS: Whatever happened to him?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he died in Algeria in the war.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MS. TUCKER: You know, I have a whole history of people I love dying.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: But that's what happened to him.

MR. CUMMINGS: So. But anyways, so you came back in what? It was 1960?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I came back, and my mother was desperately ill. I was - had very bad nightmares. I was crying, dreaming in French. All I wanted was for Henri to come to this country. Nobody, I mean, wanted that. My father finally, after a half a year of agony, said to me that he would send - pay the money to send this man, to bring this man over. And I wrote to him, and he said no. He didn't want that. That if they wouldn't - I mean, absolutely, if they didn't welcome him then they didn't welcome him, and he wasn't taking charity from anybody.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And then he was drafted.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: And my memory on all that isn't too clear. But my mother got very, very ill. I went back to school. And my relatives, when my mother got really ill, intimated that if I hadn't been away, things might have been better.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, they always can get you.

MS. TUCKER: Oh they did, very much so.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: My brother wasn't doing too well.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you had to come back to Connecticut College, too, right? Because this was, what, your third year?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, I came back for my last year.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I was a mess. I was just a mess. The only thing was that, ironically, my grades were very good.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I think at that time I had finally gotten enough courage to explain to the dean there that my family was in a mess and that if I was a sporadic student or an erratic student, it was because I had real problems.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: Then they were very accommodating, I must say. I don't know why I thought they wouldn't.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But nobody else did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you weren't accustomed to it. Why would you think they would, you know?

MS. TUCKER: So, I mean, my mother died that year. And she died in the hospital. And there were some very painful circumstances. She wouldn't see me. It was fairly awful. And my father had gotten sicker, so that whenever I was home, I would really have to listen for him, for the breathing. He was in and out of the hospital - incredible man. And so I felt very torn, you know, being away, not being away. So when my mother did die - could you turn off the tape recorder?

[OFF THE RECORD]

MS. TUCKER: And I finished school. But I think that along with everything that period, Henri got killed. Although I didn't know it, I just stopped hearing from him and his parents completely. And I surmised what had happened because I knew he had gone to Algeria.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. One and one - right - equals zero then.

MS. TUCKER: And that was the year I started riding motorcycles, and I turned into sort of - in addition to getting straight A's, I turned into a little criminal. Just before my mother died, I started running away a lot. And it was a very interesting form of running away. I had a friend of mine whose name was Peg Keggleman. And she and I would hop freight trains and travel until we could get off, with a little toothbrush in our back pocket. And invariably, we would get arrested for doing nothing more than sleeping in the back of the gas station.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But it was very romantic at that time, except it didn't turn out romantically because the last time we got arrested, I was charged with soliciting. We got some guys to give us - buy us some sandwiches. She got expelled, and I got put on probation. So not very pleasant. [Inaudible] all that anymore. But she took up with a man at Yale whose name was Peter Newcomer whose father teaches, I think, biology or something at University of Connecticut at Storrs. And she and he - she and Peter Newcomer fell in love and were arrested in the grades scandal because they were singing together in a hotel in New Haven and they'd had to get married. And it was all in the newspapers because it was right after the Suzy scandal at Yale.

MR. CUMMINGS: Suzy scandal; what was that?

MS. TUCKER: A whole bunch of Yalies were caught with a 14-year-old girl.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: My friends weren't exactly right. I think they were fairly serious [inaudible]. He was an anthropologist.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But [inaudible] and went to the West Coast, which figures later on because my husband-to-be and I went out to the West Coast to be with them. But I got very interested in motorcycles and started riding around with some friends. And I think - oh, I know what happened. At this point, I had - after my mother died, I had her car. And I brought the car to school. And I started commuting to the University of Connecticut from Connecticut College because I was doing stage sets for a dance company, and was very interested in --

MR. CUMMINGS: Whose company?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Whose company?

MS. TUCKER: You know, I can't remember.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Connecticut College was a great dance --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It was a company.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I don't know how I got involved. But in my freshman year in college, I had met a man. I had a blind date with a man. And it turned out to be a bizarre and strange evening because I went with a friend of mine, one of the people from the Ugly Club. She had met a man with two fingers on his hand, fallen in love with him. They went off to get married, and anyhow, they brought this man, Tony, with them, who is now, I think the head of the [inaudible] department at Santa Cruz College. And they were more advanced than we were in those days. And Tony and I simply parted in the night, not getting along. But when I went back as a senior to do these sets, Tony came backstage and introduced himself to me. And I went to a place where he was staying. And he was living with a man named Kingsley Drake Bruitard [phonetic] III, who is now a witness [phonetic]. And we all sort of got to be friends, and he introduced me to another man who was an actor who was playing - what is that play? The one about the Puritan and the witchcraft?

MR. CUMMINGS: The Arthur Miller one?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: The Arthur Miller play?

MS. TUCKER: *The Crucible*.

MR. CUMMINGS: *The Crucible*.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. He was doing *The Crucible* at the time. And I remember walking into this space and seeing this woman - this woman, god. Terrific. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] and seeing this man, very, very tall, thin man with an enormous red beard and very long red hair, a scar on his face, who was very interested in me. He didn't - never talked, but yet - "Now, I don't give a red goddamn" is what he would say. And I fell in love with him immediately. And I actually eventually married him. But before I married him, we lived together for a long time, had several insane adventures at college, moved into a place in the Village when I graduated, and bought a motorcycle. I bought the motorcycle. We both learned to drive it. And we went on this incredible adventure across country in 1961.

[END OF DISK ONE]

MR. CUMMINGS: Side two. The motorcycle.

MS. TUCKER: Well, the first cycle I ever rode was actually --

MR. CUMMINGS: What intrigued you about them?

MS. TUCKER: Motorcycles? Oh, mobility.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Complete mobility, lack of expense, control.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it's a rough ride.

MS. TUCKER: It's not, no.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, sometimes it is.

MS. TUCKER: Well, not actually. It depends on the machine that you're riding.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, well, what did you have?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I didn't have a machine at that time. When I bought mine, I had a DSA 650. And it was a thin machine, and it's hard on the road because it sits high, so it's rough on your kidneys because it bounces.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But I got a very good deal on it. I bought it from Kingsley. He was a psychologist who had turned witness and was afraid for Ken.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: So he sold me the bike for 150 dollars. And Michael and I packed it. Well, this whole part of my life has to do with living - when I first left school, I moved into an apartment on Bleaker and Thompson, which is right around the corner from here. And it was a 45-50-dollar-a-month apartment in the basement.

MR. CUMMINGS: What year was that?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: What year was that?

MS. TUCKER: 1961. And I got a job at the Museum of Modern Art, working for Joe Lieberman.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you do that?

MS. TUCKER: Secretary.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I went all over the place.

MR. CUMMINGS: You went and looked for jobs.

MS. TUCKER: I had had many jobs before that. I was in - I taught myself - in a weekend I taught myself how to speed-write.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And with my [inaudible]. I also worked for him. I was a legal secretary for Rod Capalo [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And so I got this job. But it was mainly - supported a lot of us. I needed to support Michael, who had this little basement apartment. Me and Michael - Kingsley would stay there a few days a week. My friend Jeffrey Starr from high school would stay there with his girlfriend a couple of days a week. I had a place that was always open to people. There were people on the floor. I did a series of books called Dick and Jane at Home, which were about my life with Michael and about the thousands of people who lived with us. I fed everybody. And these were also poor years, like, you know, where you put flour in the spaghetti sauce.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: One very funny thing happened. This woman named Jane - there were about seven people to feed

and four eggs. And we couldn't figure out what to do. So Jane said, "All right. Okay. You give me the whites, you take the yellows." And she mixed up the whites with sugar, and I put garlic and green pepper in the yellows, and then we mixed them all together. [Laughter] [Inaudible] it was dreadful, dreadful.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But I was very poor, again, very poor. But it was an open household.

MR. CUMMINGS: What building was that in?

MS. TUCKER: It was in --

MR. CUMMINGS: On Bleaker?

MS. TUCKER: It was right at the Snooky's. It's now the Mi Gon [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I know, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: They have that new thing? It's right next to the Bleaker Street Cinema. It was on the ground floor. And my upstairs neighbor was a man named Harvey Zucker who is now a fine arts photographer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But life was sort of dark and hard. And Michael and I took off, finally. We took off on motorcycles to go to the West Coast. But what was so funny is we rented the place, we sublet the place to a man named Harry Jackson. And Harry Jackson was married to Grace Hardigan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Right? Well, [inaudible] Harry Jackson, because many years later after a terrible motorcycle accident, Harry Jackson showed up and sang me songs day after day in this dreadful tenement, where I couldn't move. And I will always remember the love. I went on a very long trip looking for him in Montana. And of course, now he's a Western doctor.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, cowboys and Indians.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, well, the whole thing gets very - you know. But he was living with a dancer whose name I remember was Stella.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And they took the place.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, they took the place. And Michael and I set off. Now, what we did was that all his friends had gone out on motorcycles, and they shipped back an oak rack and two tin-lined saddlebags to sit on the mufflers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: So we got in and we set out - jerks. We set out for California with three days' practice on the bikes. Well, I'd go one way, and he'd go the other way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And Michael's parents - we weren't married then. But Michael's parents were very kind. My parents - I mean, not my parents - my father was dying. So I couldn't tell my father. I told him I was going with a woman friend on a bus ride. And Michael's parents gave us a couple of hundred dollars and blessings and lots of food. And we set off. And on the first day we went from East Hampton, Connecticut, to Baltimore, where we landed at the home of Max Oakes, who was Soras's [phonetic] cousin and who was a great friend of my husband's and - husband-to-be --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: -- and whom I had bailed out of jail along with my husband Michael many, many times. The Newport Jazz Festival - bailed them out. And he's kind of a good guitarist. So when we got off the bike in Baltimore, we both of us fell off and fainted or threw up. I mean, we had wind - we had blisters, wind burn. We were in terrible shape. So we rested up there a couple of days, and then took off across country. We made it

across in 10 days. We wanted - of all of the trips I have ever taken, I think that was the most wonderful, the most wonderful.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because of what?

MS. TUCKER: First of all, Michael is very quiet, but he's a visual man. And he and I would look at the same thing. We wouldn't even have to talk to each other, just look. Incredible pleasure would build up. Secondly, we camped and so we were outdoors all the time. Riding across the country on a motorcycle in '61-'62 is a great adventure. Cops would pull up to us, and they'd say, "Hey, where are you going? What can we do for you?" People gave us food. People told us stories. Guys would come out in their bathrobes.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was crazy. We camped in wonderful places, wonderful. We'd wake up and we'd never know where the vista was. We'd meet up with motorcyclists. We met up with Hell's Angels.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I wanted to ride with the guy on a big bike.

MR. CUMMINGS: On a big, big. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: That was very dangerous, actually. It was very scary.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But it was quite interesting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Went through the [inaudible] visually. We got rained out in a Navajo reservation, and two Indians on horseback took us through the reservation to put us safely on the road. We went along the Colorado River on a road that wasn't mapped - incredible days. We had to clean the carburetor every couple of miles. I mean, it was a real adventure. It was wonderful. And at the end of it, wind burns, exhausted, strong, right? I mean, with miles of just badland, Dakotas, everything. We landed in North Beach, Green Stream, North Beach. And I looked at it. My friends had told me they lived in North Beach. And I thought they lived on a beach. When we landed in North Beach on Main Street, I got off the motorcycle. I sat on the curb and bawled because we had gone from Greenwich Village to Greenwich Village.

MR. CUMMINGS: The Village. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I didn't believe it. Tears, just hysterical. It was horrible. So we got in. And my friend Newcomer and his wife Patty - Newcomer had been drafted. And we were going West to stay with Patty, who was my best friend, while Newcomer went to the army. So we had this - we came just in time for dinner - huge feast, all his buddies. And we all got drunk and sent Newcomer off to the army. You know, he was back the next morning. He had a dislocated shoulder, and they wouldn't take him. So, Michael and I got moved out to the porch, got foreign quarters, spent the whole summer on the porch, feeding the two couples hating each other. And they finally divorced. Michael and I got so poor that I was caught shoplifting food from the Italian village supermarket because I had salami and bologna in my brassier under my army jacket, and they got me.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Oh dear.

MS. TUCKER: And we decided to get married to alleviate the strain. So this is another whole story, which gets very complicated, too. We - it was bitter. It was very bitter, you know, not only because when you don't eat - when you don't eat, something happens to you. And there's not much you can do. You can't buy gas for the bikes. You can't - you know, you can't do anything. You can't talk to each other. All you think of is food. [Inaudible] When I think about it [inaudible] mostly all about poverty, over and over, poverty, poverty.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So I wired home, all my friends at home, and we gathered together about 75-80 dollars, took off for Ensenada on the motorcycle to get married. And I know this doesn't sound very sane, but I did not ask my husband how old he was.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I thought he was - I know it's not [inaudible]. When I met him, he's balding. He looked about 30.

And I was crazy. I never asked him. So we got down to Mexico. We went there because I was underage. It turned out he was only 17.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So it was very shocking. It was very shocking. We had started a license, we did everything. We bought rings. And then they said, "Well, you know what the age limits are." And Michael said, "You're kidding."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I didn't believe it. [Inaudible] Well, it was typical of my life. I elope with this man who is underage.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] What did you do?

MS. TUCKER: Well, first I had a good laugh.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] I thought it was the funniest thing. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] He was younger than you were.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, much. [Laughter] Three years. Three years. I was about to be 21, and he was 17. Slipped out the side door without you. [Laughter] We got on the motorcycle and we came home, you know, and I let it go.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So we headed back across the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh dear.

MS. TUCKER: So when we got to - we got to Aspen, Colorado. And among the motorcycle buddies that we have - really, it was a group of very close friends, Peter Newcomer and his wife Patty Keggleman, a man named Buck Sheffman [phonetic], who was the son of the person who owns the Sheffman liquor thing and who eventually married a woman named Bambi, if you can imagine that - Buck and Bambi Sheffman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Of course.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, of course.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why not?

MS. TUCKER: Well, we thought he had a Motogucci, which is a really interesting bike, which always fell over and had something wrong with it. And then Ed Durham - and Ed Durham - his stepfather is a member of the Fine Arts Quartet. And it's Leonard - oh, what's his name? - Succold. Anyway, it's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MS. TUCKER: Well, his mother married this guy. So what happened was, we met in Aspen, and they had this huge wedding reception for us, the Fine Arts Quartet. And everybody was [inaudible]. And I [inaudible] that we weren't really married. [Laughter] We pretended we'd been married.

MR. CUMMINGS: That he was three years younger. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So we stayed [inaudible], and had a very beautiful time. We would just sleep in this little room. And we'd wake up in the morning, and the Fine Arts Quartet would be playing. And during [inaudible], the smell of bread would come floating out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, good.

MS. TUCKER: Mmm, sister, what is that? She was an incredible woman who performed at the Guggenheim in [inaudible], I think that's what it's called. It's a one-person thing, this woman named Ann. I can't remember her last name. And this sort of sculpture stuff - she's very [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, the [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: With the [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, a sort of honeysuckle thing. Well, we did the best we could, and we went home, where we got married eventually. But it was a very awful and strange marriage because - actually, the day we were getting married, I was trying on a dress. And the guy, Ed Durham's stepfather, came by to visit us, thinking we had been married and had this celebration in his house.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, right.

MS. TUCKER: Walked in to discover we were about to get married.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] He was very nice. He was very nice.

MR. CUMMINGS: What could he say, right?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he sort of funny, but I was crying and he comforted me. So we did get married, despite everybody's wishes - everybody's.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh dear.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Well, what happened is that my father died not too long after that. My relatives all said, "If you get married, you'll see. Your father will drop dead." And he did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did they really say that?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why?

MS. TUCKER: Well, you know, it's very hard to explain a Jewish family. They don't mean badly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: But they're trying to warn you off or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see. Hm.

MS. TUCKER: Hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: So what did you do then? I mean, here you were, you were back in New York, right, living where?

MS. TUCKER: Well, now, let's see. Came back to New York, got an apartment on - we moved out of Bleaker Street onto Waverly Place, right off of Sixth Avenue. And what did I do? Did I have a business there? I certainly wasn't working for the Modern anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: So that must have been what, '63, '62?

MS. TUCKER: Sixty-three. Good grief, I can't remember what I was doing. It will say on my resume what I was doing. [Laughter] I remember that we had a lot of people living with us once again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And Joel Friedman, who is a filmmaker, and Bob Dewey lived upstairs. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: Where about was this on Waverly Place?

MS. TUCKER: Waverly right off Sixth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Towards your - right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That's very funny, but I think I must have started my talent business then.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, went up to the Howell collection and stuff.

MS. TUCKER: I think so, but I can't remember.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what did you do for Lieberman at the Modern? Because that was --

MS. TUCKER: I was his secretary.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Just answered the phone and his letters and --

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. I loved taking care of rich women.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. How did you like that? Because that was your first sort of art institutional thing?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I hated it. But I had no [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Small world, isn't it?

MS. TUCKER: Yes, it is. Bill always was difficult.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: He was not an easy person to work for.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. But did you learn things? Did you see any art? Did you work, you know, in the - whatever the institution is all about?

MS. TUCKER: Lucy was there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, Lucy was there.

MS. TUCKER: Of course, I was very interested in the library.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I didn't think very much about art, that kind of art. I didn't like the institution. I'd spent a lot of time looking at art, but on my own. And I also at that time, because of my husband, spent a lot of time with people. My husband was learning to play the guitar. And Kingsley Drake Bruitard III, who had sold me his motorcycle, was playing the lute. And the two of them were singing like angels. And they found a soprano. And they trained me as an alto, much against my will. I couldn't sing at all. But we sang of lot of Elizabethan songs. And around - there was a lot of music around the house all the time. But it got more intense after the accident.

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the accident was when I was on Waverly. Oh, no wonder I don't remember what I was doing on Waverly Place: It was because I was in an accident. My dates are really hazy. And I can look them up probably someplace, but I don't know. It was in the summer. We got married, moved to Waverly Place. So we'd been living there. We got married in December and stayed in Waverly Place. And I must have been doing odd jobs here and there. Oh, I know. I was working for Rene Bouchet [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, the famous - right.

MS. TUCKER: The fashion designer, designer and painter and so forth, as his amenuensis. And I was going to school. That's what I was doing. I was going to graduate school at the Institute of Fine Art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Aha.

MS. TUCKER: And working for Rene full time. And one weekend toward the summer, we went out to a place near Tonaya [phonetic] to visit some friends who were potters and musicians. And when I came home at the end of the weekend, my father had died. And he had given up one way or another.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I sat in mourning for four days, which is what - you're supposed to sit in mourning, sit Shiva for whatever - it's supposed to be a week. I sat for four days and couldn't cope with it at all anymore in my little apartment and said to Michael, "I think I'd better go to the ocean. I can't cope. I can't deal with this."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: My brother was ill at the time and was in the hospital, I think. So we got on the motorcycle, and I said - I just told my relatives I couldn't do it anymore. And we were headed out to Montauk. And we were going by way of Queens because there was a nut under the seat - I wasn't driving, I was in the back - that needed to

be replaced. So we were going to swing over and hit a body shop and get the nut replaced --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: -- and a man driving a Hertz rent-a-car, an Argentinean man, not knowing that you shouldn't pass on the right, passed on the right, knocked us over. My husband went flying in a great arc. And I got crushed between the car fender and the kickstand on the bike and went down, had an incredible concussion. And never lost consciousness, but when we finally got the ambulance and so forth, I was in very bad shape. My father died four days before, so there was no money, no insurance. They took me to Elvers [phonetic] General Hospital, the welfare hospital. And I had - I was a mess, a complete mess. I didn't walk for a year, at least.

MR. CUMMINGS: A year?

MS. TUCKER: Walked [inaudible] stayed here another year. I dashed around very, very loudly. I fell on all fours. And I hadn't coped with my father's death yet so that I mostly screamed in the hospital.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And the people were very rude. They're very rude in the welfare hospitals. It's terrible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And so I stayed there for a long time. And I got gangrene.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: And they wouldn't tell me. Well, they forgot to take the upper part of the cast off.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, jeez.

MS. TUCKER: So I got myself to a telephone and called - I know one of my uncles was quite famous. He's an admiral in the dental corps.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was he?

MS. TUCKER: Samuel Wools [phonetic]. Actually, he is very famous, and he - as I understood it, he was Chang Kai Sheck's dentist - but he knows a lot, a lot of people. They got me transferred to a hospital for joint diseases, and they got me out of there within a day.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I took off the cast and discovered I had gangrene in the top of my leg and underneath it was horrible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: They started to clean up. But I was in the hospital for months and months. It took me a very long time to learn to walk, a very long time to learn to move at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: But what did you do all that time? I mean, you were just there as a patient?

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, partly I'd play the guitar. I read like a maniac. I'll tell you what, I don't know if you've ever been in a hospital for a long period of time.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: But what you learn to do is this: In order to get off the bed to go to the bathroom takes about three weeks of solid work. I mean, you can spend your whole day trying to figure out how to get the strength to move your body like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Two inches.

MS. TUCKER: You need to concentrate on it. And being, you know, in that way seriously ill is a test of - I mean, it's more than that. There's nothing that can explain what that's like. You don't just lie there. Your will moves you

so that everything - learning to sit up takes days. Learning to keep food down takes days. Learning to use a spoon yourself, learning how to get out of the bed into a wheelchair, get yourself in the bathroom and on the john - it was major stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Then you have all the - I mean, really great, interesting days. For instance, the crutches, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Of course.

MS. TUCKER: Aha, a whole new adventure out there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, first how to get onto the crutches, then how to - I mean -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: Every small thing that you take for granted - eating, sleeping, talking - all of those are acts of will.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's like starting all over again.

MS. TUCKER: I've never taken walking for granted since, ever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. Hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I lost my hearing. I don't hear clear anymore out of either ear. I spent my time trying to get better.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it was how many months?

MS. TUCKER: I don't remember - two, three months?

MR. CUMMINGS: Three, four?

MS. TUCKER: No. A year without the walking, but about - no more than two or three months in the hospital altogether.

MR. CUMMINGS: But then you came out of the hospital into where, at the Waverly place?

MS. TUCKER: Well, no, we had no place to go. My husband had moved us out. And we went to stay at Jeffrey's, a friend of mine's house, my high school friend, Jeffrey Starr's place, which was very sordid and messy. That's when Harry Jackson came and sang to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, okay.

MS. TUCKER: He sang me bawdy songs.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And a woman named Diamond Stevenson, who is now Lipincott, came and took care of me from time to time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: And I sat with my leg up. And then we moved out to the country, to Spring Valley, New York. And my husband thought it would be nice for me not to have to walk upstairs. No one could come to visit us in Spring Valley, New York.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right. You're nowhere.

MS. TUCKER: That's when Kennedy was assassinated. Well, what happened was, everybody who had a motorcycle came out.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's still really a motorcycle world.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but I mean you weren't in any other kind of cultural scene. That was the culture.

MS. TUCKER: But the motorcyclists, I knew.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Some were anthropologists, Morris dancers. Mostly they were anthropologists that I hung out with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why anthropologists?

MS. TUCKER: All these guys were, Bucky, Durham. I don't know; they just were. A lot of anthropologists.

MR. CUMMINGS: How strange. How strange.

MS. TUCKER: Who did carpentry, like my husband.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: A few musicians like Kingsley and Carol. And the music got very intense then.

MR. CUMMINGS: So nobody was really living on very much. And it was --

MS. TUCKER: They were all poor.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- catch as catch can.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] They came out, and for awhile they would take care of me. But then after awhile, it got to be just music, you know. So I would cook. And they did music.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kind of music?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, wonderful music, [inaudible], all kinds of Elizabethan songs. And Kingsley and Michael did [inaudible] exercises constantly.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I tried to paint upstairs, which was [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: What was your painting like now?

MS. TUCKER: Frantic.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, painting --

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Painting sort of just over and over and over, right?

MS. TUCKER: I wasn't very interested in the painting anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: No?

MS. TUCKER: I really lost it. Besides - no, I'm sorry. All our [inaudible] had gone. I painted portraits then. I painted portraits of - there was a very - a family very important to me, who I'm still very connected to. Carl Nordstrom taught economics at Brooklyn and wrote a couple of books then. He wrote a book with Edgar Friedenberg called Growing Up in America. But they were doing some research on Machshimer's [phonetic] theory of [inaudible]. And my husband, who had not had very many jobs in his life, when I was incapacitated, went out and got a job house painting. He was house painting for Carl Nordstrom. And Nordstrom realized that something was a little strange, that my husband was a little strange, and used to send him home with [inaudible]. And then Nordstrom came over to meet me, and time passed. And my husband was leaving me every morning to go house painting and leaving me with some food and some records and some books, take me to the bathroom before he went. And then I would have to wait for him to come back to take me to the bathroom again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh!

MS. TUCKER: It was crazy. It was very bad. And Carl came over and discovered me there, and out of the kindness of his heart gave me a job transcribing tapes for this theory. They were interviews of classical students. I had a job again. I was so happy. So I'd sit propped up with the typewriter and transcribe.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So I transcribed for him for years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And he and Edgar - he was a wonderful man. I'm absolutely --

MR. CUMMINGS: That's the [inaudible]. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I adored him. And he was a great intellect. His wife was a wonderful cook and a marvelous reader and raconteur, and they had four girls. Martha was the youngest. Becky was the second; Kit, and then Carla Joy. Well, Carla was a good friend of the museums and has helped with that. And she cooked for the Jensen dinner because she's a great chef. And so I know them all. But - so he gave me something to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Good.

MS. TUCKER: And was absolutely crucial for a whole period of my life because he was somebody I could talk about ideas with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And very important to me. They're all little people.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean?

MS. TUCKER: Short.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, little people.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Also happily married.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's unusual in your world, it seems.

MS. TUCKER: Very happily married, incredible. It was very nice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Hm. But now, what happened when you finally became mobile again?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I went back to school. I actually went back to school before I became mobile. I went back to school on crutches. And some people from the Institute still remember me as that kid with crutches.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Now, how did you pick the Institute?

MS. TUCKER: Because Rene Bouchet, when I was working for him, I wanted to take - as a painter I wanted to take some courses. And I heard that Tenusky [phonetic] was teaching a course. And I had read Oriental English painting. I got very excited. So I tried to audit. And they said, "Well, you can't audit one of his classes." And I said, "Why?" And I was accepted just like that. I said, "Okay, I'll do it." By then my - well --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what was your intent?

MS. TUCKER: No intent at all, just to learn. Look. My parents were dead.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Nobody cared what grades I got. For the first time in my life, no one cared. My husband could care less.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was your own choice.

MS. TUCKER: I still like doing it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But - hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: Well, so they said I was accepted. And I found out that, instead of signing for two courses or for one course, I signed up for three because they were all interesting. And that was it. So I found myself working

for Rene, going to the Institute three nights a week. Right after the accident, Rene - it was an odd thing. But the accident was on a Saturday. I got conscious on Sunday and got my husband to make the telephone call and got a woman in to take over my job on Monday. He didn't even miss a day. He didn't miss a day. But when I finally was well enough to get to the phone and call him and find out about my job, he wasn't sure that I could have it back.

MR. CUMMINGS: You'd done a good job replacing yourself.

MS. TUCKER: It wasn't so much that. It was the kindness of some people and the lack of kindness of other people. And he died very shortly after that.

MR. CUMMINGS: He wasn't very old either, was he?

MS. TUCKER: No, he was very young.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: But when I got out of the hospital, finally, I had to go back to work, I did filing for Lee, which is how I got to the Copleys [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I was so broke that she told Melba Copley that she had this kid filing for her, and I went up to work for the Copleys to file. And the Copleys were very astute. And Melba looked at me and she said, "Now, what exactly is your story?" [Laughter] [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Then you had another short Bill Copley to work with.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I didn't think of him as short. I thought he was a pretty huge person. I have been very gifted about people in my life because most of them have been very kind. I don't think Bouchet was very kind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm. But what did you do for Copley, then?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I started out filing. Then I became their amenuensis and I took care of their collection. I did everything. I mean, I boiled their - I don't know. I boiled eggs. I packed suitcases. I wrote letters. I talked to them. I entertained Duchamp one day when they were away. They became very close friends. And the kids became very close friends. It wasn't like a regular job.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But that's another whole story because I think that a lot of the people I met - you know, Warhol, Larry Bell, Walter Hopps, Man Ray, the Penroses, Mike Todd, Cliff Westermann --

MR. CUMMINGS: All the surrealists or people who came to - the California people --

MS. TUCKER: Everybody. Met them all through the Copleys, who always said, "Stay for dinner, stay for dinner." And they were very kind. They weren't kind, they were just like very relaxed.

MR. CUMMINGS: They were living where, on 69th Street?

MS. TUCKER: Sixty-ninth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But [inaudible] Noma was quite complicated.

MR. CUMMINGS: With whom?

MS. TUCKER: Noma, George's wife.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I don't remember her. I mean, [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Well, see, I was still married to Michael Tucker, who is a, you know, [inaudible], and turned [inaudible]. We studied at the Institute, but --

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, I just want to get - okay. You had the job, right? You'd gone to the Institute.

MS. TUCKER: Well, at one time I had six jobs.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Every day a different one?

MS. TUCKER: No. All six in one day, usually. I was full-time for the Institute. I wrote for *ARTnews*. I worked for - let's see. I worked for the [inaudible] Gallery of Fine Arts [inaudible]. I was still doing the transcribing tapes on [inaudible]. I can't even remember all of it. I really - I know I had six jobs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did you do that Ferdinand Howell business? In New York, or did you travel back and forth?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah. I would go out there for a few days, come back. Oh, I was teaching at Rhode Island, University of Rhode Island. It was very crazy. But I discovered that I had a capacity for - an infinite capacity for work. I mean infinite. It was the only thing that would - I think now in many ways I see that capacity for work as a way of not dealing with so many leavings, so many deaths, so many abandonments that I had when I was a child.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Because there's just a limit to how much you can work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Of course, for me I always think there's no limit to how much I can work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. You keep going and that takes up the time and the day and the energy [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: But in a way, I love it. I mean, if I were just working, I would say, okay, this is bad. But I really enjoy my work. I enjoy my work tremendously. I don't even think of it as my work. I enjoy my life tremendously. It's not that I could separate the work from the rest.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, let's talk about the Institute. What did you do there? Did you have a program? Or were you just sort of trying things?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I wasn't good. I was going to do [inaudible]. But the first day I was there, I talked to Panusky. I remember dropping my contact lens, and Panusky and I are kneeling on the floor looking for it. But I took more than I could. That seems to be a way that I do things. It gives - if I go to take one course, I think, "Well, I'll take two." But if I had just had two, well, I'd take three. So I ended up studying with Panusky and van Blankenhagen and Goldwater who was my mentor. I loved it. I loved it. It was --

MR. CUMMINGS: What appealed to you? I mean, the people or the material?

MS. TUCKER: I hated the people.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I did not like the teachers. I did not like the materials. What appealed to me was the ability in an hour to be the recipient of a vast quantity of information and see how much of it I could get in. And all of it was interesting to me, all of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what about the other students? Were you interested in any of them? Or was it --

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, well, some of us knew each other. I knew Coby Russman, you know. I knew - Eunice Lipton was this - she was Lury at the time. She was my best friend and companion. Tall Savage, Tom Savage. I knew Mark Hampton. I mean, just, I was good friends with these people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what about the instructors? I mean, did you get to know any of them or were they pretty --

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I got to know Barney Rosenberg.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Who just could be [inaudible] and very supportive [inaudible]. But Goldwater and I did get close. None of them [inaudible]. But when he died, I had been to his house several times. And he had been to dinner at my house several times. And I liked him very much because he had the ability to contradict himself. And I think he was the most important influence on me simply because he was a man of great knowledge. He was much more cynical than I was. And I think that through my life people have accused me of a lack of cynicism and have very often laughed at me for it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Why?

MS. TUCKER: Well, they've always said, "Oh my god, this is traumatic. You can't" - lots of times people have told me what I can't do. Otherwise they'll say, "Well, isn't - that's nice. But you can't do that." I mean, starting with my leg. When they finally repaired my leg after all that time, they sat me down and they said to me - well, no, that wasn't true. But at first, they said, "Look. We will have to amputate your leg. And you are going - right below the knee, and you have to live without the use of one leg." And I said, "No, that is not reasonable." I got myself transferred out. Then when they fixed me up, they said, "You will walk, but you will never walk without a cane." Then they said, "Well, you will walk without a cane, but you're never going to walk without a very serious limp." Right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I don't have a limp. Sometimes I do. There are some things I can't do, I mean really can't do them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, lifting things or --

MS. TUCKER: No, I can lift things fine.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. No.

MS. TUCKER: But if I walk for three miles on the beach, my leg swells up and I can't do anything.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MS. TUCKER: I can't mountain-climb. I cannot run. I mean, I can run, you know, but I can't do six-mile jogs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: However, I mean, I managed to try Balinese dancing and African dancing and, you know. But it starts with that. People are always saying, "Well, you can't," you know, "You can't be a curator and be out of the museum all the time." "You can't be a curator and dress like that."

MR. CUMMINGS: Some of us --

MS. TUCKER: You can't - what?

MR. CUMMINGS: Some of us are curators and are hardly ever at the museum.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Right.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: That's what I mean. Or you can't look like that, you can't act like that and be this. You can't - you can't, you know? So --

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. Well, what - you know, so you went to the Institute for what, a couple of years?

MS. TUCKER: No, I went for many years. I went from 1962 to --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's right, 1969.

MS. TUCKER: To 1970. Yeah, I went for a long time. I lasted. I was good at it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Maybe that's [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: I think art history is terrific as long as you don't get stuck in it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] What does that mean?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that - you know, to be corny about it, the more firmly rooted you are in the past, the more adventurous you can be in the present. Or the more - I'm not interested in research and scholarship and the reiteration of something that's already been done. But I don't see how you can deal with what's happening now without having a very firm understanding and respect for what's gone in the past. Actually, the truth of the matter is, I think I've done almost everything I've done out of love and desire to do it and not so much out of thinking that I was supposed to have a degree or anything. I mean, I stopped just before I got my doctorate. And a lot of people were at pains to say, "Oh, you'll feel sorry. You won't -- you may" - you know, and I can hear my mother saying, "Take education credits so you have something to fall back on."

MR. CUMMINGS: To fall back on. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I said I have my life to fall back on. I don't need to do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm. Did you think that that was really helpful, I mean, studying ancient culture and all those ideas --

MS. TUCKER: Yes, very much.

MR. CUMMINGS: And of German procedure?

MS. TUCKER: It was wonderful.

MR. CUMMINGS: But has it been practical? I mean, have you found that it's --

MS. TUCKER: I don't think that anything is ever practical in your life. If you say to yourself, "Well, has such-and-such an experience in your past been practical?" How does one know whether it has or it hasn't?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I mean, in terms of opening you up to what's going on today?

MS. TUCKER: No, of course not. But it teaches you how to make a good fight, a good case for what you believe in. And also, I really love looking at art, and the point is that whether it's useful or not, my greatest pleasures come from looking at things and hearing things, too, but differently from looking at things. I think the discipline of research and of writing, caring about what you're doing, about being thoughtful, exploring all of the possibilities, writing in an organized, orderly way in order to let other people have access to your thoughts is very useful.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I don't even question that. I think it's a little stuffy. But then I mean, I wasn't stuffy, so it was stuffy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. It could be stuffy to do what you wanted to do.

MS. TUCKER: To do what you want.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. Do you find it was that - was useful in the same thing, being museum experience or in terms of the teaching you did?

MS. TUCKER: In terms of teaching very much. In terms of museum experience, I suppose maybe. But I mean, the point is that the contacts I made, people like Goldwater and Martha Vaughn, who was a colleague of mine in von Wagenheimer's class and who has been a very, very old friend of mine - those are people who recommended me for the job even without my knowing it. I somehow suspect - I think that question is not [inaudible]. It's not so much that what you do is what is going to make you happy. It's more that you be the kind of person who seeks out things in your life that seem right for you. I mean, if I had been a different person I would have done something else. I don't feel there is only one right way. I'm changing a lot. I mean, my ideas about how to live are very different. I don't think that I've ever been interested in my career. But I have always been very much interested in my work. And that's been a great --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean by that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I've never planned a career. I never planned a career as a museum person.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: I want to be a museum person, I should do this to make that work and I should do that. I have always tried to do the work that I felt was important to me, for me, not even for anybody else. It's very selfish. But mostly, you know - it would take me a long time to - that's an idea - that's an aspect of the way one thinks about one's life and one's work rather than a biographical kind of thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And it would be nice to talk about that, I think, some other time - there's quite a bit - sometimes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Most of the time when I was - that I was growing up I was struggling to make ends meet and I was struggling to - not to get - it's funny - to get the education I thought I needed for myself, whether that was what anybody else needed.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Right.

MS. TUCKER: There was no guardian for that. There's nobody once the parents are gone. Who is to say that you should go to graduate school or not go to graduate school?

MR. CUMMINGS: Sure. Sure, sure.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, I mean, I could have gone -- I was seriously interested at one time in doing some women's motorcycle racing. I could have - I don't think that that is absurd that I could have made that a real career.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: You know? I mean, it's an interesting thing to do. It has all of the - I think it shares many things with this life, I mean the whole life I'm living right now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, do you know - I'd like to stick in the Institute for a little while.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And that is, you know, one doesn't really study much art after 1900.

MS. TUCKER: I know.

MR. CUMMINGS: If not 1800. So how did that, you know, preparation prepare you to, you know, look at the work of 25-year-old artists?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think there was --

MR. CUMMINGS: It was something else.

MS. TUCKER: It was almost by default. I wanted to do some work on Robert Morris because I met a man in Aspen one year, '66, and I hated his work. I hated him. I hated the whole - so I've always gotten interested in [inaudible]. You know, I always know why I don't like it. And so I was taking a course in contemporary sculpture with Goldwater, and I asked him if I could do that. And he said, "Why do you want to do that?" I said, "Well, that's why I want to do that." And he let me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I had to fight to deal with contemporary art at the Institute, except to Goldwater, who always wanted me to defend what I had to do, intelligently. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. But what about Rosenberg? Was he sort of cringe-ally involved in contemporary art?

MS. TUCKER: I didn't know him that well at the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: I did take a course with Phil Rosen, and that's why I quit.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: Because he talked about the authentic art of our time as opposed to novelty art. And the authentic art of our time was everything that Greenberg had supported, including many things borrowed from Ruben's own collection. And novelty art - as one aspect of novelty art, he cited, quote, "Some girls who make plastic camels," unquote. And it was Nancy Graves, that was my first show at the Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I just decided I didn't want to engage on that level.

MR. CUMMINGS: So what was important was what he was invested in.

MS. TUCKER: It wasn't even that. I didn't want - there is a moment when life is insane - seems to people to be a race to the finish. And I'd had enough of any of that. I mean, it wasn't even in my realm of thinking. If I had to defend - there are two kinds of energies, the energy put toward defending something and energy put toward supporting something. I wanted to put the energy toward supporting, not toward defending. And I have always felt that because as a kid I was not [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Defending?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I just thought, no. Why should I?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: You know, I just couldn't. I couldn't. No, I couldn't.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. So there were no other options there, in other words.

MS. TUCKER: But even in that, you know, that's the way it is. There is some moment in which you decide to work for things instead of against things. And I realized that if I stayed at the Institute, I would have to spend the whole rest of my time working defending against my beliefs instead of working for them. There wasn't a support system to it. I was ready at the Whitney, and at the Whitney there was a support system for that. There was Jack Fowler. And that seemed a better place. I mean, I didn't think - yes, I didn't think that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, what - you know, you said that Margo Barr- recommended you and that obviously you and Jack Fowler got along or something happened.

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's a whole story.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, which we'll go into later because it's only a little bit left.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Tell me the Howell collection. How did you get that job, to catalog it? Do you remember that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I have to go back a ways because I moved to Spring Valley. When I recovered from the accident, I recovered more [inaudible]. And the money from my father came through, which was at a very odd time. We had bought a [inaudible] completely. And we had finally given up, we had divided the rice - well, actually, we bought the rice and some milk, cooked it up, and divvied it between me and Michael and the cat. And then hadn't eaten for three days - on the fourth day we hadn't eaten, we got a check for 20,000 dollars, which was from my father's insurance policy. So I mean, we didn't have enough gas in the car. So we had to siphon it off so that we could take the car. And we drove into New York, and I cashed the check - I mean, I deposited it and took 100 dollars out. And I bought three dresses for a dollar at [inaudible]. And then Michael and I went out and ate hamburgers and got sick.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Very strong - I remember, we walked in there, and then woops.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: We decided to move back to the city. I decided to move back. I couldn't take the country anymore. And it was too much of a commute, and I wasn't willing to drive anymore after the accident. So we moved back to - we got a place. First we lived in the Hotel Albert for awhile.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: That was fun. Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, your friendly neighborhood hotel. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And then I found a place at Seven West Eighth Street. And we were there for awhile, with three closets.

MR. CUMMINGS: Seven West Eighth?

MS. TUCKER: Seven West Eighth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right across from the old Whitney.

MS. TUCKER: I used to see them there all the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's right. You were on East Street.

MS. TUCKER: And so when we got - at a certain point, working for the Copleys still, well, a lot of things had happened. But when I got back and was working for the Copleys and working for *ARTnews* and still going to school, trying to get a degree, I had a period of having very bad dreams and sort of stemming from this matrix. And I simply - things didn't make any sense at the time. And I knew that I was very unhappy, but I didn't know exactly why. And what I did finally was that - I was sort of sick, I guess. I was out on Eighth Street walking one day and realized that I had been in a state of crisis for most of my adult life and most of my childhood life and that I was tired of it. The pressure stopped and I just made a decision at the time that I didn't want to live that way anymore. And I came home and called up my friends and made very distinctive breaks with most of my friends. I quit my job, kicked my husband out, and started again. And I remember after this - it took me two days to do all this - sitting alone in my place, feeling okay, just really pretty good. And - well, it's very hard for me to get the chronology of events to work right. But at some point after that, I started seeing a man who was a filmmaker, popular, and found him a loft on 26th Street, and was commuting between my place on Eighth Street and 26th Street. And I just realized, I just said, I don't feel like working for anybody again. So I sat down very seriously for a week to think about the possibilities of making a business for myself. And this was on Eighth Street at the time. And I thought that I would start it because [inaudible] private collections. And I called up Lucy Lafarge who had done that for awhile and got some advice and simply started. Made a card, told a lot of people, got jobs right away. And among the jobs I got after a while was the Howell collection. They contacted me. And I went out and looked at the job, decided I could do it, would be interested in doing it, and started it. And they didn't know very much about what they wanted. They certainly - I was far more professional than they were, even not knowing what was necessary, because I had come from an academic background. And there's a certain - one of the things that you learn at the Institute is, don't do anything unless you do it thoroughly. You know, don't bother.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: So I did that [inaudible]. And I said I would do it, and I hired somebody. I had some very interesting people working for me on that project. Kasha Lindo, Kasha Bullow [phonetic] was one. Debra Friedman, who was a painter, was another one. Laura Green worked for me for a very long time before she went back to bed. It took a long time to get that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that was a big job, then?

MS. TUCKER: A big job, then. Well, I took it on myself. I didn't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I enjoyed it, except that Columbus is an inhospitable town, to say the least. And they hadn't - I don't think they leased to me, particularly, because I'm a very odd woman to work with. But I think the job ended successfully in that we were both quite pleased with it. It was made into a book.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with the Barr collection? Was that through Margo at the Institute?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Margo became a very close friend of mine because she - when I was getting - splitting up from Michael, I was working for the Copleys. And one day Michael had called me. I was working there, and he had called me. And I was very upset. It was after we had split up. And I just raced out of work, crying. And I ran into her in the hall and knocked her over.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And you know, really knocked her over and didn't stop to say - you know, say I'm sorry. And that night she called me at home in this wonderful, booming voice, and said, "This is Mrs. Barr." And I was very afraid of her. And what she was - by the time I got through that - she was saying that she had an extra room and if I

wanted to get away, I could come and stay. I mean, it was the kindest thing anyone had ever offered. And that's how we became friends, you know, and we have been friends ever since. And that's - I don't even remember it. It's a long time ago, many years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But, yeah, I did that collection at first. They always had wonderful collections.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you work for a lot of people, a lot of collectors over the years?

MS. TUCKER: I worked for her and for the Copleys. And I did the Howell collection. I worked for some other people who actually stopped me because [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] I wasn't earning a lot of money, but I was happy. And then I taught.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like that? Because that was your first teaching, wasn't it, for awhile?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. I loved it. It took about two minutes, and I loved it. And Rae Morton was one of my first students. She was in the first class that I taught. And that's how we became friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: She was a registered nurse, gone back to school. And it was [inaudible]. It was as close a thing to instant friendship as I have ever had. And it's long-term friendship.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm. So you really had a lot of little activities going until you got the museum job.

MS. TUCKER: Well, then I was involved in a lot of activities, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I was with Mr. Sheffner before I got that museum job. I was working with Sheffner in a workshop situation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was he now?

MS. TUCKER: The head of the [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh my god.

MS. TUCKER: And I had joined this theater workshop, and there was a real possibility of joining that group. And David [inaudible] was in the same workshop. And he was at the Whitney at the time, and I had just gotten the job. And I opted for the job, but never stopped doing theater.

MR. CUMMINGS: You've always been involved with theater.

MS. TUCKER: Well, since --

MR. CUMMINGS: For a long time.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. But why have you never done more with it, in terms of - or has it just been, you know, something to do?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't exactly need something to do. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: I'm sorry I said it that way. [Laughter] You know. I mean, you've never really plunged into it in a professional way to make a living out of it.

MS. TUCKER: I guess I think it would have ruined a lot of enjoyment for me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: I managed to do exactly what I wanted to do. I studied with some wonderful people. I worked with Herbert Blau, I worked with students from Shalitel [phonetic] Company. I studied with a wonderful voice teacher.

I have a terrific group of people who - you know, I have two theater groups.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: There's absolutely no reason for me to start having to do scene study.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: To get crazy, you know. Also if I were to earn a living now after all those years of poverty and being very - once again, very poor, I'd say that if I'm going to earn a living, this time I'm going to do it. You know, I mean, I can put a quarter of the energy that I put toward other things toward earning a living, and that's how I make money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I did theater because I did it the way I wanted to do it. And it's with an incredible --

MR. CUMMINGS: Rewards and places, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, wonderful for me. I have no qualms.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what happened when you, you know, when you found out the museum was interested in you? Because that certainly wasn't part of your plan or program or an option or anything.

MS. TUCKER: Well, actually, I almost didn't find out because I was talking to my brother on the phone. And I'd opened this thing from the Whitney. I thought it was a press release, actually. I was going through mail after a trip away. And I threw it away. I was not opening because I thought it was a press release. And my brother went on and on and on. So I went through the mail, through the waste basket, and pulled the things out again that I hadn't opened to read them while I was talking to him. And it was [inaudible]. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But it was a letter saying, please come and apply for this job. And I didn't want it. [Inaudible] I mean, I went to tell them why I didn't want it. And they were interested.

MR. CUMMINGS: In your not wanting it?

MS. TUCKER: No. I think that the reasons I didn't want it interested them, not my not wanting it.

MR. CUMMINGS: And who were you talking to, Jack Fowler?

MS. TUCKER: Jack Fowler, yeah. Well, then after all, they couldn't decide between me and Jim Monty, so they kind of [inaudible], which --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was another experience.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was funny. You know, David was the one who hired me. I told him - after about 10 minutes conversation, I said, "Oh, look. Come on. Let me tell you why you don't want to hire a woman. You don't want to hire me because you think men won't work for me. You don't want to hire me because you think I won't be able to do budgets. I won't be able to travel because I'll fall in love with somebody and race across the country following them because, you know, once I met them we'd go crazy." And you know. So he was very funny. He said, "What was that all about?" I said, "What does that mean?"

MR. CUMMINGS: I just moved across the country. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] Right. No, he hired me right then.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And he hired Margo, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But he hired me for 2000 dollars less a year than he hired Margo. I didn't find out about that for

awhile. When I did, I really raised the roof.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's about the end of our -

[END OF DISK TWO]

MR. CUMMINGS: Anyway, this is side three of the 18th of August, 1974 [sic], Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Tucker at 140 Sullivan Street. A couple of things. One is when you left the Institute of Fine Arts or when you started going there, did you have a purpose? I mean, did you want to teach? Did you want to write? Did you want to do museum work? Any particular program?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I was a painter or I was studying to be a painter.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. But I mean, the switch into art history, obviously, began to be more serious.

MS. TUCKER: No, what happened - oh, when I left the Institute or when I went to the Institute?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, when you went to the Institute.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, what happened is I was working for Rene Bouchet.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And trying to paint, although it became increasingly difficult. And I think I said, at that time I was married to a musician.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And there was very little room. We were poor. There was very little room in the place to do any of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: To do all that, right.

MS. TUCKER: But what I thought was, as a painter I had read Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting*.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: And I saw this little brochure.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I went to take courses simply in the interest of general education.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. You had no real program.

MS. TUCKER: I had absolutely no - I had no thought of getting a masters degree. I had no interest in the academic community or academic life per se, but I was very much interested in - it's funny. It was the first time that I had engaged myself with the idea that education could be - education for its own sake was absolutely enough. Since my parents were no longer living, there was no one who cared. And when I went, I went just to sign up for Panofsky's course - signed up for three courses, actually, and did very, very well.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. Sure, you mentioned that.

MS. TUCKER: Because I had no ulterior motive.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did that change your attitude then?

MS. TUCKER: No, I just loved it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I found that I was left out of the very neurotic behavior that a lot of the students had about succeeding. And what happened was that I increasingly left my own painting career, had no desire to go back to it, and found myself enjoying the work at the Institute so much that I only wanted to do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MS. TUCKER: And it was just that I had a lot of jobs at that time and was piecing together a living. And one of the

things that I liked the most was the - there was incredible enjoyment in the sense of the intensity of that research and the intensity of putting things together. The library was a very appealing place at the Institute, for me, because it was a chance to - out of all of the patchwork existence that I had with all those jobs, this was a chance - it was my little island of peace and of connection to one thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: So that was the continuity, and everything else jumped off of it - come together.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Eventually what happened was that when I realized that I was going to - I was in there and I was going to get a degree and I was going to be an art historian, whatever that meant, I began to get involved in the Institute at the Institute and then I began to exhibit all the same neurotic patterns that all the other students --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was it the right kind of tea that day and all that other stuff? [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] No, no. I never got into that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, you didn't get that far?

MS. TUCKER: Uh-uh, no. That was because I dressed too strangely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: But I knew people like Toby Moulton -- was a colleague of mine and who is now, I guess, a film critic. And Tory Savage who was at St. Louis Museum and who is now back in New York. And Eunice Lipton who teaches at Hunters, the [inaudible]. Bob Buck was actually a classmate also. But I had found - oh, and I took one of Goldwater's seminars with Diane Waldman. So there was a kind of - that particular year or group of years, there were a lot of museum people who emerged [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you have any museum input at that point?

MS. TUCKER: You know, I absolutely cannot remember any. I became, I think, so anti-institution, anti-institutional in my thinking because I had come from a museum and because somehow when, because of the accident and because I had so many responsibilities and was having to look after myself because my life had been rather difficult, I had a very healthy dose of the real world. And it was hard for me after that to go into that cloistered environment and think that it had any connection with reality.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So museums were places to look at works of art, for me. But the way - I told you about how I got to the Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I think I left last time by saying that - well, I had had this interview with the president, not with [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, and Sallinger.

MS. TUCKER: Sallinger, who --

MR. CUMMINGS: And what you said to him and that he was the one who really hired you.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But now, what - that was - you saw Bower, too, right?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: And that was the first time you met, had met him?

MS. TUCKER: Yes. I had read his book, though.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But he became very supportive of you, right?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I think he was one of the most important influences for me in my life. As a matter of fact, I just got a letter from him yesterday.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, how do you mean important? In what way?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he was for me very rare because - well, some people accused him of indifference to the nitty-gritty fact of museum life, raising money - in other words, being social. He was a scholar who cared a great deal about art. And when he hired me and Jim, I think that his attitude was that if you hire people, that you hire them because it means that you have confidence in them and you believe in their ability to work independently. And he told me a story the day or the first week I came. He told me a story that he had heard about Henry Geldfeller [phonetic] being hired by Wermer at the Met. And the story was that when Geldfeller arrived in his office the first day, Wermer was there to meet him and shook hands with him and said, "I hope we do not see you around here anymore." And that's what Bower told me. In other words, he was saying, "Your job as curator," which is the job that you - as you described it, had to do with being around the artists. And in fact, I spent very little time in my office, but a great deal of time in the studios. And Bower, from the very - well, to be quite accurate about it, in the early days, within the first month, Jack asked me if I would help Lloyd Goodrich, who was still there, who was in the [inaudible] - if I would help him with the O'Keeffe show. And I thought about it. I went back to Jack, and I said, "Look," a couple of days later. "You hired me as curator here. And I don't think that assisting Lloyd is going to enable me to function in the way that I would like to function. But I would be very happy to try to find you a graduate student who might be able to help." And Jack thought a minute and said, "Yes. You're quite right. Thank you very much. And if you do have any suggestions, I'd be happy to have them." So that's how we started that. The only real dispute that Jack and I ever had was about salary, because after two years, I think it was - no, it may have been less than that - I found out that Jim Monty was getting paid more than I was. And I went to him and I said - yes, it was two years. I said, "You cannot do this to me, because I have done - in the two years I've been here I have done more shows than both other curators, than Doty and Monty combined. And you're paying them more than I am. It's not right." And he said, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. You're quite right. But this is the way the budget is gone," and so forth. And I said, "You're going to hear from me from now on, steadily, nonstop about this, until it's rectified." And I went in there every week. He would see me saying, "Well" - and I knew a lot of arguments. I said, "You have two daughters. You have an oceanographer," and I don't even remember what the other one does. I said, "They're pros. How would you feel?" And he said, "You're absolutely right. But this is not something I can change immediately." I finally - I was very angry. I was like tasting copper all the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that affect your work with the other two curators?

MS. TUCKER: Not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was just between you and him then?

MS. TUCKER: Well, Monty was the one. I went up and asked him. I said, "How much are you getting paid?" And he told me. No, I never - I always got along with Monty because Jim understood very clearly the difference in our temperaments. He was a painter, and that came first. And I didn't have that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think it's possible to be an artist and a curator, simultaneously?

MS. TUCKER: No, I don't. I used to think that it might be. I remember that Lopez Ray, who was a teacher and an advisor of mine at the Institute, told me when I first started, "You cannot be a painter and an art historian." I said, "That's nonsense. Of course you can." And he said, "No. Eventually you'll have to choose."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And one of the other people I went to school with was Jeff Way, who was extraordinary, a scholar. He was really quite brilliant. And he also had to choose between being an art historian and being an artist. But I tell you why. There are people like Harrisist [phonetic] who are painters. One or the other thing suffers. And that's why I'm quite - I feel very firmly about the New Museum, that the people who are there should be museum professionals first. And if they have other interests, that's fine. But that's very important.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I also think that being an artist in some way very deeply affects your ability to make objective judgments, not that any of us can make objective judgments. But it affects the - it's very important to have a very broad base from which to make one's corrections and decisions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And being an artist of necessity narrows that base. Eventually, everyone I know has had to choose, Elk - I mean, you know, all the people at the Whitney who were artists have always - and they somehow always

end up going back to being artists rather than choosing the museum profession, which I find fascinating.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Yeah. Well, I ask you - how did you like - you were working for the museum where, on 54th Street, then, or had it moved? It had moved already?

MS. TUCKER: No, it had just moved.

MR. CUMMINGS: It had just moved.

MS. TUCKER: I actually - it was Bill Agey had left. And it was when I took his job.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's right. And he went off to do his incremental project and then [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Wait a minute. I want to go back for a moment to feminism because I did get parity. And eventually what happened was that I began to earn more than the other people. They were all kicked upstairs. They kicked everybody upstairs. Jim was fired by Tom. But I was quite highly paid by the time I was fired. I think at around that time, the issue of feminism became a very crucial one at the museum. And Marsha Kelly was --

MR. CUMMINGS: When was this started?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: About when? What year?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I joined the movement in '69, which was - I had come to the museum at the tail end of 1968, December 1968.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And Jim came a month or two after that. I joined Red Stockings in that year and around 1970 it became quite crucial.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you get with them?

MS. TUCKER: The Red Stockings?

MR. CUMMINGS: The Red Stockings.

MS. TUCKER: Through Eunice Lipton, actually. She and I were really close friends. And she had gone to a meeting of something called WITCH, Women in whatever-it-was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And she said it was incredibly interesting. And I felt that I didn't want her to have something I didn't have. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I said, "I'd kill you," and went to see for myself. And there was an enormous meeting over in the West play. And I remember walking into the room. And I had never been in a room with all women before. And it was - the feeling was - it was instant, instant. Something just happened. I went with Elka Solomon and Kasha Menville, Kasha Gula [phonetic]. And out of that, a woman's group formed. And it was the same group, basically. I was in a consciousness raising group for five years. It was pretty much the same group.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I think it is the longest extant group, or it was the longest extant group.

MR. CUMMINGS: Which one, the consciousness?

MS. TUCKER: The consciousness raising group, the same group.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: A lot of artists, and I'll tell you about - it included - or maybe not included - Joan Snider, Jane Kaufmann, Elka, Pat Spear, a - one woman who was an older woman who was a psychiatrist or psychiatric social worker, Joan Thorn, Nancy English, Harriet Lyons, who is another [inaudible]. It was a very incredible, incredible group of people, none of whom had really, except for myself and Elka - had known each other before. But - and

out of that also, one of the - if not the first men's group in New York, also made up of artists and critics.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. Yeah. Who formed that?

MS. TUCKER: Richard Seberg and Tim, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Uh-huh. And you'd have to talk to one of them. But it was an incredible group of critics and artists over a two-year period.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do you think the women's group lasted longer?

MS. TUCKER: I think that, for one thing, it was an early group who had - oh, Victoria Barr, also - who had seen each other through some very remarkable changes. Secondly, there was a community of interest that was very durable, so that the range of things that we talked about became far more than - it was much more than the question of women's issues. It became increasingly very deep friendships, appreciation for each other's work, the evolution of some of that work together or kinds of dialog that became far more than just personal. And I think that was nice, too, that it wasn't a group that simply got around - got together to bitch.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: It became --

MR. CUMMINGS: Did it follow any of those theories that were current then?

MS. TUCKER: No. As a matter of fact, I think that's part of the reason it was incredibly healthy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Much wider scope.

MS. TUCKER: It had no ideological base. And it was flexible enough to really change constantly. We met with all kinds of other groups. We met also with men's groups. Occasionally we met with lesbian groups for several - a long time. And made some very good professional contacts, too, because there were architects, writers, [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And we became partly - some of us became very political. One of the women started a commune in Brooklyn. We did some theater work together.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was your group one that had a lot of Marxist influence, though? Because some of them did.

MS. TUCKER: No. Eunice Lipton was in that group, and she dropped out because she felt we were too political and became a Marxist afterward.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, because I know I talked to various people who belonged to those. And some of them were very Marxist. And some were very - not nihilistic, but very negative towards everything.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, no, not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: In fact, one of the most important things this group did was that we started other women's groups. And we must have started anywhere between a dozen - and it's very hard for me to remember, but -

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way? I mean, people would hear about it and -

MS. TUCKER: We would go out to any group of people who were interested in forming an organization. And we'd simply set up a consciousness raising session. I mean, Miriam Schapiro came and asked me how to do this stuff. I mean, it was that kind of thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: But it was very low key. It was very --

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you get into NOW and all those other groups that were going on?

MS. TUCKER: Not at all. And completely independent, and it was a non-proselytizing group. I had no interest -

none of us, I think, had interest in saying, "This is the way to do it." Now, we're not forming groups for women artists, either. They were very, very - oh, we met with older women from time to time. So you could bring your mothers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you ever have Ti-Grace Atkinson appear?

MS. TUCKER: No. We weren't part of that, either, that kind of strange star system. It was just a very small, fiercely independent group. And we went around a lot to colleges.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where would you meet, normally?

MS. TUCKER: We took turns at each person's house. And all the food was brought together. And we would choose a topic to talk about. And in general, they were - if the topics were interesting, we'd keep going. But for me, it was one of the most - it was a wonderful support system. The artists never turned on me because I was a curator. We did some very adventurous, very adventurous things in terms of trying to get to know each other. At least, I think they were adventurous.

MR. CUMMINGS: In terms of what?

MS. TUCKER: Well, we did some theater things. We did - the idea that we would go out to meet with people who were very different - one time we met with a group of teenagers. Another time with older women - or we'd do several of these things. We spent a lot of time trying to tell each other what we seem to be like to each other in a rather straightforward way. And the friendships have endured many years.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you appraise it now, eight or ten years later?

MS. TUCKER: Well, let's talk - I was talking about this in the museum. But this is, I think, quite an important thing for me. Of that group, on some of - most of the relationships split up. Several people had changes - radical changes in the nature of their thinking about their own sexuality. At least one person emerged bitter, very bitter. Every single person's professional sense was strengthened. Their work grew, without exception. There was no one who sort of dropped out of that. I feel that the women's movement has done an incredible job. But it's been a - it was almost as though at the moment that many of the personal problems were solved for certain women, they gave up, not realizing that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Why do you say that?

MS. TUCKER: Because it's easy to lose sight of the long-range goals when you're struggling with the immediate problems of income sharing, how to live equitably with someone, in this case, mostly of the opposite sex. Who's going to wash the dishes? Changing the patterns of generations and generations - those things become so immediate that, once they're solved, there's a sense of false relief. Well, now I don't have to worry about who's paying for dinner. He cooks, he washes up as much as I do. We have an equal life. That may very well be true.

MR. CUMMINGS: Nobody ever has an equal life. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but I mean that what seemed to be at the heart of the problem was solved.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: However, I think that sexism is a political and economic issue and cultural as well. And just - I've always thought this because I lived an equitable life with the men - more or less - with the men I've been involved with, didn't mean that I could leave the women's movement. I thought that there was an incredible obligation to change the - well, can't do it, but to make an attempt to change the social structure that caused it, without necessarily having to talk about that in someone else - in terms of someone else's ideology. What's happened now to us, because the women in that group, most of us, are now in our late 30s, early 40s, is that I think there's a sense of great disappointment as the women's movement did not permanently solve the problems that exist between many women.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's interesting. That's interesting because [inaudible] Pete Grates [phonetic] is an old friend of mine. And we had this discussion about two years ago. And she was very bitter and very washed out about the whole thing.

MS. TUCKER: I'm not. I feel that that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Plus she's bankrupt and everything else, you know.

MS. TUCKER: But you see, that's because she - her life became predicated on that movement.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

MS. TUCKER: And I think that happened to a lot of people. I think Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago, who changed their lives so that their identities were based on their relationship with the women's movement - they suffered tremendously.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, because they never grew or changed. It was the organization.

MS. TUCKER: The movement left them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I've always felt that - I feel now that feminism is as active an issue in my life as it has ever been. The nature of my relationship to it maybe has changed or the way I manifest it has changed. But I don't - I feel that it's still quite - I don't - it's funny. But I don't know if it's my personality or the incredible good fortune of being with a group of women for so long that I cared so much about, that I have no feelings of bitterness. I only have feelings that we won't - we just started the talk to be done and that you can't stop now, especially not now when there's a real backlash. All of a sudden the word "girl" has come back into currency. People are viewing this in a very different way. But on the whole, I would say my estimation of the way - of my involvement and the way that involvement has kind of evolved is, it was a really wonderful thing in my life and still is. And it was an experience of closeness and of exchange with a group of people that made me feel permanently less isolated. It was wonderful to find out that -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, yeah, other people had similar problems and the world -

MS. TUCKER: No, see, it wasn't that.

MR. CUMMINGS: No?

MS. TUCKER: It was that I could separate out the problems that were mine from the problems that seemed, because of all of us, to have been caused by the social/political situation that we were in. And it gave me, I think, a great deal of clarity and a lot of comfort.

MR. CUMMINGS: So had you had any political interests before this, social/political?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I've always been what people disparagingly call a liberal, which meant that I was woefully ignorant politically and had leftist tendencies. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but you have never belonged to groups that played politics.

MS. TUCKER: Not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Or had a great interest in them.

MS. TUCKER: Not at all, not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: Although many people have said that I would be a good politician, and I think that's very funny because I know nothing about politics. And everybody says, "Oh, but that's the point. You don't need to know about politics to be a good politician."

MR. CUMMINGS: That's true.

MS. TUCKER: And I find that horrendous, the idea is very repugnant to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: If you know too much about politics, you can't be political, you know. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I think that one can have a tremendous influence in one's life on other people - that's terribly moral [inaudible] - by the nature of the life you lead.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, of course, of course.

MS. TUCKER: And I think that that's about as much as a human being can do is to try to live some kind of an honorable life or a happy life, which to me is an honorable life.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Well, there is one other group you belonged to besides Red Stockings, wasn't there? Or not?

MS. TUCKER: Well, that was this group, this consciousness raising.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MS. TUCKER: But to go back to the museum, I had a few moments - more than a few moments - of being incredibly bitter because Elka and I worked very, very hard in the museum to make some changes. And we did not do it in the usual way. We didn't - somebody said something, we wouldn't jump up screaming "Male chauvinist pig!" There was a lot of anger at the time, but both of us felt, I think, that there were other ways of being - making changes and being clear about things, issues. And I want to give you an example of that. We were scheduling shows one day.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And Jack Fowler - there were two shows scheduled for women. And I was proposing a third one, also a woman whose work was interesting, not deliberately to do that because if you look at my records, they're fairly mixed. But Jack said, "Well, I don't know if it's feasible to show three women in a row." And I said, "Well, you showed 20 men in a row." And Jack said, "Yes, you're quite right." And that took care of that. I mean, he was very, very reasonable. But after awhile, I remember - after awhile, it's a pun.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Steve Wiley was the administrator here [inaudible] one day was talking about a show that Pat Hills was going to do. It was on - it was a western show. And he said something about - someone said "cowboys and Indians," and Steve said, "Ah, don't say that in front of Marcia. You have to say 'cowpersons' and 'Native Americans.'" [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So they got it, you know. They got it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And we all went on a march, I remember the first women's march. And Margie Marsteller [phonetic] actually came out with us. And the only person that didn't go was the switchboard woman, which is very upsetting because we really wanted her to go.

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that?

MS. TUCKER: I can't remember what year it was. It must have been 71.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MS. TUCKER: It was wonderful. And the whole museum [inaudible]. And I remember Jack standing at the elevator. We were all back. There was a great support of that. There was - it was surprising. And a couple of the men actually went with us. I can't remember if Steve did or what. But it was - one other incident I recall that seemed interesting at the time. I don't know whether today it would be. But there was a mail clerk there named Ray, who was a black man probably in his 30s. And someone had left a note out that said, "Ray, the mail boy will not be in." And the women got incredibly angry and said the reason you - it's like being called a girl. The reason you call him a boy, even though he's a grown man, is because he's black. And the person who wrote that issued an apology.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: But it was a real case in point. And anyway, I think that - oh, the reason I said that I got bitter was that at that time the women started to picket the Whitney. And they have always said what the reason - in all of these newsletters and so forth, that the reason the Whitney began to show the work of more women was because of those pickets. And I am deeply resentful of that because that was not the reason. If anything, they almost ruined the chances, because throwing Tampax and eggs around the stairwell made the people - and I was in on all their staff meetings - made the administration of that museum feel that they were dealing with petulant children.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Not that I didn't share their rage. But we were on the inside. I don't know what they thought we were doing in there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. They don't know. They really don't know.

MS. TUCKER: They have no idea. But the endless battles - I remember Hal Rosenberg and myself and one other - another man - I don't remember who it was - were the committee one year to elect the Brandeis awards. And we chose to give it to Joan Mitchell. And there was a lot of talk about that. I said, "Look, you've never given this award to a woman. You can't proceed in this way." I mean, so we were all agreed. It was finally given to Joan Mitchell. But Hal patted my head as we left. And I stood up on a chair and patted his head back.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: He was always doing things like that, constantly, and it was very exhausting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: It was funny, but it was exhausting. And I had a note pinned prominently on my bulletin board for years, how it was the mayor of Ottawa, Charlotte Wilton or Whitten, and she said, "Whatever women do, it's true that we must do twice as well to be considered half as good as men. Luckily, this is not difficult."

MR. CUMMINGS: That's a quote she pinched from somebody else.

MS. TUCKER: No, no. I did not pinch it from somebody else.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. She did.

MS. TUCKER: She pinched it from somebody else?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MS. TUCKER: Yes, I heard that she had pinched it from somebody else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But where I got it was from her.

MR. CUMMINGS: From her, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I used to - I really loved it. I really thought it was - after awhile, I realized it was [inaudible] bitter and strange quote. But all of that took a lot of energy and took - sapped our energy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, how did you find it now? Because you in the Whitney years traveled a great deal around the country. I mean, you seemed to travel all the time.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Yeah, I did.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that affect when you when you went to Cleveland, Chicago, California, wherever?

MS. TUCKER: Well, in the first years that I lectured and I talked about those things, I was hissed at, and I was - people would ask me if I was married. It was very strenuous. But I think I - there are just sometimes when you know that you are absolutely right. I mean, just know that if you're not right, then the issue that you're involved with is and that there's not even any question about it. And the other thing is, I was a very acceptable feminist speaker because of the way I look, because I look feminine and because I'm not generally - my manner isn't extremely loud or angry or aggressive. So people were able to listen to me say things that they might not have wanted to listen to other people say. On the other hand, I often wondered whether my manner was cowardice; whether - I mean, whether it was cowardice or whether it was diplomacy. And finally, now after all these years, I realize that I just - this is the way I am. And it would have been very hard for me to change the way I was in the interest of a cause. [Inaudible] to speak with my own voice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I liked to chastise many people for not speaking with their voice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. You didn't have [inaudible] of that group or --

MS. TUCKER: Well, they didn't like my manner.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: You know, "How can you dress this way and speak this way?" And the way I dress is nobody's concern but mine. But one thing happened to me that almost - almost moved me away from the women's movement altogether. When was it? Was it 1971? It must have been '71, '70, '71. Lucy Lepart invited me to her

loft to meet with a group of women in the arts to discuss some mutual problems. And I said I would be delighted. Oh no - oh god. I do remember when it was. It was earlier than that. It was 19 - it had to have been just before 1970. And I said I would be glad to. And I got there, and I found 50 to 75 women who had gotten there to attack me and the Whitney. And it was shocking. It was shocking!

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what? Lucy set it up or it just happened.

MS. TUCKER: No, it was women in the arts. They had just formed. They were angry.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MS. TUCKER: They needed a scapegoat, and they turned to me. And I had quietly been a feminist for much longer than that - I mean, since '69 - without having to announce it in that way. And I was very, very hurt. And their bitterness -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did Lucy think of all of this?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: What did Lucy think of all of that? I mean, did she know that that was going to happen?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. I don't know. But I remember even friends there suddenly looking away. And I realized at that time that they had put me in a position where I was going to be depersonalized.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Where they saw me as the institution, and there was nothing I could do to prevent that. And I thought that it was - that was anathema to what I understood as feminism.

MR. CUMMINGS: But that always happens when you represent an institution in a group situation. I mean, the person is only the mouthpiece for the institution.

MS. TUCKER: But I never felt that way. And I think that, if anything, when - this all comes back to, when I did get fired from the Whitney, part of the reason that I did not suddenly - I wasn't the institution. I think that by that time I had been so independent in it that people no longer saw me as it. I learned something. Well, I mean, I've learned a lot. But you are your work. The work - the institution doesn't own your work. And it's the difference between - I was talking to someone on my staff today, who said something about investing a certain amount of time and energy in something. And the word "investment," investment in a relationship, investment in work or in a career, is repugnant to me because it means that you hope that the yields will come in the future. And if the yields aren't - you know, if the joys aren't day to day, then you're in real trouble because then you're going to be victimized.

MR. CUMMINGS: By yourself.

MS. TUCKER: That's right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So that the institution - somebody said, "Well, who will take your place?"

MR. CUMMINGS: You would just continue. The institution continues.

MS. TUCKER: The institution continues, but it doesn't own my work.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: I own my work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Or the work that I've chosen to put out in the world is whatever is there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: At any rate, that was a very, very bitter moment for me. And there were others, other times when - -

MR. CUMMINGS: I think it's always interesting to be attacked by one's peers, in a way. It sort of squares things

up. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Well, it's - to be attacked by the people you support when you've just come out of a boardroom spending hours fighting to get somebody - to get a show, to get somebody's paintings bought, to change something. And then you walk into a new situation and they attack you. And professionalism prevents you from saying, "Listen. I just killed myself in there for you."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I know. I know. But they don't - they never see it, you know. It's a constant battle.

MS. TUCKER: That's why I think that the rewards have to be intrinsic.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And not extrinsic. You come out sounding so pure and optimistic. But all of my experience with this stuff has made me not cynical rather than cynical. And I find that very surprising. Well, I mean, I was warned, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Anyhow, [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: What can you do? Anyway, before you went to the museum, you did several other things.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. My husband -

MR. CUMMINGS: You went from teaching, *ARTnews*, various things like that, curetorial private collections handling.

MS. TUCKER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: You never got involved with any dealers.

MS. TUCKER: Uh-uh.

MR. CUMMINGS: Doing projects, research, anything for dealers.

MS. TUCKER: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was all collectors.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I have a - I do not think art and commerce are a happy mix. [Laughter] And I never - I've never felt that I would be good at it. I think you have to concentrate on earning money or on the explication of the art and the interest in the art. And sometimes the best art has absolutely no commercial value whatsoever, and I think the two are in conflict, for me. I can't say for somebody else.

MR. CUMMINGS: What causes the conflict for you?

MS. TUCKER: That it requires a certain degree of acceptability on the part of the public to be able to make something commercially viable. And the art - the kind of art that I'm mostly interested in, at the moment when I get interested in it, is hardly ever viable in any way at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why is that, do you think? I mean, why do you choose that for areas that -

MS. TUCKER: I don't choose it deliberately. Oh, I choose an area because I'm - well, it sounds like - and I've said this before. The truth sounds like a self-made cliché that I'm very much interested in what I don't know and not in what I do know. And that's one of the reasons I never got involved so much with very, very well-known artists or artists who had incredible reputations who had had - I wasn't - I was no longer interested in adding to art history. I was interested in trying to find out something about what I didn't really understand, but which my instincts led me to. I'm working right now on a Barry Levay show. And part of the reason I'm utterly intrigued by his work is that it baffles me. It really does. I have a feeling very clear. I don't understand it. I think that I'm very much inclined toward a certain kind of - I'm usually seduced by a lot of work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. How? In what way? By what factors?

MS. TUCKER: Beautiful images, poetic situations, a quirky sense of humor, Richard Tuttle, a certain kind of poetry - but all the work I was ever really engaged with in terms of major show, I was engaged with because it was something that absolutely resisted my getting close to it. And in the process of the years that I have to work on a show or think about it or write about it, I begin - I force myself out of my own way of thinking. And my whole

education has been just extraordinary that way because I've read incredible books. I've gone into areas of mathematics and science that my own nature would never take me.

MR. CUMMINGS: For what purpose? I mean, [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: To better understand the work I was doing. I'm not interested at all in how art is connected to other art. I think that, for me, that's a useless enterprise. People write about that all the time; that's fine. I'm very much interested in how art participates in the world. That is, the world of science, language, philosophy, anything that is really out there.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did that attitude manifest itself? Was it early or slow?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. I think I've only come to terms with it recently because I'm only now old enough to see that I have a backlog of writing and that it's begun to have a pattern for me. But I suspect that it's the same thing - it's somewhat similar to my interests when I was younger that I always liked to do many, many things, and people stopped me from it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Now, when I first started to write, the criticism about my writing was, "Well, she doesn't stick to the art." I mean, what's the sense of writing about Al Helden, the development of spatial understanding in children as Piaget saw it, when you're not writing about a Helden connection with the abstract expressionists. But I don't understand how you can do the one at the expense of the other.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, Piaget becomes a device to handle what you see in Helden, then.

MS. TUCKER: I think more than that, that it may in some way help to explain Helden beyond - Helden's work beyond the context, beyond that tiny context of art. And, well, the hell of it is it interests me because by its very reason it seems - I would like to know as much about the world at large as possible. And looking at works of art is the entryway to that, not that they aren't also incredible, but that there's so much more than meets the eye.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I found one thing in having interviewed so many people and having read so many books about the same people, is that so often, the art, particularly in the more very post-war, very post-60s, does come from sources that have never appeared in art history before. And so in a way you're supporting that kind of observation.

MS. TUCKER: But I don't know whether the art comes from those sources or whether I see the context as larger. In other words, the artist doesn't --

MR. CUMMINGS: I think the artist --

MS. TUCKER: I mean, how [inaudible] interested in Piaget's theories of space?

MR. CUMMINGS: No, but I think the artist now has much more, much wider input. Now they look at television. They talk to different kinds of people. The world has greater possibilities than it did four or five decades ago.

MS. TUCKER: In 1950. The education of artists is a much wider --

MR. CUMMINGS: Much more complicated, yeah. I mean, it's not just the studio.

MS. TUCKER: An artist historian is no longer just an art historian.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who are they?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, who are we talking about? Are we talking about - this is us and them. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Us and them. Now, what happened when you, you know, started - the museum began? What was the first show you did? Nancy Graves came along very early.

MS. TUCKER: I think that was Trisha.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did you see the camels?

MS. TUCKER: In her studio.

MR. CUMMINGS: In her studio?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, I'd see Nancy. And she was married to Richard. And they were friends of mine from - that whole group of people had gone to Paris together.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Nancy, Richard, Victoria Barr, Muyon Lin [phonetic], Sylvia Glass, Joanne --

MR. CUMMINGS: Who you had dinner with a couple of weeks ago.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Who you had dinner with a couple of weeks ago.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I got a letter telling me.

MS. TUCKER: Good god. You move faster and further than anybody I ever know. It was a terrible dinner. I was very ill.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: I couldn't walk. I was --

MR. CUMMINGS: That's awful.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Yes. Well. I mean, there was - I was just not a good guest. She was a delightful host.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: But - no, I mean, her part was fun. Mine was - I was very - like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: You know. Joanne Ecclidenson [phonetic] taught class that I did. Who else? But, well, Bob Dewey was my upstairs neighbor when I was married and lived on Waverly Place.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And he lived with Joel Friedman and a high school friend of mine named Jeffrey Starr from San Francisco and Friedman were my upstairs neighbors. So when I split up with husband sometime after that, Bob and I started to go together. And all of those people were friends. So that's how I - well, I got to know Victoria through her mother. And Richard and Nancy, I remember - I just remember hanging around them. That was before Richard showed. He had showed one piece that had live animals. He had shown that in Milan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Milan.

MS. TUCKER: And I was up at their studio on Mulberry Street, and there were the camels in the back. And they just knocked me out. They were really interesting. I just decided to do it. But I was saying about Jack Fowler, one of the most wonderful things about him was that he was willing to take a chance. Whether he knew who the people were or not, he somehow - he had this real touch. And he even said - several years ago he said that I had done a show with John Moman's work, and he said he had to admit that when he saw that show, he just thought the work was terrible. And that it was five years later, and he'd come around to absolutely loving it, and he'd bought two pieces for that hospital fund, and he wanted me to know that. So he had that kind of incredible integrity that would allow him to say something like that. I just thought it was wonderful. But he would support ideas that no one else would have supported. The idea that the camels show was under - still under his jurisdiction.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And the idea of doing the catalog was approved by him, but doing the catalog after the show.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did the other curators do? Were they accepting of this? Did they give you a lot of trouble?

MS. TUCKER: Nobody gave me any trouble, no. Mack [inaudible], who - Mack - I mean, Mack [inaudible] was the strangest and most eccentric man I've ever met. But outside of his treating me very strangely, probably

because he simply couldn't deal with a woman for awhile, one of the things I liked about him was he was very reliable. If you asked him for a book or a catalog, it would appear on your desk, and he was always right there. And he also had taste for very funky things. So he would support me almost all the time, no matter what because we had this funny little thing in common.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: You know, he'd - we found a friend, although it wasn't in those kinds of shows. I thought he was completely undiscriminating about his choice of works in that genre.

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean between artists or different works by one artist?

MS. TUCKER: It was just anything that looked like that, he would like.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: You know, anything that was funky, he would like. Although now, looking back on it, I thought that he - most of the people in those shows he did turned out to be pretty good artists, it's just that he lumped them all together and he did too many of the shows. So that he began to make an undifferentiated mix.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But anyhow, Mack - I found Mack quite easy to deal with. And Jim and I got along very, very well, partly because Jim was not obsessive and I was. And there was no problem about who was going to get to do all that work. [Laughter] I just did it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And it was perfect. I mean, I didn't mind, and he was delighted. So he was very much involved with Greenberg and all of those people, you know, Nolan, Olisky - not Darby so much, but Kunes, Christianson - he was a very close friend of Dan's. So his inclination was quite different from mine. Mine was much more effective.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you seem to like objects in a way, too, or three-dimensional things more than just flat painting.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't think I could say one thing or another. The range is - for me, anyhow, is just [inaudible] is art. But I was very much interested in large-scale sculpture. I mean, we did that Robert Marsh show, and I did the Nauman show. And I very much like building things. I like doing - I like the challenge of trying to figure out how to get those goddamn logs up - you know, rigging them up the shaft. And I must say that I think a lot of that has to do with being a woman, that somehow those were the - that somehow that was the last thing that a woman would --

MR. CUMMINGS: Challenges.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, the last one anyone expected. And it was something I didn't know about, which is why it interested me. So I learned about fore loads and gantries and - I mean, I keep all these how-to books in my bathroom, you know? It's very easy learning the language to figure it out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. How did the "Anti-Illusion" exhibition evolve?

MS. TUCKER: Well, that was something that in the course of going to a lot of

studios I began to see this very odd pattern emerging. And I had wanted to call the show "Beyond Geometry".

MR. CUMMINGS: Why?

MS. TUCKER: Because it seemed to me that a lot of people were in a minimal kind of - were looking at - the major work was minimal. They'd had primary structure shows, Kinneson did and so forth. And in the studios I started seeing messes, things that I couldn't - that didn't look like anything else. So I remember going to Dowler with that. And Jim and I had arrived at the same time. He had museum experience; I didn't. He knew the West Coast; I knew the East Coast. It seemed like an ideal situation for us to work on that show together. And it just evolved. It was a very nice experience. Jim and I had no problems working together. The artists had no - in fact, it was glorious because whoever couldn't get along with one of us could get along with the other. And when there was somebody really impossible, the two of us just stood side by side. And the experience of working on a major show in such an uncompetitive way was a real --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] in a way.

MS. TUCKER: It set a precedent for me. I was able - that was one of the reasons that I convinced Jane Wittington to do the Nauman show together, because she had no experience with that either.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you know Nauman before that?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. He has been one of my - I met him in '69 before the "Anti-Illusion" show. And his wife, whose name was Judy, at the time. And he's been one of my closest friends for many years. But I - he was not a close friend at that time. During the "Anti-Illusion" show I barely knew him. But it was during the process of working on this show that we got to know each other. And - we'll go into that, too. But one thing that did happen around that show that was very, very difficult - and this was just before the women's movement - was that Clem Greenberg came to see the show. And someone introduced me to him and said, "This is the co-curator of the show." And Clem looked at me and said, "Oh really? I thought this was Jim's show." And I said, "No, it's not. It's done by the two of us." And he walked off. And I went outside [inaudible] in a total state, a complete state. And my friend sat me down. He was a painter. He sat me down on the grass in Central Park, and he said, "Look. Our reputation is not made by one show or two or five or six. It's a whole lifetime." And he bought me an ice cream cone and sent me off to get a haircut. [Laughter] I had very long hair at the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah. That's right, you had long straight hair.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Long straight hair.

MS. TUCKER: Not straight.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Long hair.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it was longer.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And I always will remember that. Another thing that happened at the time, you see. I was very sensitive because I remember being in a bar with Patty Oldenburg. And she said to me - oh, we were just standing there. And she said, "Oh, I saw your boss today." And I said, "Jack Fowler?" Because Jack always went home to Katona [phonetic]. She said, "No, Jim Monty." And I got very upset.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Very, very upset. And - but again, that was a long time ago when they assumed, when I came to the Whitney [inaudible] someone - Margie McCullough assumed I was my secretary. She expected someone older. I keep getting this. Now I'm older. Sooner or later you get older.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. You get older. Yeah. But Allison, [inaudible], and Greenberg reminded me of it. You've never followed any particular critical group or anything. I mean, you've never been aligned with Lucy or Greenberg or Hal Rosenberg or [inaudible] or whoever. Was that by choice, by coincidence, or you're just not interested in them?

MS. TUCKER: Not interested.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I'm not interested in polemics at all. And I am really interested in what happens when you look at art. No, it's very simple. I'm very interested in the fact that a visual language actually exists and that the vocabulary, which is always changing, can nonetheless be learned and that - oh, it's so hard to explain this. Trying to show work, that is, trying to look at it, choose it finally, put it in the proper context, write about it, not take it away from the artist, and find out how you change. I mean, if you change - how you see them when you change - everything, I think, suddenly, but everything. It was task that could consume me and probably will for the rest of my life. Polemics is actually uninteresting to me. Being part of a school or a camp or a way of thinking is a deflection of energy.

MR. CUMMINGS: But that's the thing. Polemics has a role in explication.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But it's not mine.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MS. TUCKER: It's not mine. I - there are things about all of those people I admire very much. I have known them

all. I'm interested in some aspects of what they've written or done and feel very positive about that. But I - I feel that energy that I put against something is not good energy for me. But energy for something is better. So that I have the freedom to pick the things that I like and - but I never - I'm not saying I never was conscious of it one way or the other. I never thought about it because of that. I have always felt that I had my hands full. And those kinds of critical arguments were - I didn't want to argue with someone's ideas about art when I could be thinking - bringing that same energy toward thinking about the art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Your own ideas about it.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, or pulling ideas that really interested me together. You know all those articles that start out by saying, "Contrary to what So-and-so thinks in his perfectly dumb essay on bla-bla-bla."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, why bother? Why not just say, "Here's what interests me"? I mean, there's a lot of room in the world for many different ways to --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's the old scholarly trick, you know. "Notwithstanding Sam's 500-page book, we all know."

MS. TUCKER: Right. I think that when you look back in history and you see how many things can exist simultaneously that don't accord, then it gets very interesting. There's no sense [inaudible] right.

MR. CUMMINGS: For eclecticism, eclecticism. It's just --

MS. TUCKER: No. No. The process of doing what I do interests me. I mean, if you do favors unselfconsciously, then it's the same thing. It's another kind of energy. I think that one only becomes self-conscious after the fact. You say, "Oh. I see that I have had an extremely eclectic sensibility, and that seems to be mine."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And it's good. But trying to be eclectic is as false as trying to --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I don't mean trying, but I mean that could evolve in that direction rather than say it's sort of classicism, whatever.

MS. TUCKER: Well, see, I don't think that there's a right and a wrong. I think that what seems to be right, wrong, good, or bad changes and shifts so much in the course of one lifetime that rather than trying to figure out which is going to be the best or who's going to make it or trying for what people - people talk about a track record. I say [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Why? Why? What threatens you about that?

MS. TUCKER: Nothing threatens me about it. But the idea that you're good at something because you made some guesses and were right --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: It's very uninteresting. The idea that the process of your work or what you're trying to do in your work is more - or the ideas that are generated by your work are more interesting than whether the artist ended up being famous or not famous.

MR. CUMMINGS: But don't you think they augment each other?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. I haven't come to terms with that, with the credibility, you know, aspect of museum work. I still have a very hermetic attitude about what I do, which is quite unrealistic because it is, after all, out there in the world. But I - you know, the people who are famous in our time, in our lifetime, given another lifetime, are going to be obscure.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's a cycle.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but it's much more important that the nature of what you write about somehow be connected to some ideas that are really important. You know, you can't guarantee that your ideas are important.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But you can try, I think, in some way to understand things beyond in a year.

MR. CUMMINGS: So in a way, you really are projecting into the future. I mean, you're gambling on the success of your own attempt.

MS. TUCKER: No, I don't think that's right either. And I don't think I'm gambling on anything when somebody's dead. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I think I'm interested in generating - in having company with thinking, in having company, in throwing out something that seems to me to be important and having -

MR. CUMMINGS: Feedback. Response.

MS. TUCKER: Response, or maybe in some way generating, even without my knowing it, an idea someplace that may get into something else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: I've said that I would like to be receptive. I mean, I don't need to say, well, I want to live --

MR. CUMMINGS: Above and off in a cloud.

MS. TUCKER: No. I would like to have my work make a difference. But I want it to make a difference that's a generative difference rather than an oretic difference. In other words, I don't want to provide anybody with any clear-cut answers. But I would like to raise a whole lot of questions that I think are important because they're important to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: What's wrong with providing answers?

MS. TUCKER: I don't think I can. I don't think that I have the - I think the answers that I would provide would be - I don't feel answers in me. I don't feel that I could say anything that would answer anybody.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Hm.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, I could share something of what - I mean, that's partly why all of this is so interesting. It's very embarrassing to talk about yourself. But that is, after all, all you have. But to me to try to pretend that my ideas exist to have validity outside of my little life just doesn't - I don't know. I'm not the person who's going to make a judgment about that.

MR. CUMMINGS: You just keep doing it.

MS. TUCKER: You keep doing it. Well, I keep doing it because I like it. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, if somebody says, "Why do you do what you do?" It's because I love it. It's terrific stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Absolutely.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, god. It's like I consider that a privileged world to - each time I do a show, it seems to me very much as though I have the ability, as I think I've said before, to become more than I am, or to become other than I am. And it's like childhood fantasy, you know. I mean, my overriding childhood and probably adult fantasy is to look out through somebody else's eyes for a second, through somebody else's consciousness just for a second.

MR. CUMMINGS: Knowledge is what you're talking about.

MS. TUCKER: Yes, that's exactly it. I never thought of it that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. Okay.

[END OF DISK THREE]

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay, this is side four. You've mentioned a lot of names previously. What - you know, you had - we sort of eliminated a lot of critics. But you have mentioned that you read omnisciously in fields outside of art history.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fine. What else - what led you or how did you pick Piaget or whoever it was? By going to the library, the bookstore, discussing with people?

MS. TUCKER: No, I never go to the library.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] I mean, if I can't own the books, I get very frustrated. I don't want to be in a place with thousands of books that I can't own.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And, well, first of all, a lot of books are recommended by artists because they - friends of mine know that I'm interested in reading. So, for instance, Ray Morton gave me Wilberg Schultz' *Existence Base on Architecture* many years ago. Bruce Dowman has always recommended books. We both like to read. But we also read - we like to read mysteries and spy novels. And I read a lot of westerns, too. Myron Stout is another person that I have spent one incredible day with when it turned out both of us were noodles for westerns. So he's read all of Louis Lamoure's books, and I've only read about half of them. But I read all these firsthand accounts of the west. You know, *A Bride Goes West* and *Fox Clothes* and all that stuff I told you about.

MR. CUMMINGS: What - I mean, why? For what reason do you read those things?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think it partly must have to do with growing up in Brooklyn. When I was a child, I was interested in country music. And I was interested in the circus. And I have this passion for - you know it. I don't know if we talked about this on the tape - for tattoos, freaks.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, we haven't yet.

MS. TUCKER: No? Well, I have somehow always been interested in the edges of things in the same way that I'm interested in the edges of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: By the edges of things you mean society?

MS. TUCKER: Everything. The edges of behavior. Not for myself - not for myself particularly, though I mean, I have ridden motorcycles.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But I'm not - I always think of myself as a rather sane and kind of this really balanced person, not an eccentric person in my dress or my manner of living or anything like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what got you interested in that part of life? I mean, what got you interested in tattoos? Travel?

MS. TUCKER: I've been interested in tattoos ever since I can remember because I have no idea how I got interested in tattoos.

MR. CUMMINGS: From being a teenager?

MS. TUCKER: Even before that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: I just remember seeing tattoos and thinking they were beautiful. But I suppose that what happened was that my life as a child or as a young adult was not bearable. And as I read more, more and more of my interests became ones that were as far away from the life that I actually had as possible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: I don't know because no one has asked me the question before, so I'm only speculating. But there is something so exotic about those things that they seem to be places of absolute poetry. And the more I got to know about them, the more I realized that that was a small world, a kind of planet of little clubs, a little private world.

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean like tattoos and circus people?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But it was something that I could understand or I could grasp. It wasn't so huge that I couldn't grab hold of it somehow. But I also think as with one's passions, one stops very rarely to examine why they're there because you're too busy exploring them. And it's only at times like this when someone says, "Well, how did you get to do that?" that you say, "Well, I wonder how that happened."

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But things that are - the West has always interested me because it was as far away from me as you could get. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And there's a wonderful romance and independence about all of those things, about freaks, tattoos, the circus, you know, cowpersons who made them Americans.

MR. CUMMINGS: Cowpersons. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But I forgot how we started talking about this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but getting into all the reading and ideas.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, the reading, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And obviously, it appealed to one's fantasy nature.

MS. TUCKER: Well you see I read two kinds of things. I read, you know, Julian James and Piaget and all those people. And then I read this other stuff. And it's like two incredible extremes, which I suppose is not unlike me if I think about it. But mostly artists. But the way I actually start to work on an essay or on a show is that I head for - I have favorite bookstores in each city. And the nature of the bookstores is quite different in each city. In Fort Wayne, you're not going to find one. [Laughter] But if you go to Cocksen Brentano [phonetic], let's say - when I was working on the Jenson essay, what I would is just spend hours in Cocksen Brentano's and look in certain sections - anthropology, whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But that's where I found Kasira's [phonetic] books. I was just browsing through. And I can spend days browsing. Oh, what I was going to say, that Jenson is just that I had never even heard of Kasira. But in the process of browsing, I looked - I found the second and third volumes of the Philosophy of Art Form, all this incredible stuff relating to Jenson's work. Stand there and read a chapter or two, buy the whole thing, go home, read. But I think that whenever I have leisure time, that's what I do. I spend a lot of my time in bookstores just looking at stuff. And it's extremely relaxing for me. And that's partly how. I mean, if you're working on someone whose work has to do with spatial concerns and you browse enough, so then you find whichever one of Piaget's books it is.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But also, I mean, there are some educated people who read footnotes. An idea interests you, you follow it up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Index.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, you know, I know how to use the library.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] How do you find writing about art, though? What kind of process do you use when you decide to work on - I don't know, say, [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the first thing is I get myself into a big, acute anxiety and then delay the entire process for a week. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: That's the first thing I do. I worry about it. I've never written anything where I didn't begin with the idea that I couldn't do it. I have always felt that the task was just beyond me, that I had not an idea left in my head and that I have no idea where it's going to come from. I'm right in that stage right now about Barry Levay, which is the stage of just - I have no idea that I have anything else to say. But once that stage is recognized, then I think that it's beginning to work. I don't like to write. And I find it just very painful, very isolating. But what I do is start in the bookstore. So - and I talk to the artist in much the same way that you are talking to me, not

about the work. But I wrote - I just try to spend a lot of time with the person and find out something about the quality of their life and the way they think more than the work, because I hope the work will talk to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And then I start reading. And eventually, what happens is that I isolate myself completely for days and days, and I start to make outlines. Well, I take notes on index cards from all these books I read that don't seem to have anything to do with anything. And eventually, as the outline takes form, I can shuffle those cards around. And I don't think I have ever started writing with an idea. I've always - the idea has always evolved in the middle of the writing. I write about three drafts after the research, which takes a long time. But it's not research - it's not facts about - it's ideas more.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And once I've written the first draft, I generally read it over, cut and paste, rewrite it, and then give it to an editor who - I've had three or four different editors. But for the past eight years, it's been Tim, who reads it, you know, in a critical, a very critical way. And then I rewrite once again. And I write on the typewriter.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find artists are accurate in describing their own work and ideas?

MS. TUCKER: Not at all, which is why I don't try to do that, because then, I think, you're repeating their rhetoric or their ways of verbally defending themselves against the world. I'm always - I like to talk around their work. And whatever they say about their own work, I tend to put aside, not take down verbatim. I don't have - I think I always hope to provide someone, not with a compendium of information that they already knew or had, but with a really new view or some new insight into the work that - what I want from the artist is - what I ultimately hope for is that the artist will say, "My god, somebody actually saw that without my saying it," or "Yes, that's actually in the work, and I didn't really know it was in the work."

MR. CUMMINGS: So you want to provide the artist with an insight into his own world, possibly.

MS. TUCKER: Partly that, but partly I want to provide them with the conviction that the work alone will say what it has to say, which is what - a lot of artists get very nervous and [inaudible] --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, because --

MS. TUCKER: -- very nervous if I even ask them about the work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because the work often says things other than that which they think they're involved with.

MS. TUCKER: But I learned how to respond. I mean, that's awful. I really feel fortunate in that. I've never - all the time, all the things I've written from the beginning, I've never had an artist tell me "I don't like that" or "No, I don't want that published." Mostly they've just said, you know, really, really wonderful things. So I've felt that at least I was on the right track. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: I've found that a lot of them have problems dealing with the ambiguity of art.

MS. TUCKER: Ah yes. I think that's true.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, somebody with another background will see something in a totally different way than they see it, you know?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. But you know, a relationship with an artist is just wild. It's like - it's everything all at once. It's not just the professional relationship. You completely - you've got a total stranger's life mixed up with yours for a period of a couple of years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, yeah. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And it's the most intimate situation outside of a sexual one that I can think of, or outside of - I mean, my professional relationship with the people I work with in that tiny room is very intimate. But being - doing work with an artist is even more so.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, because you watch them. You're getting into their theories, their thoughts, their problems, their dreams, their ambitions, fantasies.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I worked, you know, with Rosenquist. I did that show with Rosenquist right after the accident.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. That must have been a horrendous time.

MS. TUCKER: It was unbelievable.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, Jim always has a little trouble focusing anyway.

MS. TUCKER: It was unbelievable. It was really difficult.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, he's always been difficult. And I went to college with him.

MS. TUCKER: You did?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh.

MR. CUMMINGS: I've known him for a long time.

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. We've got [inaudible] to move onto that stuff, that's all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, one other thing about, in general terms, what about working with other museums, other curators, museum directors around the country? Did that change over the years a great deal during the Whitney time? Or was it, sort of, you were there at the museum, you represented the museum and it was just ongoing?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Or did you have particular supporters around the country at various places?

MS. TUCKER: Well, Jane [inaudible] - did I tell you this story that Bruce - when I was working on Bruce's show with Jane?

MR. CUMMINGS: No. No.

MS. TUCKER: Bruce said to Jane, "How do you like working with Marcia?" And Jane said, "Well, it's nice. But Marcia always wants to make everything so personal." That's what she said. And I thought that was very funny. And I would say that my relationships with all of those people have been on a very personal level.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And what I mean by that is - how do I describe it? For example, Henry Hopkins, I have always felt, was a real supporter of mine in a very nice, very low-key way. I met him because I was invited to Julia's show when he was a director at Fort Worth. And it was also during the women's movement. We - he, Jan Butterfield, his wife, and Nell Johnson, who is from the Kimball, and I went out with Dave Hickey, to dinner. And I launched into what might have been my most furious feminist lecture to date. Why I was prompted in Fort Worth do to this is beyond me. But I waxed eloquent. And Dave Hickey afterwards said he hadn't heard anything so fine since the Seventh Day Adventists. You know, Dave Hickey had a sharp tongue, bless his little soul.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Hm.

MS. TUCKER: Hm. Yeah. Well. Anyhow --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was he implying that part of being a curator is to preach?

MS. TUCKER: No, no. It was the women's movement part of it. Thank god it wasn't the curatorial part. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: I see. I see.

MS. TUCKER: But somehow or other, Henry was really interested in all of that, really interested. And I felt that - during that show, which was when I gave Jim Roche a prize. Jim Roche was running around barefoot on motorcycles. God, there are some wonderful stories about people like that. Roche is out there in this little shack, right? We go see his work. He's out there in this little shack. And he's asked them not to bulldoze down the shack where he's staying for free until I get to see the work he's doing, Mummers and ceramic things. He has this incredible accent, Roche. And he says - I said, "How have you been surviving?" He looked real poor to me. He said he's been eating cat'n rot, cat'n rot. And I thought it was breakfast food. And he meant cat and rice. And he had literally been eating cat. And he got - he was running around barefoot on this motorcycle. He got - I gave him a 400-dollar prize in that show. I mean, that was before [inaudible]. The work was really interesting to me. And so that sort of pulled him out of this hole. And Henry had invited him over to this big party. I met a whole bunch of those artists. But somehow, the relationship with Henry was more than just, I go in, enjoy your show, thank you very much, goodbye. You know, it seems to have been a very ongoing - he and - who the hell was it?

Somebody else and I were doing a show someplace, and the only thing we fought about was, we all wanted to buy this little piece for 35 dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And who was going to get it?

MR. CUMMINGS: Sounds like a jury.

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: It sounds like a jury.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, but it was good, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I knew Jim Elliot. I'd met him at a museum conference. And we stayed up all one night talking museum stuff, just like that, and tsoo-tsoo-tsoo-tsoo. And just somehow seem to have been friends ever since. That's how I met Jack Fulton. It was also at a museum conference early on. And we - Jack and I took an all-night tour of all-night diners in Milwaukee. And we really literally did it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Terrific.

MS. TUCKER: And it was the basis of a wonderful friendship, which, I mean, we still --

MR. CUMMINGS: You still drink Schlitz beer. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: No, we don't, but he's the best dancer I know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: He's a wonderful dancer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, let me ask you two things then.

MS. TUCKER: But there have been a lot of museum people because Brenda Richardson, for instance, is somebody that - well, she's my peer. She's somebody whose work I admire tremendously. I think she really knows what she's doing. She's a wonderful writer. She's a good, good curator. She's as competent as anyone I know and as nice as anyone I know. I guess I met her out in California. I met Carl Lindsay at a gallery, and I met Brenda at a museum, and have always - she was working at that time for Peter Seltz.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, at Berkeley.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And I have got to say that I have - here we go on the record. I have never had very much respect for him and never will. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: But why? [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But why? Because he doesn't know what he's doing.

MR. CUMMINGS: He's a little crazy, Peter.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: He's little crazy.

MS. TUCKER: It's not that he's a little - I don't care about - everybody's a little crazy. I don't mind a little craziness.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But I like a heavy dose of professionalism with your craziness.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Anyhow, that's how I met her. I met Meltrip in his studio. You know, all these - actually, I started doing pewter workshops a long time ago, too. It must be nine, ten years ago almost now, nine years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, we'll get into that in a minute. But so - in other words, those museum conferences were really useful in terms of meeting people and getting things going, and one or two here or there.

MS. TUCKER: One or two here or there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's the most you can expect.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, yeah. It was college art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I've also felt very independent from those people because I've really always felt like a curator and not like a director. And now that I'm a director, it still doesn't make any difference to them. I mean, I don't know if they even --

MR. CUMMINGS: Think of you as a director? [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: No. Well, I always see myself as being somehow not part of all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean by "not part of all of that"? What is the part of "all of that" which you do not feel --

MS. TUCKER: Jumping from job to job, going from Denver to Milwaukee to this place to that place --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh I see, bigger budgets, bigger museums.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Bigger budgets, bigger museums.

MS. TUCKER: Bigger museums, you know, moving every three years, getting fired from this museum and that museum. Not that I haven't gotten fired, too. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I got fired for different reasons. [Inaudible] Well, it's because I don't consider myself attached to an institution. I think that's it. I don't consider myself a museum - you know, locked into this - you know, the 40,000 dollar a year museum job somehow.

MR. CUMMINGS: So the museum is your métier rather than a career?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that is a big difference. I never thought about my career as a career. I mean, I never thought about my career.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I must say that some people have said that was - watch out for that business. But I've always thought about my work and that I could do it - well, now, that's not true. I never always thought I could do it with or without an institution. That's not true. But I'm finding out that there are many things that are of incredible interest and that one can do them under whatever circumstances.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But you know, one of the things, to sort of go back to the Whitney business, which we keep going --

MS. TUCKER: Well, we haven't actually, you know, gotten --

MR. CUMMINGS: Gotten too much into that. I mean, here you were out of the Institute working at the Whitney, uncommitted to Greenberg and the other powers of those years. Were you aware of any influences, outside influences? Did people tell you that, you know, you really had to go to certain galleries, consider certain artists? Were you not interested? Were those people not acceptable to you? You developed your own --

MS. TUCKER: No. See, I had had a great advantage. I had never been part of that world. I sat at my desk the first day and I thought, "Goddamn. I can just call up Jasper Johns' goddamn studio." And I just started going to people's studios. I mean, it was almost immediate. But I've been much more influenced by the artists that I

know, and a very broad, wide range of them, than I have ever been influenced by other people. I've never had a critic - I mean, in fact, one of the critics who I admire, Robert Pinkus Whitman, publicly slammed me or used to slam me all the time. And I've always admired his writing. But I know - I think critics think they're usually different. And I - you know who did influence me very much? Leo Steinberg influenced me very much in terms of the way he wrote and the way he lectured and a certain kind of absolute passion he had for the art he dealt with. And I felt - I worked for him at City, a freshman program. And although he was in many ways, by his own admission, also a flawed man, very insecure, I remember a wonderful conversation we had. [Inaudible] tell me a joke that had to do with the 30 Years War, and I laughed. And he said, "You know when the 30 Years War was?" I replied "No." He said, "Do you know what century it was?" He said, "Do you know what century it was?" I said, "No." He said, "Do you know who the war was fought by?" I said, "No." I mean, I was a kid, you know? And he said, "And how do you expect to teach art history that way?" And I just sort of pulled myself together, and I said, "What I need to know about the 30 Years War, I will learn it." But then I went to his house to pick up something. I mean, it really took a lot of courage. And I said, "You know, Leo, you're 20 years older than I am. You're a brilliant scholar. I don't have experience. I don't have that background. I don't have your memory." I said, "Why do you have to attack me like that? I feel bad enough as it is." And he apologized. He said, you know. But he was flawed in that odd way. At the same time, he's the best person to walk on the street with I've ever met in my life. He's just wonderful.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And as I said, he was great. I was just --

MR. CUMMINGS: Like a gypsy, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: He was terrific. But I think his writing has been very important to me. The sense of - that a person was writing about something another person made has been really - it was really wonderful. But - I mean, obviously, I was influenced by my friends. But then, not [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: What artist would you say has been important to you in that way as window openers, organizers, stimuli?

MS. TUCKER: Mel Bruce a lot, a great deal.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Although Bruce is extremely shy, I have always felt that somehow his full commitment to the world, rather than the art world, was of great interest.

MR. CUMMINGS: What does that mean, "commitment to the world"?

MS. TUCKER: Well, you know, that he didn't choose to come and live in New York, and you know, do these heavy openings, political numbers, that he really has struggled all his life to live a good life with his children, with his wife whom he is now divorced from, with his friends who were not chosen for any reason other than affinity friendship. He's - for the quality of relaxation and attentiveness that he has, I've always felt in his house, their house, whatever - I'm very close to his children both, especially to one of his children, who I --

MR. CUMMINGS: You're godmother, aren't you?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't know what that means because they're not Catholic, but yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I always felt a sense of - if you work in a museum, there is a persona that is established. It's very hard to break through. And I've always felt myself to be myself in that environment. I'm [inaudible]. But there was something about his intensity as an artist, with no - without having to relinquish living day to day and with no pretensions, that I loved. I just felt it made a big difference. Robert Erwin is another person very much like that, who I have always felt - well, not always because I didn't always know him. But I have felt very strongly about his participation in the world, his caring about his work as it actually existed out there to be shared and the fact that he also has not relinquished or let go of what he is, who he is, in order to be a Professional Artist, tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But lots of people -- I mean, I've known Nancy Grace for a long time. The incredible quality of that woman's intelligence knocks me out. And I've always liked to be with her because somehow you didn't have to try - Nancy never has to try to be intelligent, to be intelligent. She doesn't have to put on anything. She just - she is. I know what I'm trying to say. I'm trying to say that somehow when people are attempting to - when they're

trying to be smart about things, they end up being pretentious. And when they are themselves and don't worry about the nature of what it is they're saying, then ideas are generated in an insane and wonderful way. And ideas flow in and out of one's life and conversation as naturally as breathing. And that's the thing that interests me about Nancy and about Irwin and about Bruce and about Barry Levay and about Tuttle, about a lot of the people that I've worked with that I feel --

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find that your relationship with the artist is continued even after you've done an exhibition?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, absolutely. That would be very difficult for that not to happen. In fact, mostly I've gotten much closer afterward because you're at the state of the exhibition --

MR. CUMMINGS: The tension is over with.

MS. TUCKER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I mean, it goes the way friendships go. But with some exceptions. I have not remained close to Joan Mitchell because she is not easy to be close to and because I don't want someone --

MR. CUMMINGS: She lives somewhere else, too.

MS. TUCKER: Well, she lives somewhere else, but she's also an alcoholic, and I don't want to be around people who are self-destructive because [inaudible], especially when I care about someone or when I care about their work. But I mean, that's one of the - well, I want to - let me go on a minute because no one has ever asked me that. Who has been important to me in terms of the way I've thought about things? Terry Allen is, I think, a big influence. I met him also in 1969 through Dave Hickey. And as I said, I've always been interested in country music. And Terry is a singer. But what I liked so much about his work was that he was one of the first people who absolutely refused - in my generation, in my knowledge - who refused to be pigeonholed and whose career, as it were, suffered for so many years because people would say, "Well, what the hell are you? Are you a singer? Or are you a printmaker? Are you a sculptor? Or I mean, do you do perform - what do you do?" And the fact that all of his work has been one long narration, and the fact that he - his life with his children, with Bucka and Bale and with Joe Harvey and with his friends is so - and his work is so utterly integrated, and where the intelligence of the work doesn't suffer. You don't have to be a divided human being. It used to be, I think, in a way that people would put their intellect here and their lives in this little corner.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who would do that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, Morris, for example, was very much that way. When he talked about work, he talked about work, rigorously about work, where he somehow could not manage to integrate the biographical facts of his life with the ideas that he had.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Oh.

MS. TUCKER: I remember that very strongly. I think that Richard Serra used to be like that. Times have changed. People are older, and they have softened in, I think, a very good, very - for me, very wonderful way to watch. But there is something about not separating those parts that was not common, let's say, in the late '60s, early '70s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do you think that was?

MS. TUCKER: There was a lot of heavy, theoretical art stuff going on, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean there were sort of art forms stamps and the critics being superstars?

MS. TUCKER: No, I don't think of it in connection with a particular magazine or person.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I think that it was a residue of a minimalist aesthetic, where the more distance you got from the work and the more one could deal with pure ideas, somehow the better it seemed. And I was at that time quite fascinated by people who didn't do that, partly because Robert Goldwater had always said, "Never forget that artists make art. It doesn't just drop."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And his position was very unpopular because it included psychology, and psychology is forbidden.

MR. CUMMINGS: By whom?

MS. TUCKER: Well, it's - I mean, by the - in the general line of thinking. I suppose Greenberg was in part responsible for that. Greenberg was dealing with the formal aspects of work. Rosenberg was dealing with the socio-political aspects of work. And no one at that time was saying - was talking about psychology [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But I haven't put a good deal of thought into that. I mean, I'm talking off the top of my head.

MR. CUMMINGS: What other people? I mean, even, say, in terms of historians or collectors, the dealers, authors?

MS. TUCKER: I didn't know very many historians. I certainly didn't know any dealers, god knows. I think they all intimidated me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Why?

MS. TUCKER: Well, as I said, I was very impoverished. And I looked funny. And the only person I remember being really kind to me was Donald Gold when he was at Sispak [phonetic]. He saw me in the gallery 10 times and finally came over and said, "Hi!" You know? He introduced himself. So that was very nice. But I think that Bill Coffley [phonetic], whom I was working for, was a definite influence.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he had this wonderful attitude, which was completely irreverent. And I respected that. I remember that Bill Reuben came to borrow a painting from the collection. And when Bill Reuben left, Bill Coffley made some of the most wonderfully witty and disparaging remarks I have ever heard in my life, and I just loved him. I just loved him.

MR. CUMMINGS: There are no gods to him anymore.

MS. TUCKER: Well, but in that house I met, you know, Larry Bell, Andy Warhol, Luke Penrose. I went to dinner there all the time and met everybody. And Walter --

MR. CUMMINGS: He does love to give those parties, doesn't he?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, this was before those parties. These were dinners. And I was the secretary.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, '69 [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: I met Duchamp.

MR. CUMMINGS: Sixty-eight, seventy, whatever it was.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, what did that mean to you about finally meeting all those people and Duchamp and Penrose?

MS. TUCKER: Nothing at the time. But I mean, nothing and everything - that is, I was very shy. I was partly intimidated by it. I was intimidated by their wealth - tremendously wealthy. And at the same time it was - I would have loved to have been completely invisible and just hung around. I didn't feel that I could hold my own in that situation. My other life - you know, when I came home from their place I came home to complete poverty and a life full of musicians. And it was glamorous, but not home.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. Right.

MS. TUCKER: And at the same time, I think - it gives you a little bit of - when those people are not - when you have immediate contact with them, a lot of the glamour wears off. And it's a day-to-day contact. And that's very important because then you realize, well, these are people struggling to do their work just like anybody else. When I met Warhol in the early days, thinking that he was very unglamorous - and now he comes in very serious about his work and very touching because he was so curious about everybody else. That's what -

MR. CUMMINGS: Did he change that much?

MS. TUCKER: Probably not, but he is less accessible to me because the veneer of fame is --

MR. CUMMINGS: Protects him.

MS. TUCKER: Protects him and it keeps me away because of my personality.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I have met several famous people by now. And they have all, for me, shared the same quality, without exception. And that has been a quality of such intense curiosity about the world that it nearly bowled me over. I told you about this thing with Duchamp, talking to Duchamp.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. What was that? No.

MS. TUCKER: Well, one day - this was very important to me. I was at Norma and Bill's. And the doorbell rang, and this old guy was there. And he said, "Oh, are Norma and Bill in?" And I said, "No, they'll be back soon. Come on in and I'll make you a cup of coffee." He looked a little familiar, but I didn't know who he was. I made him some coffee, sat in the living room, which was part of my --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I thought my function. And he started asking me questions. And two hours later the two of us were going blah-blah-blah-blah-blah at each other. I told that man, I swear to god, I told that man all about - I told him about my marriage. I told him about graduate school. I told him about everything. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And he told me about - a lot about, you know, his marriage, about living in France - never told me who he was. It was so very - no one, because I was a secretary, right? No one had ever asked me so much about myself and my life - ever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And something about - I can remember just where I was sitting. I can remember looking at him. I remember something like breaking loose in me because he was - you can tell when people really are interested and when they're just not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MS. TUCKER: When they're doing it because --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Every anecdote I threw out, something would come back, you know. And then they came home, and they said, "Oh, we see you've met. We see you've met Marcel." And I realized I'd been sitting there talking to him."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Marvelous.

MS. TUCKER: I near - well, I near to fainted. I got up and I just felt myself go white. And I left. I just ran out. Norma is leaning out the hall saying, "Marsh! Marsh! Where are you?" And, why, he knocked me out. Knocked me out. So then I met - I went to dinner one night when I was living with - who the hell was I living with? That's interesting. I guess I was living with Tim. A woman named Shirl Ann Smith invited me to dinner. And she had been an actor, then she's a painter. And a friend of hers, who she invited to dinner, who she was very close to, was Lee Falk who wrote the Fetterman Andres Magician (phonetic). Yes, it was myself and Tim, Lee Falk, Shirl Ann Smith. And who knew? We went out, over there to dinner, and the other guests were Alah Rene and Franz Maron. If I had known they were coming to dinner, I probably wouldn't have gone because I would have gotten - I get very nervous about this stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Anyhow, it was the same quality in Rene. We sat around the dinner table, a rather dreadful dinner as I remember. And somebody started talking about comic books. And someone was talking about narration. And it was one of the most interesting conversations I have ever had in my life, and I'm convinced that that's what started me thinking about images in the way that I did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really. Wow.

MS. TUCKER: And what year was it? Maybe '72.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But the same quality about - well, we had a comic strip writer, a filmmaker; Florence was an actor. [Inaudible] we had a regular writer, Tim, and myself. It was a mad evening because it was very quiet and very intense. But the thing that struck me about Rene that I loved was the same thing, this incredible curiosity, incredible, always interested. Why? What? How? What do you think about? You know, and it's for me incredibly touching because I always - very few people, if you really look at the world, hardly anybody ever bothers to ask you a real question.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, most people can't afford the answer.

[PAUSE]

MS. TUCKER: Wow, that's very perceptive.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's very interesting that several people you mentioned are much older people or people almost your same age. And there's very few in the middle.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I mean, there are the people, you know, a few years older or they're a generation.

MS. TUCKER: Much older.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I never noticed that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Just like it's a block of time that --

MS. TUCKER: I don't know any 50-year-olds. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: God damn. Well, I know many younger people, many, many younger people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. But chances are they're not as influential directly, because you see them in a different way.

MS. TUCKER: Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: And they really feel in a different way.

MS. TUCKER: Allen and Sylvia I'm close to.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who?

MS. TUCKER: Al Hills and Sylvia Stone.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes.

MS. TUCKER: They're sort of in between.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But I don't know, I don't know. I mean, you grow up with --

MR. CUMMINGS: What happens.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what do you do in terms of - sort of going back to the Whitney experience and such part of the substructure [inaudible] [Laughter] - for several years the museum had pretty much the same group of people there. I mean, it's you and Monty and Pete Wild and Jack Fowler and such. And it seemed to work fairly well; or did it?

MS. TUCKER: I think that it worked well. But - god, I don't know. I'm very happy if you leave me alone. Because

really, almost all I need, just leave me alone.

MR. CUMMINGS: And let you do what you want to do and --

MS. TUCKER: Let me do it, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I don't care how much work I have to put in. It doesn't make any difference. I'm very happy. When someone starts to play around with my work, I get really crazed.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean by play around with your work?

MS. TUCKER: Well, let's say I was doing an installation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And a director came in in the middle of the installation and decided that he wanted to move this painting here. I'd go nuts. I would quit. See, that's what I would do. I would quit a job for that. I mean, that to me --

MR. CUMMINGS: Anybody would do that?

MS. TUCKER: Nah-uh.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But that's probably because they know I'd quit. [Laughter] No, I don't - it's the same thing. No one can rewrite a paragraph I've written. I just - either you do it or you don't.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But I believe the same thing about other people that now work for me, that you must give people what belongs to them. You can't take what belongs to somebody else. But I just want to be left alone.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I got along with those people very well. I loved - I tell you what I loved, though. I loved staff meetings because I'd have to fight for shows. You always had to fight. I mean, Jack Fowler didn't just say, "Whatever you want to do, oh, is fine." You had to explain why. And I thought that was just great because I'd have to go in there and convince these people who did not know what I was talking about.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why didn't they know?

MS. TUCKER: Well, because Jack had said to me, you know, that he was hiring me to go find out what nobody else knew. I mean, that was --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, so you were the front going out into new areas.

MS. TUCKER: Sure. Well, but, I mean, I chose what I wanted to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: All right. So I would come back with information. And it was new information, right? And I'd have to fight for what I wanted. I developed this, what I would call my Jewish technique for getting exhibitions. Like the Nauman show was a hard one. I realized that no matter what I showed them of Nauman's work, nobody was going to want to do that show. So I got this technique, which I used to use at the dinner table to get what I wanted, which is that once a day, no matter what the circumstances were, the name would crop up. You see, so you go on for three or four months until when you finally hit them with it, it's very familiar. It's almost as though they don't really know whether they agreed or not. And I really did that. I really did that with the Nauman show. I mentioned Bruce's name perhaps at every staff meeting over two-three years. And finally, when it came down to that, it was almost a fait accompli.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But I hammered his name all the time. And in addition to that, I had to explain. And I liked having to use my wit. I just thought that was really - I mean, Jack listened to a good explanation. He really liked that. So I feel that I learned how to speak.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, did you get feedback from other parties at the table?

MS. TUCKER: Well, Jim was laconic. And Mack was off someplace. And Steve Wile fought me a lot. And I always had to, in some very diplomatic way, remind him that territory was here; we're not in jurisdiction.

MR. CUMMINGS: He's always had aspirations about work.

MS. TUCKER: Well, Steve and I had - there was awhile there we had a really hard time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I guess I sort of evolved. I mean, I started to think of myself as --

MR. CUMMINGS: You had to move sort of out of exhibitions, in a way. What did you do about adding things to the collection?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Were you an enthusiastic collector?

MS. TUCKER: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Takes care of that, doesn't it?

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: Why not? I mean, what - you know.

MS. TUCKER: Well, because I don't trust history. Again, I --

MR. CUMMINGS: But it's not history. I mean, it's your own --

MS. TUCKER: Well, sure. You add it to a collection, and then there is your history. I did add a lot of things to the collection. But only - I was really interested in acquiring them from the artist before - I mean, I wasn't interested in getting a Stellar for 90,000 dollars. I was really interested in - my biggest battle was over Joan Snyder. I wanted to acquire one of those really beautiful early Joan Snyders. It was 800 dollars. Everybody said, "No! No way. No way." And I just kept picking at it, picking at it. And finally - Jack jokingly used to call it "the Tucker Snyder routine." And we did finally acquire one for 4000 dollars many years later through the good offices of your list. And I could not resist at that meeting. I turned around to Jack and I said, "I told you so." [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I said that. And he laughed. Four thousand dollars. I mean -

MR. CUMMINGS: But don't you think that --

MS. TUCKER: It's not that I think that Joan Snyder is going to be the greatest artist who ever lived in America.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. But don't you think that - you know, one thing at staff meetings as well as collectors, nobody is ever influenced by the price. Don't you think it is more difficult to sell --

MS. TUCKER: Something - sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- something that's less expensive, even though the quality is going to be the same forever?

MS. TUCKER: Sure. Sure. Sure. But you see, though, that's what I'm saying. You know, after awhile, so what? I mean --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I just was not - I did a lot of permanent collection shows.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I loved looking at those things, again. And I must say that inspiration is one of the things that I -

one of the most extraordinary pleasures that I can think of.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's true.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, god, love it.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, that's the curator's last private pleasure.

MS. TUCKER: I love it. I love it.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, picking and choosing and spacing and lights and all that other sort of stuff [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I really think it's great. But the question of permanent collection was not so interesting to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why not? I mean, you weren't interested in filling in things in the '30s or the '50s, the whole --

MS. TUCKER: No, I loved looking at them. But I'm not interested in filling them in.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: I'd just rather be looking --

MR. CUMMINGS: You're not interested in today's living rather than --

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's obvious. I mean, that I'm very interested in things that are just emerging because - well, I tell you. I really like being in a place where I have to be confronted with the work. And it's a dialog between me and the work and not somebody else's opinion, and nothing having to do with expediency. Or where it's just me having to deal with the work with no previous ideas about it, nobody saying, "Well, So-and-so recommended; you should." The immediacy of being thrown back on yourself, your own resources, and what the art is doing to you, whether it's good or bad is the most interesting thing that I can think of. But trying to fill in the gaps is a historical process of evaluation that seems, to me for my knowledge and for my - to be pretty true.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you observe your own appraisal of works of art?

MS. TUCKER: I really try to guard against my own taste. I try very hard. Hey, people think my taste is for funky things; it's not. It's for rigorously intellectual, distanced, cold, highly theoretical things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who does that kind of work anymore?

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] [Laughter] No, it's not true. Bob Morris. No, Kadul [phonetic] -- I mean, all of the things that I have worked --

MR. CUMMINGS: But Kadul is an incredible romantic.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, they're all romantics. All artists are romantic anyhow.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So when - what's the sense? This is silly, you know. What I mean is that I try to watch out for easy stuff or for stuff that's very accessible to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: In terms of what? I mean, how? [Inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: See, that's why I don't like to do business in my house because --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: My house is full of things that have personal meaning. I mean, every single thing I own is - well, no, with one or two exceptions - has to do with a little history of my relationship with somebody or with an idea or something. And they're all very important to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. But [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: And I don't care whether they're good or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Are they gifts? Or do you buy things?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, sure, I mean, every possible way. I don't have very much money. But - oh, I bought that Joseph Yokum for 100 dollars. That was a birthday present from a past year. Tim gave me Ray Morton's thing as a present. That was - every year that I worked for Bill Copley he gave me a drawing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, how marvelous.

MS. TUCKER: God bless him.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Well, see, he knew that I liked his art. He really knew that. Because I think I was one of the few people who thought his work was just dynamite.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's wild.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I always loved it. But people didn't, you know. I mean, this was in the early '60s.

MR. CUMMINGS: They still don't.

MS. TUCKER: I know. Well, you know, I --

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you see his performance last year?

MS. TUCKER: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: You didn't?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. I was out of town.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, it was incredible.

MS. TUCKER: I was away.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was this room that lit up inside and all these people rising on the bed [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: It was incredible. I mean, it just was so [inaudible], so professional.

MS. TUCKER: Right. Exactly. I just think the world of him. Anyhow, the other thing is that when I teach theater, this second theater group I have, I agreed that I would take them a year's worth of workshops for a drawing each. I buy a lot of things from people when they're graduate students for 50 dollars, anything I can afford. And then sometimes many years later, they've become well known or they've given you a little thing. But mostly, people know I like food, wine, and art, and not in that order.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] What's the order?

MS. TUCKER: Art, food, and wine. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And those are usually the presents that I get. And books - I mean, that's not true, books. But I'd rather choose my own books.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: This is only about a quarter of the things that I own. Anyhow, we were talking about --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, [inaudible] to go back in a way, not to belabor it. But the whole - you know, working in a museum, and even if it's a twentieth century museum, of which there are now several decades exhausted, I get the feeling that you were much more interested in the more recent than the historical.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, always, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the more questionable rather than the more acceptable.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the more undefined. But how does that place you in terms of what you thought the

museum was about, or has that idea evolved?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that's a very confusing question for me because that's partly, I think, the answer to what you asked earlier about, why do you not feel part of all of that? And that's why.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: The museum will take care of itself. And museums will take care of themselves. Institutions will; history will. The only thing that I have control over is the quality of my work. And I basically don't like institutions. I like very much to work collaboratively, or I wouldn't have been part for so long of at least two, and now three, incredibly collaborative groups. But I think institutions are very detrimental to human beings because you can't think at the limits of your intelligence. And I think that is the only place to think and the only place to work. And if an institution - an institution likes to work at the center. And that's no - for me, that's not a good place to be. I can't. I can't live that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, you've used a term which is your work. How do you define what your work is? What does that mean to you? And what are the elements? What are the ideas, the feelings that constitute that, that phrase?

MS. TUCKER: See, it changes every day, I suppose, because right now my work is involved with making - isn't that ironic - with making an institution that will be un-institutionalized. I don't - [inaudible] just wonderful human [inaudible]. Just great. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Making a square egg with the yolk on the outside, right?

MS. TUCKER: I think of my work as partly - it's first looking, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Looking at things. And most of the things that I really look at, besides all those wonderful Vermeers and, you know, Sienese painting and all the things I really go to look at, I think I spend more time looking at things that no one else will look at than most other people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Secondly, trying to be dumb rather than to understand. It used to be in the old days, when I first started this work, that I would go to something and try very much to understand what my terms were and how the work met my terms. And many years ago, that changed. And I only understood it afterward that I started to go to work and find out what its terms were and whether I could meet them - good or bad, it didn't matter. But it left me very dumb in front of the work - more interesting for me to be dumb in front of the work. So I learned to talk about the weather while I was looking at something and to be very patient, spend many years looking. So one is looking, and the other is keeping my mouth shut, not trying to prove myself in front of works of art or through works of art. That's not the - I don't have to prove anything there, nor does it, in a sense, have to prove anything. It's just - it's a mute state of looking. Well, this is part of the work. Then comes the process, over many years, in which things begin to shift and take shape in relation to each other. Then the generation of an idea, which is - needs to be shared and which needs to have people there who are willing to listen and, hopefully, be convinced. Or in some cases, convince you that it's no good. And you throw it out and begin again. Then the act of presenting, which is wonderfully complex. And in the presentation, the act of interpretation and explication, which has to do with the writing, with the attempt to bring the artist closer to his or her work, to bring me closer to that work to change. Finally, the incredible attempt, like pulling teeth, to bridge the gap between the artist, the work, and the public at large, which I see also as important, by trying to be direct and simple.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. You said something about people showing you that it's not important or not --

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who's done that ever with works of art?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'm very strong willed. I mean --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] It's not many people. But I think that I have proven myself wrong many, many times. I mean, the stuff that has changed, I wouldn't have done it. Well, I think Bower, in part, some of the - oh, I remember Bobby Rosenblum did something. I went to him with art I thought was a great idea for a landscape showing - wonderful, to me. And he took it apart in about a half a minute, but gently.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what - what do you mean?

MS. TUCKER: I was going to do some kind of landscape show. And he just asked the kind of right questions that left my idea flat, in a very good way. And I think the people I've had as editors over the years, some of whom I've lived with, some of whom - well, one woman who I don't even want to talk about because I dislike her so much now, but who was a wonderful editor and who really managed - I really appreciated how she managed to make me rethink certain kinds of things in a very healthy way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's a lot of what editing is about, thinking.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I think my staff now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I'm very influenced by them. They - boy, they have an incredible way of doing things I really like, which is, you know, I throw out something. And they sit real quiet for a few minutes. And then they just start to talk. And they always like to take it from the extreme. And they have half the time, at least, totally changed my ideas about things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Hm.

MS. TUCKER: And afterward I'm always surprised. I say, "Gee, you're very young."

MR. CUMMINGS: But they're all like --

MS. TUCKER: But they've got smarts. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I was just going to say they're somewhat younger.

MS. TUCKER: Somewhat? I really like that. I mean, they knock me out. They really knock me out. A lot of things, a lot of things. They say, "Oh, yeah, let's do this."

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: "Hm," they say. Yeah. I guess I'm talking to the director. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Let me see.

[END OF DISK FOUR]

MR. CUMMINGS: I just want to say this is side five. It's September 1, 1978, Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Tucker. I wondered if you did reviews for *ARTnews*, right, for awhile?

MS. TUCKER: Yes, I did.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like that experience? Was it gallery reviews? Did you go to studios, too?

MS. TUCKER: No, it was gallery reviews. And the way -- actually, the way I got the job was that Noma Copling introduced me to Tom Hask. And Tom was quite interested at that time in the fact that I had done my masters thesis on social surrealism in America from 1930 to '40. And I think that he probably needed someone, a reviewer, who had that kind - what he thought was that kind of interest.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I did it for quite a number of years. And it was very, very good training for me, I think. First of all, it taught me how to write quite concisely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because you had six lines for a [inaudible] painting. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: They were very space - "So-and-so and So-and-so does birds, flowers, and vases in shades of pink and grey." You know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Next. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And - but Scott Burton was reviewing for them. Now I can't remember because it seems to me that Scott and I met each other many, many years before that and re-met again at odd years. But I get confused because I know that, for instance, John Perault -- I was a friend of John Perault's when I was in high school.

MR. CUMMINGS: You'd met Scott in Paris.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: You met Scott in Paris, didn't you?

MS. TUCKER: No. I think I had met him --

MR. CUMMINGS: Anyway, somebody - back to John Perault.

MS. TUCKER: I met Scott in Paris? I can't remember now, but Scott I've known for a long time. Well, I was in high school, and John Perault was - I was in my last year at high school and John was in his first year at Montcrest State Teachers College. And there were three poets and myself and two other friends, or four poets and four friends. And we hung out together. And John was writing poetry at that time. But I think he also was writing for *ARTnews*, and I ran into him again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MS. TUCKER: And it turned out that Harris Rosenstein, who worked at *ARTnews* - he and I went to the same junior high school in Brooklyn. And it's called David A. Gooding Junior High School. And Harris said to me that, by all rights, he should have been a rug salesman, I should have been a drum major.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: He was quite right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. That's the kind of world it was.

MS. TUCKER: But I found about working at *ARTnews* - I found that after awhile it really got deadly. And it got deadly because I was reviewing third- and fourth-rate shows.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MS. TUCKER: Very rarely --

MR. CUMMINGS: You rarely got a good one.

MS. TUCKER: Well, the good shows were really given to the senior reviewers. And I wanted to write an article very much and finally did write an article, but it was given to me. I didn't get to choose it. And I wrote it on Robert Nabkin. It was the first article I had ever written. And looking back on it, I think that I did a good job with what I had, but that Nabkin's work was not my area.

MR. CUMMINGS: It wasn't your - yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It wasn't my --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like that, though, seeing all this sort of second- and third-rate stuff and having to do those three or four lines? Did it go anywhere or did it get very repetitious?

MS. TUCKER: It got extremely repetitious. But I also felt at that time that it was a rather privileged situation that I had. I was earning a little bit of money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: It was four dollars a review, which I needed desperately. And it seemed to me to round out the other things I was doing, like being in school, you know, and like teaching. You know, I was trying - teaching art history. Working still for the Copleys, beginning to catalog private collections - all those things kind of - this was yet another aspect of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And it became clear to me, I think, around then that there were many different kinds of things one could do with art history training and that I didn't necessarily have to choose one. In other words, I didn't have to solidify any ideas about a career. But I remember writing to Tom Hess or sending him a telegram, a fake telegram, saying, you know, something funny about, "Help," you know, "Drowning in surrealists, fourth-rate surrealists aesthetic," you know, "Please prescribe one rigorous, intellectual exhibition to review."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I remember also that they edited rather heavily at that time. And I can recall, for instance, writing a review of Patricia Johanneson's work and saying that it made Barnett Newman look like a - you know, a German expressionist or something like that. And they wouldn't - absolutely would not - they didn't like too much humor in your reviews.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah, yeah, yeah, very serious.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. And I think that Tom was a rather formidable personality to deal with, not someone that I felt that I could get very close to.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MS. TUCKER: Well, first of all, he had an extraordinarily ironic sensibility. And for a young kid, it's sometimes hard to tell, you know, whether he's serious or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Or cynical.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. He was very cynical. I had dinner - I sat next to him at dinner about a week before he died. And he did the small talk in which he was being quite cynical. He told me that I shouldn't - that it was useless to trouble to write about unknown artists when there was so little written about the ones who were great artists. And I said, "Well, yes, of course, people follow their period."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: "And you're entitled to write about de Kooning and I'm entitled to write about you."

MR. CUMMINGS: Somebody who's [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was he supportive, generally then, or not?

MS. TUCKER: I felt that he was extremely busy and - I felt he was kind, yeah, and not at all a bad person to work for. But he was intimidating to me. I don't think [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: What about some of the older writers that were around? Did you get to know them?

MS. TUCKER: Not very well. I met Ashley and - Scott I know was writing for the [inaudible] you probably know about [inaudible] or re-met him from someplace anyhow.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Kim Ravens. I'd have to go and look back. You know, they - oh, you know, I just remembered something. My first writing - now I don't know whether it was before or after, or even if they were during *ARTnews*. But I wrote for the *57th Street Review* for Jock Truman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I loved it. I loved it because he never edited a word. And he would often send three reviewers to do the same show. And then you would get three different points of view. A lot of people wrote for him. I think he paid you something like five bucks a shot for everything. It was nothing. But it was wonderful. I felt very good about that.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kind of feedback did you get from *ARTnews*, as well as the 57th Street Review? Anything? Or was it just sort of --

MS. TUCKER: Absolutely, absolutely not. The only thing that I recall now was that there is a man who does light sculpture. It's a little like the Lumiere boxes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Riback. [phonetic]

MS. TUCKER: Raul Riback, right. And I wrote a review, one of the first reviews I had written when I was not very knowledgeable. And I thought they were considerably quite good and wrote something nice. And last year, I think, he excerpted from that and put my name on it without putting the date on it, and put it on an [inaudible].

And I was very, very angry.

MR. CUMMINGS: Lord. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was the pits. Well, the thing is, you know, when you write, it's - I was talking to a friend --

MR. CUMMINGS: They never use dates. They never do that.

MS. TUCKER: When I was in San Francisco, saying that there's something truly terrifying, in a way, when you look at your shelves and you see that you have written books because it's as though your mind is out there permanently, the workings of your mind, for anybody to see. And, plus, all of the pretensions, the lack of knowledge, the, you know, dumb ways you've written things, and the struggle to understand. It's all --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's all there.

MS. TUCKER: All there. And you can't take it back.

MR. CUMMINGS: Little signposts.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, you know, I see all those essays or those books as steps, not progressive steps, but as aspects of some kind of search for understanding, which I don't think will ever be completed, but it's just that, you know, it feeds itself into the fabric.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: But thinking that all those works have come out - oh, one thing I was very grateful for, and that is that when they were interviewing me for the Whitney, they wanted to see my writing. And I don't think it's quite enough in a professional situation to show your student work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: Although I don't think that the - actually, I think that my masters thesis was not as bad as I thought it was originally. [Inaudible], but I was able to cut out some of the longer, better reviews from *ARTnews* and from *57th Street Review*, which gave them an idea of at least my writing ability, if not my judgmental skills.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MS. TUCKER: I don't think for a long time I could tell what was good from what wasn't good in the days when there was a fairly clear-cut idea of that. But because of that, maybe I gave up really worrying too much about the matter of whether one was correct in one's judgments and trying instead to understand what was going on.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that's not necessarily the point anymore?

MS. TUCKER: No, I think that it's not. I think that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Since when, would you say, roughly?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I would say that somewhere in the early '70s, when minimalism appeared to have given its last gasp. Actually, I don't think anything does. I think that things come --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] go on forever.

MS. TUCKER: Incredibly cyclical. I think that suddenly people got very confused because they - I don't know if I talked on the tape about this. But I'm very much right now involved with the idea of a nonlinear, non-progressive attitude toward things, that based, I think, on what - it may already be out of date, but on Thomas Kune's ideas about paradigms in the structure of scientific revolution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And that things are important when they are paradigmatic, when they draw - when they serve as a model, draw a whole group of people away, when things are relevant for their time and place rather than - I mean, what he says is that Einstein is not a greater scientist than Maxwell, simply because he had more information, that Maxwell was as important to his own time and place. It is, it's a fairly complicated theory. But I think that when you don't have a goal, a very clear goal, then you don't have progress towards a goal. And when

you don't have progress towards a goal, then you have no measurable steps. And the art world, not art, but the art world, is such that - and especially the financial aspect of it, art as a commodity, really depends very much on very specific things, ways of measuring quality. I was going to [inaudible], I guess, last week. It must have been last week, as I talked to you the week before. And I drove up with Sam Kuntz and his wife, whom I had not met. And Kuntz in the car was trying - he didn't ask me anything about what I did at all. But I was trying to draw him out. And he said something about - he said that there was no quality anymore. He always knew quality, and he did not see quality anymore. And he said "quality" in a particular way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I said, "Well, there is a great deal of work going on in studios that's very good, and there's work that's in shows that's quite good, too." And he said, "Well, I don't get to studios, and I don't see quality, and things have changed, and they're just not what they were." And I thought, "God, help preserve me from old fartism," which is what that is. It's like - it's something you can't help. I mean, he's not an old fart. But I mean, it's - when you --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's of one's generation, you see.

MS. TUCKER: Right. But --

MR. CUMMINGS: And each generation has its own definition. And that --

MS. TUCKER: Well, someone said about Alfred Barr -- I guess it was about Alfred Barr - that a good museum person manages to make it through one generation well.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's about right.

MS. TUCKER: And a really great museum person makes it through two. And only a genius can possibly make it through three, and Barr was close to that. Anyhow, what I was going to say about that is when we finally got to Vera's, I forced some information from Kuntz about [inaudible]. And he said, "Well, is there any quality in there?"

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] You see? He made his point, didn't he?

MS. TUCKER: Right. Yeah. Well, of course, not Sam. I mean, I don't show anything I believe in, you know, [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah, but it has to do with a certain - you know, I've known Sam for a long time. And with him I think it has to do with a certain way of living and certain kinds of ideas and, you know, art is on the wall and it has a frame and it does this, and it fantasizes and all this.

MS. TUCKER: I'm interested in objects also, as you know. But, you know, that's not all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, of the - now what was that? I think about because - sorry. Oh, we were talking about quality. Well, I think that at a certain point in the '70s when the goals - when, especially when Greenberg's goals for modernism became - really came fully into question, publicly into question, people got very frantic because I think that that started to affect the market. I think that people don't buy when they're not sure of having their investment returned. And the days of the big collector, the investment collector, are over. People get frantic and say, "Well, if I can't buy Hoffman and [inaudible], what am I going to do? Who am I going to buy now? What?" Are there any really great collections of the '70s, even in a funny way? The Vogels' collection is a little out of date.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Oh, a lot out of date, in my point of view.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Yeah. Well, who collects now?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, there are people who buy. I don't think there are collectors anymore because the collectors can't, for one thing, figure out how to use a lot of what's been made, in their living room or working environment. It's just awkward stuff, you know. If you have a big pile of sand with glass in it, the maid is going to come in and sweep it all up one day when you're gone. And you come home and say "What happened?"

MS. TUCKER: "What's up?"

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Well, also there's a real awkwardness and lack of the grace. And you know, there's a

certain kind of very demanding intensity about a lot of the work now that doesn't lend itself to interior decoration. And if you look through *Architectural Digest* - and that's another thing that really, really got me. I drove back with Robert Indiana. And Indiana was saying that he doesn't see the old people anymore. Agnes Morton's gotten crazy. So-and-so doesn't this. So-and-so doesn't that.

MR. CUMMINGS: The whole generation has fallen apart.

MS. TUCKER: Right. And that, coincidentally, all five floors of his loft were going to be featured in *Architectural Digest*.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I think a lot about those things, about how people allow themselves to become embittered because they had expectations. I think that nowadays there are far fewer expectations there of a --

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Yes, I do. I think they are of a very different nature.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think -

MS. TUCKER: I know artists in their 30s who do not expect to get rich and famous. They hope to show moderately during their lives.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: They hope to have a small audience. They hope to get good visiting artist jobs so they don't have to starve all their life. But they're not interested in becoming like Stella.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But what happens is that out of that group, some will become established and will become famous, and their life will change because of the fame.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: They will be Robert Indiana, you know, or Paul Jenkins [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Well, I see this happening already because I see people my own age who I grew up with who are not famous, but who have managed to show and sell and sell some more. And I've seen them buying country homes and fixing them up. And a whole group of artists now are having children in their late 30s, the women in their late 30s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: There's this very funny thing happening where the women marry - most of these artists I'm talking about are men, who are married to women in business or executives, the sound engineer, urban planner.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: The men and women are generally the same age. And in their very late 30s, they decide to have a family. The man takes primary responsibility for the raising of the child. The woman is the primary breadwinner.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, he's home working, and she's out working.

MS. TUCKER: That's right. Yeah. I think that - I mean, I think that's very nice, actually, to have children in your late 30s when you know that you want them. But they don't have the same expectations at all. They don't - I mean, because our generation saw people like Ronny Ranfield get famous at 23 and unknown at 25. And I think that people mistrust it.

MR. CUMMINGS: But every generation has that.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I haven't lived through another generation yet, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yet. But I've seen it happen in so many businesses. You know, writers have a big novel this year. In five years, you know --

MS. TUCKER: Nothing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Nothing.

MS. TUCKER: But it seems to me that people don't make that kind of splash anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I think culture is not as important nationally in the '70s as it was in the late '50s and through the '60s.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think the news picked up on it, the media picked up on it. All of that was enormously -

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And it has calmed down a great deal now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. They've gone on to work in -

MS. TUCKER: People mostly - the media is about institutions more than about art, or about, for instance, it's about --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's gone back to politics and crime and the same old things it's rocked on for years, which in a way is good for the arts because the arts can [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Well, I feel that we're in an incredibly healthy period. I have felt that for quite a long time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And there's really, really good work being done.

MR. CUMMINGS: I want to go back to a little more life history here in checking out these things. We had left you living, I think, either downtown or on 20-something Street.

MS. TUCKER: Well, wait, let's see.

MR. CUMMINGS: This is - I mean, this is, you know --

MS. TUCKER: When I first moved to New York, I lived a block from here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. No, this is when Robert Fiori was around.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I had a little place on - I met him when I was married and I was living on Waverly Place.

MR. CUMMINGS: On Waverly, right. Okay.

MS. TUCKER: But then from Waverly Place, that was - I had the accident when I was living there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MS. TUCKER: And then moved to Spring Valley, New York, after the accident.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Went - and then went to Europe, traveled fairly extensively, went to Greece, actually because of the Pinoskis -- not Pinoskis, because of von Blanckenhagen. I took a course at the Institute in classical Greek work, and he just totally inspired me to come immediately. So I did. Came back, lived in Hotel Albert for a truly dreadful two months, and there's nothing like the Hotel Albert.

MR. CUMMINGS: What can you say about it?

MS. TUCKER: Nothing.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And then moved to 7 West Eighth Street right across from the old Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I lived there for quite a few years. I moved to the loft on 26th Street. Bob actually needed a place. And I called up Jack Kline and lied and told him that I was a friend of Oldenburg and Lichtenstein and Rosenquist and all these people and I needed a loft. And I got one for 125 dollars, got Roy's old loft.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I know that one, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Downstairs one.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that one. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And Ken Selson lived in one upstairs. And so I got it for Bob. And I sort of commuted between my place and there for two years and then moved in. Well, let's see. We split up for awhile for a summer. And then I went to Aspen that summer and stayed with Victoria Barr. And that's where I met - let's see. Oldenburg was there, Bob Morris, Yvonne, somebody - Ralph Pomeroy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's right.

MS. TUCKER: Who is now in San Francisco who also wrote [inaudible]. Allan D'Arcangelo [phonetic], Duane Valentine - it was an interesting group of people. It was a very, very hot summer. Not - I mean, it was - cooking - you know, cooking-with-gas summer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And that's when Bob Morris was first doing his felt pieces. I think this was in 1967, must have been '67, because I saw him [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And so there was a lot of art activity.

MR. CUMMINGS: They were at the Aspen Institute or something?

MS. TUCKER: They were at the Aspen Institute and I was recovering from my relationship with Bob. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And trying to do my work on my thesis, which I was not successful at. I stayed there for about a month. Victoria was very - an amazingly companionable roommate. Let me see - very easy. We had quite a good time. And then I came back, and when I came back, Bob came over and asked me to move back with him. And so I left Eighth Street and actually moved into 26th Street and stayed there - oh god, I stayed there for a really long time because he and I broke up in 1969, I guess - '69-'70, well, that summer. And I renovated the place and stayed there until I moved to this place. Jane Kafman and Doug Olsen lived across the street. And so we all got to be rather close friends for awhile.

MR. CUMMINGS: You never got interested in film through Bob, did you?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I did partly. But what happened was that I made one film with him. I made a little film for the "Angry Arts Festival".

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: And I had known a man named Paul Bartell when I was in high school, who was a filmmaker. And I ran into him again. He was a brilliant guy. I ran into him again someplace uptown. He was screening a film of his at the Thelia. And Brian de Palma was working on greetings. Bob was the cameraman. Bob de Niro - it was Bob de Niro's first film. And I was giving them some money because they started shooting it in 35 millimeter, and the blimp on the camera wasn't working properly and it screwed up the soundtrack. And they were really - everybody was just dead broke. And I remember putting 100 bucks into the film. And I was an extra in it. And then I guess the year I broke up with Bob, I saw de Niro very briefly. And - but by that time I was real interested in acting more than filmmaking. But I don't - well, you know, Tim also makes films, has made films for many years.

MR. CUMMINGS: I didn't know that.

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. They are very odd narrative films, really strange black and white, cheap. They're either really bad or quite good. They're right on the cusp.

MR. CUMMINGS: One or the other.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, I mean - you see, Bob did the film for [inaudible] in 1969. And I was involved with Sheffner - not with Sheffner personally, but with Sheffner's workshop group at the time. And I was around while they were filming and while they were editing. And I had gotten Bob to do two films for me at the Whitney for very - I think they were - he did them for 2500 dollars altogether, two half-hour color films, one on Keith Sonian and one on Richard Serra. They were very good films. And they were shown continuously with Bruce Nauman's

films during the "Anti-Illusion Show". And that was a really big step for me because I was trying to convince Jeff Bower at the time that we needed a film program at the Whitney. Two of the major things, as far as I was concerned - well, there were three major things. First of all, that there be a separate print department, prints and drawings because Elka had some actually originally to work - she was supposed to be working under my jurisdiction, which was patently ridiculous since she knew far more than I knew about her field. And they didn't overlap at all. And she had come in as assistant curator or whatever. But I convinced Jack of the feasibility of using separate prints and drawings department. But I was very interested in having a film department. And I think commissioning those two films and seeing how many people showed up to see films at the "Anti-Illusion Show" was possibly partly responsible for Jeff's decision to go ahead and do that film program.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: And he asked me to set it up. That is, to do the search for the curator and [inaudible]. And I did a very extensive search, and I interviewed all kinds of people, including Richard Foreman and Stan Lauder [inaudible] at Yale. Or he was at Yale. I think he's at Stanford now. And one of the people that I asked to submit an application was David Binestock, who was a very close friend of mine whose name at that time was Beanstock. But he was a friend of Fiori's and a very good filmmaker. And he was really very knowledgeable. And even though we had no - he was less qualified in a certain way, Jack was the kind of person who was hiring people without reputations at the time, you know, people who were coming into something fresh. Anyhow, he and the president, you know, made the decision ultimately that they hire Dave, which was incredible. I mean, I never expected them to do that. I was overjoyed. But our friendship stopped then. Not our human friendship to each other, but the friendship actually stopped because his life changed very radically. He was a quiet, quite a hermetic person, very sensitive, very unattractive, always lonely. And he had just begun to have some very intense and long-term relationships with women, very good ones. I began to share a house with him and a woman named Emily who he was living with in Woodstock. And we would - we'd get the house for the winter. And we would go up there every weekend. It was wonderful. He was - I just loved being around him. He was always calm and quiet and really sweet. Bruce Rubin was another man who was a friend of Dave's and a friend of Bob Fiori. And Bruce had been to India and was on this incredible mystic trip. Well, he came back. And somehow or other, he and Dave had always been very close. So Dave hired him at the Whitney. So he eventually became a curator there of film. Dave killed himself. I've forgotten what year. It's the same year that Smithson died. A couple of days after, he shot himself in the head. And very, very, very shocking - a terrible thing - he was engaged to this other woman and finally seemed sort of happy. But the pressures of that job, I think, just really did him in.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Yes, I think so.

MR. CUMMINGS: From - what pressures?

MS. TUCKER: Well, being public, for one thing. For a very private person to be very public is a real shock. I think setting up a department from scratch, being subject to a lot of criticism, having to raise the money yourself - I think it just finally - that on top of, you know, trying to live a regular full personal life as well just did him in. But I have such nice memories of that summer, or the winter, rather - the two winters, I think, in a row we had that house - and going up there and building a fire and cooking wonderful meals. And Murry Rice and Elizabeth came up one time. [inaudible] came up one time. It was very, just incredibly pleasant. But then I grew away from him because of the pressures of my work and the pressures of as his. But when he died, I had to go identify him because I was the only person.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. It was really just --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh dear.

MS. TUCKER: I wish I had never done that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I truly wish it. It's one of the few things I regret and wish I hadn't done. I'll never do anything like that again. And Joel Friedman - he was also a very close friend of all of ours from years back. He and I both - well, we went to get - he and Bruce and I all went together to identify David. And Joel and I had to go and tell his mother.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you do that?

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you do that?

MS. TUCKER: God knows. I mean, it's just the worst - the worst thing I can think of. And I had not gone to Smithson's funeral. I knew Smithson quite well. I didn't go because I was too upset. So when - Dave's funeral, I just - I left. I couldn't go. I went away. I think I went - what was it? I went down to visit my friend Nate in Florida. Tim sort of like put me on the plane and called Nate and said, you know, "Get her when she comes off." No, it wasn't in Florida at the time. It was in Sacramento. I went to visit all my friends out there, which was very good for me. But I had nightmares for years about it. And there were a lot of deaths in that period because Eva had also - I can't remember the dates.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And she and I had gotten to be close friends also. And I felt very - and anyhow, back again to the Whitney and the film program and film in general. The film program was, obviously, very successful. I had nothing to do with it once -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well you just took him around.

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. But I - the next step was to get a photography department over there. It was the only one I lost. [Laughter] [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: No way they were going to buy that.

MR. CUMMINGS: I wonder whether it was a little too late. It should have been done 20 years ago.

MS. TUCKER: Of course. But you know, hell, everybody said no. You could start an incredible photography department that really only dealt with a certain kind of thing, you know. You could have collected Eggleston all those years ago. I'm talking about - I started learning about photography in 1970, '69-'70.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right away then.

MS. TUCKER: Right away.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So I mean, I think I told you I'm used to sort of this Jewish dinner-table type thing, which is that you mention whatever it is you want ad nauseum once a week until it finally comes through.

MR. CUMMINGS: Over dinner, yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But that one didn't work.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I did get them to buy the Bruce Nauman, those early photographs, though.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right. Now, where does Tim come into all of this picture?

MS. TUCKER: Well, Tim and I had been friends when we were -- when we were 19 we both went on junior year abroad.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: And we were on - he was at Columbia, and I was at Connecticut. And we were on the Mauritania going across together. And there was a man named Richard Greenman who - I don't know if I told you this before - who is a professor of French at Columbia, and he's radical, active, and was prominent, figured prominently in the Columbia riots.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

MS. TUCKER: He's a very brilliant man. I went - when we went across, Greenman and Tim and I and one other woman whose name I have forgotten sat at a table for four and had the wine steward come bring a round [inaudible]. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, you told me about all this stuff and dessert and food and everything.

MS. TUCKER: And that's how we got to be friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And when I went to France, first we lived in Tulle, where studied French.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And where I met the Frenchman that I lived with for that year. When I came back, Tim and I - now, let me see. Tim went to Vietnam. And he was a translator. He translated French-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-French. And I wrote to him, and he wrote back. And then I was in my e.e. cummings phase, and I didn't use capital letters, and he thought that was really despicable, so he stopped writing to me. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MS. TUCKER: And then we resumed again. We actually - we met, ironically, through Pat Hills, who had sat at the desk across from me when we both worked for Bill Lieberman at the Modern in 1961. She was married to Fred Hills, who works at McGraw Hill. And Tim works at McGraw Hill. And they had a big party. And they invited me. And they invited Tim. Don't remember what year it was, but it must have been in the late '60s. Yeah, it must have been somewhere around '68. And Tim and I had an inkling of the fact that we were interested in getting together, but I was living with Bob at the time and didn't want to complicate my life. So Tim would come over occasionally. And we would go for coffee, or Tim would sit and talk to Bob or, you know, like that. Then Tim got married. And I met him and his wife at Pat Hills' again at another party. And then he got unmarried, in I guess it was 1970, and called up. And the two of us went out. Oh, we went out to brunch on Sunday and just started going together immediately. And we moved in a couple of months later. By the fall we had moved in.

MR. CUMMINGS: And Bob what, just left? After [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: No. Bob left. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: He left in August, I think. It's a very strange story. He left in August of '69. And he was already involved with Barbara Jarvis at the time. And he just failed to show up one night. So I said goodbye forever. And he said goodbye forever. And it was goodbye forever. And then I think he started living with Barbara almost immediately after that. But for me that was a very, very painful separation because I was so angry. And I don't think I ever really understood what had happened except that I realized that I had lived with somebody who I didn't like very much for five years, who I certainly loved and respected enormously as a man who's got an incredible mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But somebody I basically didn't really like.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: And it's amazing how you can do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So there is this - there's an interesting attitude that women used to have about men, which was that you don't get involved with your friends. Don't get involved with anybody you really like or - you know. Well, we're just good friends. You know, I don't want to get involved with somebody as though it would somehow change the nature of the friendship. But I think that before - this is just before the women's movement. A lot of women were involved with men that they battled all the time or where there was a great deal of passion because it was what you couldn't have. And love is what you can have, I think. But - and that's a very complicated area. When I began living alone and began to really enjoy it again, I also - I think there was just a moment when I realized how angry I was. There was also - coincided with when I got involved with the women's movement. And I just realized that I would never, ever be with somebody I didn't like. And this was a very radical change. And - well, in the period - I haven't actually been single for very long periods of time. I think partly because it takes so much energy. And it takes so much energy for me to work also that --

MR. CUMMINGS: What does? Being single or involved?

MS. TUCKER: Being single.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't know. I haven't been single for a very long time so I can't tell you.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I don't - whatever the whole idea of engaging with people in a casual way is not particularly interesting to me. I also think I'm very vulnerable being in a public situation. And I don't like people to know about my life. I mean, it took - everybody knows that Tim and I have broken up. I never even said anything except to my office. But someone said to me. "Oh my God. Oh, that's the hottest news in town." I mean, I feel really wounded by that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, not that - there's nothing to talk about, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: There's no, you know, no scandal, no - perfectly amicable separation and, of course, friendship. But just the fact that this world is so - our world is so small and that it cares so deeply.

MR. CUMMINGS: It watches itself on everything.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I don't gossip. I've never gossiped. If you tell me something, I will never tell it unless you - you know, it's in the newspapers or something. But when I did break up with Bob, I went out with some people, which I think this probably might be important. I went out with David Butts for quite a long time. And I think that - David is a very remarkable man. And I think few people know how remarkable he is, how absolutely kind, smart, talented, honest, and just a really wonderful man. And he's somebody I will always feel very connected to in a very good way. And I think that he - my relationship with him, I think he would have liked it to be more permanent than it was. And I was just not ready for that kind of thing at all. But I think that being with David and seeing how close that friendship was, had been, continues to be, without any sense of obligation or even a need to see each other, made me understand that that was really what I was interested in, not what I had with Bob.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MS. TUCKER: And I think that's changed everything. And I [inaudible]. I think I can generalize, I tried to stay away from artists. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. Yeah. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I'm also very hesitant to talk about a lot of these things because I don't know what --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's all right. I mean, we got a mouthful of that.

MS. TUCKER: What goes on tape, what doesn't go on tape. But my very long friendship with Dave is something I really am happy about.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you, you know, in a recapitulation here. You started teaching at the University of Rhode Island.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that come about and why? I mean, was it a job or were you interested in teaching?

MS. TUCKER: No, not at all. But Eunice Lipton - her name was Eunice Lory then - was my classmate at the Institute and my best friend. And she had been teaching out there. And she broke up with her husband. And she was supposed to teach a summer course, but he was still out there and she didn't want to. And she asked if I would be - if I would do her the favor of substituting for her. And so I did. I said yeah, I'd be glad to. And the first day teaching, literally the first day, I knew it was absolutely my cup of tea. Just that simple.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you teach and what kind of college?

MS. TUCKER: I taught - god, I can't even remember, but I taught art history, American art from 1900 to the present. I taught survey courses. I taught American art in architecture. I loved art appreciation. That was the

best, for me. And nobody else wanted it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Oh god, it just drove them crazy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why? What was the [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Because I had a chance to try out things that were so radical at the time that no one had ever even heard of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean? I mean, what's an example?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I decided not to teach by lecturing, but to see if I couldn't get these people interested in seeing in another way. And I had no guidelines at all except for my involvement in the theater. So I started setting up all these funny projects. I thought, to try to explain the difference between Egypt and - Egyptian sculpture and Greek sculpture, let's say - Egyptian old kingdom and Greek classical period. I'd put two slides on the board, and I'd get two students to take the exact poses. And the whole class would arrange them till they were perfect. And then they would just stand there for a really long time. And then they'd start to talk about how they felt. And there's Greece and Egypt right there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Or we would solve certain kinds of perceptive problems by setting up an [inaudible] right in front of the [inaudible] and having people act out - I mean, I know it sounds a little dumb. But it was very exciting. And this was in the late - Jesus, it must have been '67, '66, '68?

MR. CUMMINGS: Sixty-six, yeah, sixty-six, sixty-eight.

MS. TUCKER: Sixty-eight, right. I wasn't in theater then. I only joined Shefly's group in - no, I did. I had already. I've forgot. I had already [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: The whole overlap.

MS. TUCKER: I joined Shefly in '68, right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So we did things like blind walks. I'd take them out for a whole day blindfolded. I had people keep journals. It was totally experimental, I didn't know what would happen.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did the university take to all of this?

MS. TUCKER: Well, they didn't take badly because there was such excitement. And the classes - I mean, those kids in the class were like really there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: That was the first year I ever did a disguise class. I just - what I could do was to follow my fantasies. Since I saw that it was working, I was able to do whatever I wanted to. Like I would tell people to make something beautiful. And what? "Make something beautiful?" Right? And they'd go nuts trying to figure out what something beautiful was. They would bring them into class and talk about them, or, you know, switch objects. This was the first time I'd ever done this experiment. I've done it for years now. I had people write descriptions the first day. They would write a detailed description of themselves as a physical object. And then someone else who didn't know them would write a description of them. And then I would take the descriptions. And then the last two weeks of class, I would give the descriptions back, both one that somebody else had written and their own, ask them to read them, and then give them an assignment, which they had two weeks to do. And that was to completely alter their appearance without being conspicuous. The task was, you've committed a serious crime and have to escape the country. And this description of you, the compendium of the two, is being circulated. And we'd meet in a very crowded place, at the most crowded time, and try to identify each other. And I've done it now for years. It's shocking what happens. MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Wow.

MS. TUCKER: Well, that particular class was one of the best because some people made themselves older. One guy who was real straight-laced - he was an engineering student and constantly fought me. And he dressed as a - at that time it was called a hippie. He dressed as a hippie and went to buy his paper. And the man who usually treats him so well treated him like shit because of the way he was dressed - permanent lesson, right? He never again was able to have the same attitude. Actually, he gave up engineering and became a poet. And many years

later, came and saw me, looked me up when I was on 26th Street, to tell me how much his life had changed. And he had long hair. [Laughter] It was great. But one man did a very interesting thing. No one found him. No one found him at all. He came as a paraplegic.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: Well, no one will look at your face when you're crippled.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Another woman dressed as a nun and conspired with the nuns to sit with them. There was a whole group of nuns taking courses. And they made her a habit, and she sat with them, and nobody ever found her. And another guy became the campus cop. He borrowed a gun and a uniform. No one ever found him either.

MR. CUMMINGS: And he was right there in front of everybody.

MS. TUCKER: Right there. And, god, it was just wonderful. I aged. That's what I did. I became old and sort of - at that time I was in my 20s. I wore very short skirts, little miniskirts. I had long hair. I just became dowdy and much older. And a very interesting thing - I was going up the hill to see if my disguise worked. And I saw a friend of mine and I yelled. And the guy turned around and came toward me and said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were somebody else," and walked off. And the whole day nobody looked at me. Nobody smiled. I just was invisible. And I started thinking, well, what would it be like if I --

MR. CUMMINGS: Really was every day like that.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Get off the lipstick. But I have done that many, many times with many different classes. And it's - what happens, you see, what you learn is that your perception of the world changes if the way the world perceives you changes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, good. It's a stimulus-response.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But you know, these were ideas that were - I mean, I just - they weren't things I knew. They were things I found out. And the class just got very close. And I think that that was almost the first of these theater things that I've been teaching. You know, like I just did this other one for two days at Santa Barbara. And the same thing happened. Over and over again the group goes like this - inextricably, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Together. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And they find it very hard to go into the real world again for awhile.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, also, they know the way the world doesn't know, you know.

MS. TUCKER: Well, also because they've been in there testing the limits of their bodies, their imaginations, you know, everything. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you find the experience of being involved with the performance group, the theater, in terms of looking at art?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that this performance involvement is probably one of the most important things in my life. And I think that - I got involved in the first place because I read - well, Bob had been in Joanne Sheffner's workshop and I was jealous. That was one thing. But the other thing was that I read Grotovsky's book, *Toward Theater*, and I absolutely determined that I would do that then at that moment. And there was nothing --

MR. CUMMINGS: He had a lot of people thinking he came out of Arto [phonetic] and the theatre scene.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. And I had been interested in acting before, and I had done a lot of choreography and stage sets. But this was very - I would like to talk about that because it's somehow utterly connected to what I do now and to the way I look at things. First of all, the theater, this particular kind of theater is not competitive. You have to test your own limits and extend your own limits constantly. But if you compete, if you watch what somebody's doing, if you do something because it looks good, then you have failed absolutely. There are some real rules, at least to the kind of theater that I teach. Everybody dresses the same. You start out from a position of complete neutrality, no makeup, no jewelry, nothing. The same shorts and the same T-shirt, everybody. So that you, after awhile, really fall back on your own --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's a uniform.

MS. TUCKER: Well, it's more than that. It's a way of allowing the other parts of yourself to show. For instance, someone said "Ann." And I said, "Oh, yes, that was the woman who had the writing on her T-shirt." She couldn't find a plain one, you see? And I didn't want that to happen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: Well, also, it's very sculptural if people are dressed the same. All of the circus kinds of things we do have a uniformity to them. And there is no vanity. I mean, you lose your vanity. You become just - you can't tell the men from the women. It's very hard, actually, as you look, you know. But I want to take some time with this because I'm - but the idea of an aesthetic that doesn't have - the idea of not dealing with things in the linear or progressive terms has a great deal to do with the lack of competition in theater, that each thing is highly individual and that one person's risk can't be weighed against another person's risk. One person can't get up and sing, and for them to do it it takes all the courage that they have. For another person to simply do a somersault will take all the courage that they have, but they can get up and sing. Some people are physically strong; others, not. Some people can do beautiful, daring things without taking a risk at all. But ask them to touch somebody in a real way, and they turn white and start to shake. The point is to learn to extend your own vocabulary. Learn what yours is and go beyond it. But you can't substitute one for another. And I think that works of art are very much - at least, I deal with works of art in very much the same way that I deal with human beings. I can't say that one is inherently better than another. I can't say that I like one better or that one seems singularly well suited to a certain kind of, you know, activity, or that some people I want to be my friends and others, I don't. Some people have a certain kind of presence; other people don't. But I don't mean to be simplistic about this, but, you know, it's like who's a better artist, Vermeer or Rembrandt? It doesn't make sense.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm. Right. But now, what in your theater idea - you do basically performances that are made up?

MS. TUCKER: I don't - no, this is not - I started this group six and a half years ago. It's not a performing group. It's a group that gets together. It's a group of mostly artists. We get together because we enjoy the work and because it seems to change us in such a way as to make the other work that we do - it's really changed us.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, why wouldn't you want to go around the country and teach?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I don't teach performance at all. I teach exactly the opposite. I teach artists who are interested in themselves how to make something with nothing, how to make something with no object, with no costumes, no props, nothing between you and it. And without exception - I mean, I've gotten this incredible correspondence about --

MR. CUMMINGS: It all sounds like what you do [inaudible], in a way. I mean, how to move and how to - except there's no sound. You use sound.

MS. TUCKER: Oh sure. But I will try and explain what the work is like, what kinds of exercises I do. Sometimes they're three weeks, sometimes they're, you know, a day, 12 hours. They start with concentration exercises where - it's very formal where people lie on the floor with their eyes closed and they make a simple statement about their physical state. "My left toe hurts." "The back of my right knee slumps." One at a time. Then people have to repeat, once, each person's state back. Then we do the same thing with their emotional state. Right away you have a group who knows what everybody's physical and emotional state is. So you know who you're working with right away. Somebody says they feel - "I feel sad and fragile." Then someone repeats, you know, "John feels sad and fragile." You know something about --

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: We do exercises where people lie on each other, just physical weight, because after if it's an ensemble, have to learn how to do that stuff. These are very rudimentary theater exercises.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But they're shocking for artists, who have never touched other human beings except their children or people they're sexually involved with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: We do some physical work. We do some yoga, some tumbling. I force people to be physically courageous because it lets go the barriers for being expressively courageous. So, for instance, we do somersaults. And then somersaults leaping over one person, and then over two people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: One guy got up to six. He flew across six bodies. It was a brilliant moment. I mean, we never knew he could do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I do headstands, backbends, somersaults, all things, not to push people to do them, but to find where you're afraid.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. Or so you can find out what your body does.

MS. TUCKER: And it doesn't matter how old you are. Find out what your body does, too. They do balance things, where two people will start balancing on each other. And they find to their amazement that they can stand on each other's shoulders.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Then they do them in groups of four, and then in huge groups, and then they make these wonderful things. Do singing, like get people to sing a song regularly and then to sing it in the most extreme way they can. It's very difficult. A lot of sound and movement exercises, transforming exercises, some very funny theater games, like simultaneous conversations or --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you pick up the sequence of all of these things?

MS. TUCKER: Well, partly intuitively and from teaching for so long. Partly because I always - I work with my group regularly. Then I work with the other group every other week.

MR. CUMMINGS: What's the other group?

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's - I started doing some workshops here because people got interested. And a lot of very, really wonderful artists were doing it. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you have non-artists and others in this group?

MS. TUCKER: Sure. Well, Bill Denton is a lawyer. John Manning Maryme [phonetic] in the first group - he just dropped out. He's an architect. And Michael Cortland was an architect. And Tim is a writer, and [inaudible]. There's a psychiatric social worker. It's mostly artists. But I started doing these workshops. First I did them in a series of four for one group and then four for another group. But they wanted to combine. So they combined. And then they just - they approached me and said they wanted to do it permanently, and would I be willing to? And I said yeah. I thought I could probably do that. So, there are now two groups.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you follow the Kutusky's [phonetic] series or [inaudible] or any of those people?

MS. TUCKER: No, no, not at all, not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's all made - it's all something that you've made up as you've gone along?

MS. TUCKER: Well, no. I started working with Kutusky's exercises, and I still do them and am very interested in them. But Kutusky has turned to [inaudible] recently. And I was amused by that because I've always felt in my roots that it's very important to eat together. And that all these potluck dinners which we do always afterward are as important to the theater, not just to bonding, but a lot of ideas are generated and a lot of discussion. See, I don't believe in discussion when you're out there. I think that all of the theoretical stuff is very uninteresting to me. And most people are too busy analyzing, thinking and analyzing, before they even have had a chance to find out what they feel about something. So the work that I do is very rigorous. That is, people can't lounge. There's only one - I mean, it's almost funny by now because people when they imitate me teaching are always repeating, "Neutral! Neutral! Neutral!" which is what I yell.

MR. CUMMINGS: What does that mean?

MS. TUCKER: And that is that everything starts from a neutral posture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: This has to do with a lot of my thinking about art, too. If somebody is working out there and someone else is standing around like that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, just watching, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But that's very bad.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I think people should stand like this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, up straight, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, just - yeah, with no --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Well, what happens is, at first people can't stand straight. They can't stand with their arms at their sides, ready.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: They get very nervous. Usually, it takes me two days. By the second day they can stand that way and I don't have to yell. And then they find it's uncomfortable to stand another way. But it means you're ready to move and also that there's a foil against which to work in a group. And more important than that, the person who is out working hard in the center of the room looks across and sees people focusing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Interested, right.

MS. TUCKER: Focusing. So that and no talking at all, no discussion, no discussion whatsoever of anything that goes on. So it's very, very intense.

MR. CUMMINGS: Intense.

MS. TUCKER: And it's very hard. We take a break. No discussions during the - no talking during the breaks.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do people do at the breaks?

MS. TUCKER: They sit quietly by themselves, or they lean on each other. They smoke cigarettes or they think.

MR. CUMMINGS: For five minutes?

MS. TUCKER: That's right. They don't ever discuss.

MR. CUMMINGS: I have to flip this over.

[END OF DISK FIVE]

MR. CUMMINGS: Side six. Thinking about what you were saying about this group and what physical activities and the things that they do, do you know the [inaudible] about how the move, his whole theories about moving onstage and walking and stuff? What do you get out of being involved with this? I mean, in a way you participate, right?

MS. TUCKER: Oh certainly, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: But also, you kind of direct.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't direct the Sunday group at all. That's a completely collaborative group. I directed for two years.

MR. CUMMINGS: But I mean, somewhere somebody has to say, the beginning, or how does it function?

MS. TUCKER: No, no. It functions now according to a certain pattern. We begin by doing physical exercises. We take turns cleaning up. Each of us, we go around in a circle and each person does an exercise. And by now we know enough which - we know why we exercise. We don't exercise anymore for strength because you can't do that once a week. You exercise for flexibility and for - to warm up and to get ready.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: So we each take turns. We all know the exercises. We do voice exercises and physical exercises. Sometimes we say the Tai Chi together. We have a Tai Chi teacher come in and work with us here. We have a

music, voice teacher come in and work. But we're working on - we have been working on what ended up being a piece. Every so often - we've only performed twice in the six and a half years, when we thought that we had something important to say and that we could say it well. And that's the only - also, it makes us very cohesive at a certain point when we need it. And it was initially my idea to do a musical about death, which met with some very serious opposition from some people in the group because I had been the director earlier, and they didn't - they really didn't want any - they didn't want to go back to anything that resembled that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, so no storyline, no continuity.

MS. TUCKER: No, I just said that I thought it would be interesting to work on a piece about death, a musical about death.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: And yeah, that's what we did. But the input on it was - it was the same from everybody. Some people work on structure more. Edward Fried, for instance, is an incredible director. I'm much better as an actor. Tim did a play on the death of Catherine the Great within the piece, which he directed. It was completely collaborative. So we begin to work. And then we sit down and decide what parts we want to do. And whoever is not working is watching and criticizing. It's very self-critical. And it functions fine, to all of our surprise and delight. And the other one I'm directing, but will eventually let go of - and what I get out of it is that, first of all, grownups never get a chance to play. And I think play is very creative, and it's also fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's true, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But when do we get a chance to play? What do you mean, play? Out there, you get a - well, see, now in my work, in every possible aspect of my work, I really like to think and act at the limits of my intelligence or my physical capability. And this really forces that, besides the fact that it's so much fun. It's aspects of people you'd never see.

MR. CUMMINGS: How much time do you spend at a session? Two, three hours, four hours?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, more than that. On our team chart, a minimum session for teaching is five hours, minimum. I don't even think I've done a five-hour one. I've done mostly seven-hour ones, twelve-hour ones.

MR. CUMMINGS: But I mean, the weekly group?

MS. TUCKER: The weekly group meets at six and breaks - the average work session is four hours. And then we eat, which is another hour and a half to two hours, which we consider [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's about midnight by the time it's over.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, easily, yeah. And then once a year, we also go away together as a group to Maine, so far. And - -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where abouts?

MS. TUCKER: Well, it's Newport. Dave Tory's family has a house there with no running water or plumbing. But it's a wonderful house. So we all - lots of bedrooms. And we all go up there and cook and run around and play in the water. And once a year, we have a costume banquet, because most everybody in both groups are just really interested in cooking. And so we, you know - you get a costume and a dish to go with your costume. Generally, we sit down and we'll plan the whole menu and plan the wines.

MR. CUMMINGS: For example?

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: For example?

MS. TUCKER: Well, one year I remember Manny came. He brought ceviche and he came dressed as an octopus. [Laughter] And it must have taken him weeks to make this thing with grommets. He was wearing a navy-blue leotard and plastic tentacles all over. That's how he joined the group. He was so wonderful. He had come with Barbara Zucker, who came as an avocado, as I remember. And he brought the Beatles, you know, An Octopus's Garden, because you bring a piece of music also. [inaudible] came as Louis Quatorz, the incredible moustache and ruffles and things. And she brought veal orloff and had the appropriate music.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I think Tim and I came as Adam and Eve one year. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: You know, big collard greens on our crotches.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Oh, marvelous.

MS. TUCKER: And a dristina [phonetic] and a stuffed snake and an apple. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And we've had such fun. The costumes have been outrageous, just outrageous.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you document this?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah, of course. You know, we have funny photographs and stuff. But it's an opportunity to really play very, very creatively. I also - I like the physical work. I like the fact that, you know, I used to be tone deaf and I can sing now. I like singing with Kent. The intimacy of the situation, for me is like a family. It's the closest thing to a family, which I don't have. And everybody else feels quite the same way now. Teaching it is different. I think that teaching is very gratifying because you - I have felt from the response that I've been able to give people something that they could not possibly have under any other circumstances and something which lasts forever. But the first workshop I ever did was in San Francisco. I don't know if I told you this, but Jim Melcher and his wife and Tray Fox, Howard Fried, a guy named Roger Bliss - Melcher just recently, a couple of months ago went down to Louisville to give a lecture and gave back his lecture fee and told them to use it to get me to come down there and do a theater workshop, because he remembered all those years. And my work has changed a lot. Then I ran into this man Roger from San Francisco, who is now - he's a Tai Quan Do teacher, and he owns - he has this Tai Quan Do school. And he also said that it was one of the nicest things that he could remember in his life, doing that for three days. And I participate, too. But what I'm trying to say is that the nature of the work that I do and that you do precludes being terribly close to people. I think it's a heavy business. It requires all of the charm and the manifest-tations of easygoing personality that you can muster.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But it has very little to do with intimacy. And the art world is, as you know, notoriously un-intimate.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think so?

MS. TUCKER: Yes, I do. You're [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] This is like the Pentagon in some ways, isn't it?

MS. TUCKER: And what happens to me and the people who I do theater with is exactly the opposite of that. There is no place to be an opportunist. There is no place --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] the whole other side of one's psyche.

MS. TUCKER: The whole other side. We never talk - that's an agreement we made. We never talk about art. We never do business. We never discuss anything. But when I got - when I found out I was going to get fired, one of the people on the board called me and she told me that I was getting fired, right in the middle of theater. I mean, usually I don't answer the phone. I just went to answer it. And that I was going to get fired momentarily - there was no - that was for show.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was it, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That was it, yeah. And I'm very glad I was told. And I really felt like someone had kicked me in the stomach. I just - I - just all the wind went out of me. I was in shock. Not that I hadn't expected it, knowing it was coming, being miserably unhappy, all of that - it was no surprise.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but you still never react until you know it's going to be, you know.

MS. TUCKER: A fact. And I went out there, you know. And I said something to Tim. And I just realized that there was no place - there was no place that I wanted to be under the circumstances except right there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, right there. I went through the whole workshop. And at the end of the workshop, I told

them. And I mean, I never had, except for the women's group - a group of such utterly supportive people, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Dave made and showed a wonderful T-shirt, which - [inaudible], but this Dave Troy who was here made me this, with Tom [inaudible] from the newspaper. And I wore it to my goodbye lunch. I washed it, unfortunately, which is why it looks so messy.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: All of the time that I'm - support for making the New Museum, money, help, physical labor, hugs and kisses, conviction, whatever it is that a family should and would give you is what I get from them. And I think that I get to know people. I just came home, and I found letters from my theater group in Oxbow. And they're all real. There's not a bit of fluff in them. There's nothing in them about, "Well, you know" - it's all substance. It's all direct. And there's no reason, when you're engaged with people on that level, to do anything else. So you can cut through acres of bullshit.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, how do you go to Oxbow? Do they get in touch with you?

MS. TUCKER: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Does somebody tell them about you?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the first time I went, someone told them about me. I've been doing a lot of theater recently.

MR. CUMMINGS: A lot.

MS. TUCKER: And the word seems to have gotten around. Anyhow --

MR. CUMMINGS: So you go and spend, what, a week out there or something?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I spend a week in Oxbow. That's my vacation during the year. Now, I'm going to go again next year. This year they've gotten a very good wrestling mat, which made all the difference in the world. And they let me bring Kent, who was my assistant. And when you have two of us - if we have 14 people, when you have two of us working it makes a lot of difference.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So I work every day for five or six hours with that group.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MS. TUCKER: Plus a morning class of physical exercises and sometimes an evening sound class. But because we can live together --

MR. CUMMINGS: What's an evening sound class?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'm doing certain kinds of sound exercises that are - after supper - not so physical. Finding ways to sing while freeing your voice --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Partly, you know, like [inaudible] technique and partly what I've learned from my other teacher Noa Amid [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Who's that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, her name used to be Susan Ames. And she changed it. It's Noa Amid. But she did a lot of music for the open theater. She is a composer, a wonderful, incredible composer and singer. She's in Poland now with her husband, who is Polish, organizing an international theater troupe. And I met her at a women's conference in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. And she - this women's conference was organized by a woman named June Freeman around 1971, I guess. And they had never had anything maybe never had anything in Pine Bluff like that. But they got one composer. They got Diane Wakoski, a poet, myself for art history, a woman who is a psychologist, and a movement person. And each day we would do a whole bunch of things. And Noa did a concert. And she started singing these portraits of women that she's done. And I don't like that kind of music, you know? And I found myself an hour later sitting and weeping, so absolutely moved by what she had done, so

just devastated by it. She and I got to be very close friends and found that we had a great deal in common. So she is my major teacher.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you have a great interest in the circus, don't you?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, do you have any interest in other kinds of theater? I mean musicals and great drama?

MS. TUCKER: Nope, none at all. Not at all. I don't like Broadway very much, don't care for - I mean, I'm always willing to be entertained. But I think it's more, again, being interested in the edge.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And also in the edge of the form as theater. The best thing I did - I recently went with a friend of mine to the Big Apple Circus - wonderful. They were so good. They were so good. But a lot of them are theater people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But the thing about Oxbow, the first group that I did there got so - it was a very special group. They got very, very close. And I'm still in touch with all those people. We still have these - you know, any time I go to to Chicago we all get together. And I think that what happened was, word went back to Oxbow that this was really an interesting thing. So then this was the second year. And I had quite a large group. I had 14 people. And the same thing happened. For me --

MR. CUMMINGS: Are these the same people or new people?

MS. TUCKER: No, different, new people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did that group then maintain some homogeneity afterwards?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, yeah, for years. I did three weeks in Chicago. And that was seven hours a day for three weeks. Can you imagine?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, when I left Chicago, they had a party. And I could not bear to say goodbye. I just couldn't. I had to go out the side door. And I knew I was going to start to cry, and I couldn't stop myself. I cried all the way home. It was just - it was a terrible separation from them. But then, I'm always writing. But you know, I worry about that too, because I mean, you get - and each group is very different. You never have - they're never the same.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, personalities, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Sure. The work they do - some groups are fantastic with music. Others, yuck, they're terrible. But they do physical things that knock you out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I feel that in some ways, the honesty of this kind of theater and the deeply personal nature of it have to do with something that I very much want and need in my life. And I think most human beings want and need - and that it serves as a model for me for how things could and should be in work situations and friendships. I don't mean that you have to - you know, one of the women from this Oxbow group wrote and said that three of them got to live together - live near each other, got together, and they realized that they knew each other very, very well, but knew nothing about each other. And so they began to talk to each other about their lives. And they said it was wonderful to come at friendship the other way around.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: To really care deeply about somebody before you actually know anything about them. And we always exchange facts and have no knowledge at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, I've never seen - well, that's not true. I've seen you be silly. You've seen me be silly.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But that's partly, you know, one of the things about the New Museum that is - that makes it so much different from any other place I have ever worked, is the fact that life comes first. And that means that all idiosyncrasies, personal excesses, difficulties that one has are not only tolerated, but welcomed as a sign of working with people. So, you know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Part of the reality of it all.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. You know, you get in, in the morning, you find three people in three different bathrooms crying, you know? That would be - or fighting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fighting, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Or cutting up. There's a lot of cutting up that goes on. And I think that that's the only way you can work well. But the other thing is this idea of not competing for, not only to jockey for position or for salary. I'm having to believe mixed people work better because then the only way they can distinguish themselves, is by their work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And of course people are competitive. But there's the good competition and there's a fear competition. And I don't want anybody there who feels that they're going to be kicked out on their ass or that they're going to be favored or - I want people to take pride in their work for their own work. And that has not been the way --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's hardly ever been. It's not only a museum, but [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Well, you have to be vigilant, but - I just really believe that we can make a work situation that is human. I believe that, absolutely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I want to get into the whole New Museum idea a little bit later.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Anyhow, in all of this theater, one of the things that has happened to me is that I feel younger than anybody my age, or younger than anybody. And I think that that's part of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you just keep open to new possibilities.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Well, I also keep going to school. You know, going to - when I went to Washington University, going to school - it's so funny. There was no dormitory, right? And everybody was 20 years --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that was a couple of summers, right?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. They're 20 years younger than I am. I had no idea, no idea.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Really. I mean, there you are doing Aikido, trying to learn how to juggle [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do you do that, continue going to school?

MS. TUCKER: Well, first of all, it puts me in a place - what's happened to me, you know, through not being interested in my career, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Is that I'm highly visible. And if you live all the time in that situation where you are well known, where you're known for your work, where people have an idea about you, pretty soon it's easy to hide behind that. And it's easy to lose sight of yourself, for yourself.

MR. CUMMINGS: It gets to be a rather monotonous pattern, too.

MS. TUCKER: Hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Sure.

MS. TUCKER: Well, someone once said, "Be very careful of - you are what you pretend to be, so be very careful what you pretend to be."

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: It's true in a way. Well, this isn't even pretend. But I don't want to be a public - I don't want to be that persona that is the public part. When you go to school, once again who you are is reaffirmed because nobody has any - I mean, there are you. I'm never the best actor, ever. I am often the most courageous person. But I'm never the best actor. But I find out all over again about myself, my relationships to other people, you know. This world is so hard also that you have very little time. One of the things about having very little time is you tend to be economical and efficient. And you don't mess around with people who aren't in your field or, you know. And that's too bad because it cuts you off from a lot of life.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And so here I go to school. And I meet a 20-year-old person who is fantastically interesting and with no --

MR. CUMMINGS: But mostly what you do in school is go to theater classes of one kind or another.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And you don't go to art or music or --

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I only go to theater classes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, so you're - yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Singing, singing lessons.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And, you know, one of the reasons I'm so interested in singing is, Kent and I have been singing a lot recently. We did a little concert at Oxbow. We sang for Richard and Sissy and Peter one night. We sang all the songs we knew. And I realized that something tremendous had happened, which was that Sissy was sort of near tears. And Peter had his head in his hands like this. And when we finished they all said they were really moved. And I'm beginning to understand that it's not how well you sing, but it's the commitment you have to your song that matters. I mean, you have to have skills, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It might have taken us a year, you know, to get over - to learn the words so you can commit yourself.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But I am quite interested in singing in public. And Kent and I are going to try to do that. That's our next thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: You should do a concert at the Whitney.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, [inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about - see, this is what I mean. Doing things outside an art context is what interests me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, I mean, you have to. I mean, I have all sorts of extra-arts activities. And I find that it, you know, clarifies my own thinking.

MS. TUCKER: You have to.

MR. CUMMINGS: If you're just art all day long.

MS. TUCKER: Or art world all day long.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. It's just you can't, you know - tunnel vision.

MS. TUCKER: Hm-um. Well, I just - I like [inaudible] people.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Eh.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you know one thing - I want to go back to some of the exhibitions and things. We just talked about that quite a bit. In researching and sort of looking at all of these activities you've been involved with at the Whitney, one thing strikes me as being, in the broadest way, almost a manifesto. And that's the "Anti-Illusion exhibition". Now, there are so many things that came after that in terms of individuals, other ideas, that if you look at it going backwards, you can say, "Oh, well, it's really all here, and it's just developed." In other words, people came into those ideas. Do you think that's so? I mean, was that an exhibition that you thought of afterwards? Or was it just a vast moment, and then other things --

MS. TUCKER: Oh, no, I thought about it a lot. But like anything else, one doesn't have a glimmer of one's own work until a lot of time has passed. I knew I wanted to do that show. I mean, instantly I knew that that was the show I wanted to do. But what was important to me was giving the artists a space and letting them do work that I hadn't seen. I thought that that was the crucial - that was key.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you were a patron, in a sense?

MS. TUCKER: Well, in a sense. But also, I mean, I obviously knew the work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you knew vaguely what they would do, within certain terms.

MS. TUCKER: More or less. A few surprises - Robert Morris was a big surprise, you know. But I - it was the right place the right time. But it would have been a good show whether it was there or anywhere else, you know? I don't think that when I wanted to do it, I was not doing it - I had no - I just thought of the Whitney. I had no idea of historical anything. I was very un-self-conscious. And Jim was equally un-self-conscious. One of the reasons that it was very, very nice to work with him - I felt that the two of us were in a very good place together and could venture abroad sort of hand in hand. I think we relied on each other very heavily for support and information equally. And as I said before, I had great pleasure in working with him. But that the show was later held as a success, if anything, only makes me understand very well that if you do anything right, that if it is so-called right, it will only catch up to you many, many years later when it doesn't matter anymore because you're off someplace else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, that's true.

MS. TUCKER: And so what? You know, when that show was done, the reviews were hostile, negative. [Inaudible] every single show I ever did, you know, with the exception of Al Hills' show, which Hilton Cramer reviewed favorably.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Down the drain. I mean, it was way unfair.

MR. CUMMINGS: Even Bob Morris [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Every one of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. I have a collection of horrible reviews. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, amazing, amazing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So that makes me understand that whatever happens, you just continue to do your work and let them do what they're going to do their own way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I just opened *ARTnews* and I read - I had done a panel in Toronto called Object and Phenomenon with Sylvia Stone, Tim Scott, George Trakas.

MR. CUMMINGS: This is of sculpture?

MS. TUCKER: Wayne Tucker - yeah. And there was a little review by somebody I don't know, and she says, "The

panel was so poorly moderated by Marcia Tucker that nothing emerged from it anyhow."

MR. CUMMINGS: Um.

MS. TUCKER: Now, that's very interesting. [Inaudible] I put it away. Who does one believe? What does one - you know? What does that mean? I may have moderated the panel poorly. The feedback from it was not bad at all. But there you are, right out there - take that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Fun. Fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I'm willing to moderate the panel.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. In going through the sort of large one-man exhibitions of Morris and Tortov and other people, how --

MS. TUCKER: Tortov was a small show.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But it was a one-individual, one-man [inaudible]. How did you decide on these people? I mean, were they --

MS. TUCKER: Just happened all the time. I would get, you know, like a bug. I'd have to do it, mostly because I wanted - I just - it had to be done. I just knew that somehow I had to see all that stuff together.

MR. CUMMINGS: Bob Morris has talked about, you just liked the work --

MS. TUCKER: Well, Morris, I just liked him and I got interested in doing it. Nauman resisted interpretation from the first try. I did Nauman - well, I took some students to a Nauman show at Castelli's, the first Nauman show. And I remember very distinctly taking them out there, walking them around, and saying, "Well, this is a crock of shit. Let's go." Walked right downstairs, got outside, and I said, "We'd better go back up again because I think I've had a violent reaction to this." Went back up again, I had the same opinion, exactly the same opinion. But I wanted to know why. So then we left. And I went out to dinner with Murry Reich and Bob Fiori that night to a Chinese restaurant. And Murry said, "Did you see that crock of shit uptown at Castelli's?" And Bob started to attack - vehemently attack Nauman. And I found myself arguing with him. About three hours later, they were being very patronizing to me, very, very patronizing. And yes, yes, yes. Murry actually wrote me a letter about a year later, apologizing for it. And Bob - who knows? But I found that the process of playing devil's advocate made me understand that it's incredibly interesting. So from that point on, I just went and pursued it like a maniac. And that's how Nauman arrived at the "Anti-Illusion show" and how I - oh, I've written - he's the only artist I've written twice about, and I intend to write again. I think he's a very, very interesting artist, and he always, always baffles me. If anything, a friendship makes it more difficult, but - because I worry about being able to see clearly if I care about somebody. But I was not --

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find that becomes a problem?

MS. TUCKER: Well, it becomes a problem in this sense: I - my work is more important to me than anything else. And I wish I could say, like somebody else, you know, who held up your work, the friendship is more important. And sometimes I feel that I'm not sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I really understand how this happens. You get to know somebody's work. You admire it. You care about it deeply. You want to know them. You want to know who made the work. You get close to them, and there you are, friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And no one knows how it started. But I don't want to compromise myself for the sake of a friendship. I do have some friends whose work I have never shown and don't care about. And they're very long-term, dear friends. I can manage that. I have them at my house, you know? But it's impossible for me to think about not having a friendship with somebody I've worked with, not that it continues, necessarily. I mean, I'm not a close friend of Lee Krasner's anymore. But I would say that during the time when we were working on the show, we were inseparable and friends - that I will always have very a deep connection with those people. Tuttle and I are friends. Rosenquist - I mean, even the ones that are hard to work with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I worried a lot because I seem to absorb artists. It's like if I tallied up the number of young artists who came to New York for the first time from elsewhere in the country and stayed here or got jobs at the museum or here or, you know, it would be a little bit astounding. And it seems to me that I --

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean that you had met around the country and then they appeared in New York?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I always invited them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And put them up or helped find jobs or places to stay. You know, all my friends are - like John Prather and his wife Caroline are staying at Dave Troy's right now, trying to find a place. But I think I - it's partly personal, that I want to keep the people that I like and care about around me and convince them to come to New York. Their work also shows up, right? I'm very worried about - I mean, I worry all the time about - not about my integrity, but about how certain things might appear. And then I realize that that's ridiculous. Your integrity is inside you and the hell with it, you know. But I mean, I've never --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did you, you know - some of these people are very difficult to persuade to do things. And having a major exhibition at the Whitney with a catalog and all the stuff that goes with it is sometimes, in theory, desirable. But in fact, when they have to commit themselves, it's something else.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but I think that that's because they trusted me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I think because they knew somehow that I was on their side and not on the side of an institution. And I feel that - I'm working with Barry Levay right now. My attitude is that what Barry wants to do I will make possible. I absolutely believe in him. I believe in his work and that my responsibility is to write a catalog that makes sense and that's really good.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, then, in organizing an exhibition like that, how much would you say your input and how much is the artist and how much is mutual?

MS. TUCKER: I'd say that there's no way that you could even separate them. At a certain point, you're thinking with the same mind. I mean, that's my experience of it. The writing is always mine.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And the installation, unless it's like with Barry -- the installation will probably be his - but the installation is usually mine. But you see, I really believe that I have been extremely fortunately gifted in my relationships with artists. I think there has been some kind of real trust in that, which never gets puffed up no matter what. Because my loyalty is very clear. I mean, whatever the artist wants to have happen, I would like to try to make that happen. But then after awhile, they also do the same to me because I have all kinds of practical information. And it becomes a very --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean practical information?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'd be fighting with Robert Morris, you know. He wanted to put up seven more pieces than he had in his show. And I had done all this work. I talked to the engineers, the architects before [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: I had located the crossbeams. I knew where everything had to go. He didn't believe I knew all that, you see. He had to check it and find out, of course I was right. I would take a lot of pride in being accurate about things. There are some things you can't do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Some things, for instance, a woman in the last show wants an enclosed room with a two-foot entryway. Well, I know without calling the fire department that you must have a minimum of four feet in a doorway, see? So I can tell her that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And she can say, "Oh." But if she thinks I'm trying to, you know, mess with her piece - but I don't

think that people think that way nowadays.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And not that there aren't tensions, complaining, because there are. And not that there isn't an incredible amount of all kinds of anxieties. But I think I'm sort of used to it, for one thing, and anxious to have it come out right.

MR. CUMMINGS: So how have you - you know, saying - well, in the case of any of these people, what's your procedure in choosing the actual work? I mean, there's a lot of work in some cases to look through.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, yeah, yeah. I'm just going through that right now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where do you decide? What's your definition of who this person is? How do you arrive at that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the first thing I do is try to get as much information about as much of the work as I can. And that means I generally invade their house. Like right now I have huge portfolios of Barry Levay's drawings. I have all his notebooks, his sketches. And I read and, you know, look. Then I try to figure out what the space will do and which things are of interest. Then we sit there and talk. And the more you talk, the more it becomes clear. I mean, Morris was a real crazy situation because I planned to do a retrospective. And at the last minute, he said no retrospective. And I had already written his retrospective catalog. I didn't like that he was riding herd on me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Which he was. Then I thought, okay. Why not let this - why not take a chance? Why not say fine? There's a real interesting thing about doing a retrospective catalog for a whole bunch of new pieces. Let's see what happens, right? And that, of course, became then the genesis in some way for the possibility of doing a catalog after the show, like with Tuttle, or of allowing - of letting go a little bit, you know? Instead - you don't have to grab it by the throat. So I said, "All right. We'll do that. I'll look back up." Morris did in the end, by the way. I watched what he did in the end.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I could go over each of these shows and tell you a whole bunch of stories about them. Because that was the time of the artists protesting against the Vietnam War, and he closed his show down two weeks after it opened, got a lot of PR.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It was a hype. It was a real PR hype.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, he's always been good with that.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: He's very calculating.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, very. But it's all right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what did that do in terms of, you know, your life at the museum and all that?

MS. TUCKER: Nothing. Jack Fowler was - Jack - I mean, it's very hard to understand for somebody who's never worked like that how absolutely supportive Jack Fowler was. He believed in me. He protected me. He felt - Jack would step in when the going got bad, you know? And he would write - somehow managed to take care of me. I - you know, I really sometimes wonder if I'm not even blinded to some very serious faults that he had because he was so supportive of me. I never felt that my job was threatened, ever. I never felt that bad reviews would change anybody's attitudes toward me. Of course, I never heard about it. He just protected me from it. And all I got from him during that Morris thing was absolute sympathy, you know? Absolute sympathy. Steve Wile, on the other hand, was very angry at me. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: He's always angry. That's part of being Steve.

MS. TUCKER: Steve was very hard to work with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, he still is - he's always trying to sell you something, in a round-about way.

MS. TUCKER: Well, he gets into this incredible power routine, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I don't want his job. He really wanted mine. But --

MR. CUMMINGS: Looking at it now, he's trying to be director of the Hirshorn.

MS. TUCKER: He's what?

MR. CUMMINGS: Trying to be director of the Hirshorn because [inaudible] had to retire in a couple of years.

MS. TUCKER: No, but, you see, he's not qualified to do that job.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think he's qualified, you know.

MS. TUCKER: He's not.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, what was Harold like? Harold Mitchell? Mitchell lives in France.

MS. TUCKER: Well, I should tell you this incredible story about Harry Mitchell. I was just - see, I'll have to do an imitation if you really want me to tell you about the artist.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Because I have an hour's story about Joan Mitchell, but it's unbelievable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, let's save it for [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: But I'll tell you about Al. See, Al was just so delighted when I asked him if he would do the show. He was really thrilled. And he expressed it. He was very open. He freaked because I didn't ask him any questions about the work. I just asked him stuff about himself. So he had no idea what was going to happen. And when he finally got [inaudible] he was very, very, very pleased. But he really - he's not used to my way of working. And I have since discovered that nobody is. And I have to inform them about it. I say, "Listen. You will suddenly find yourselves in a really weird place of sort of benign neglect, what looks like benign neglect, where all of a sudden you don't hear from me. Okay? I'm working. It's that I figured the work had to do what it's going to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you can't talk to them every day because you have all of this --

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but they needed that. They need it every day.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: They want every day to know what's happening. But I spent a lot of time out in the country with Al and with Sylvia and talked to them. It was very difficult for me because Al talks a lot and argues a lot and wants to get into theoretical stuff, which I - and I am very not like that at all. I put my argument in my writing. When we chose the work it went like that. It just was incredibly easy. It fell into place beautifully. The real quarrel we had was, I said, "Al, are you going to do the installation?" He says, "Well, I'm going to - and I want you to know this is what I'm doing." He said, "Fine, no problem." Well, I was full of anxiety. I have a way of doing installations when there are very heavy works of art. You can't ask people - I at the Whitney always handled - that was something that I felt that I wanted to do and had to do. I did not like saying to the men who worked there, "Put that there. Put that there." I felt that I had to do physical labor also. And I'm very glad, very glad I did. So Jack Martin used to get a little antsy, right, seeing maybe I had a painting, you know. And then after awhile he calmed down about it. But - so I learned a lot. But when you have a 300- or 400-pound painting, you don't want to double-handle the damn thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: So one of my ways of dealing with Al's show was, I put everything where it wouldn't go first, see? And then I had a very long, hard look at it. And I know everybody thinks that [inaudible] installation was one of the best installations I've ever done. I mean, it's really beautiful. But I put everything wrong, see? And knew exactly what was going on. And then I went home to sleep on it overnight. And Al came in and then looked at it and got hysterical that this was what I was going to do and started moving paintings. So the next day I --

MR. CUMMINGS: How could he do that, though?

MS. TUCKER: He brought a couple of guys in.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: And so of course, when I came in the next day, knowing exactly what to do, he screwed me up. Well, it cost me a day on an installation. So I got him in the office and I said, "There are two choices. You do the installation all by yourself, but I'm going to go away. You're not going to have the benefit of my advice. Or I'm going to do it. But there's no in-between." And he apologized and said okay and kept out of my way until it was done. And he was so very happy when it was done. But I don't like people messing with that. Anyhow, so that was the only really tense moment that we had. The opening was joyous, really joyous. I mean, Al was so happy. He and I felt as though - you know, he said a wonderful thing to me when we were in the back looking at his paintings. And I was saying to him - I mean, we were jumping up and down. [Inaudible] jumping up and down. I was saying, "Al! Look at the installations!" He screamed, "God, that's a beautiful painting!"

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] We turned to each other laughing, you know. And Al says, "You know, we're the only two people who can say that kind of stuff."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] [Inaudible] wonderful. Isn't this great! And it was his first project. And it was a real pleasure. I had such a good feeling about that. You know, we made a movie that Rena Kazurski edited. And it's a movie of the installation, with voice-over of me and Al having this very intense conversation in the studio about [inaudible]. It was very nice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. Have you had people say no to exhibitions?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Richard Serra said no.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. I asked him in 1970 if he wanted to do a big show. No, it wasn't '70, it was - it must have been '71, '72. And I could understand that. I also asked Cy Twombly to have a show, a long time ago. He wouldn't do it. Who else did I ask? All my shows that I - well, I had been screaming about doing a Westermann show for years. Let me think. I do believe that I only asked - I know I asked Cy. I tried to do an Agnes Martin show. But they didn't - the staff didn't want one. Too bad! [Laughter] Well, but they [inaudible]. So what? And then the John show, I mean, that's another. I wanted to do a John show a long time ago, and that show [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: I thought David Whitney probably somewhere in there, in the background forever.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Well, not forever. But --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But I'm glad I didn't. I'm very glad I didn't because, you know, I didn't - the only way I would have done a John show would have been to do it like I thought it should have been done, like just another one of, another artist's artist, with a modest - you know, one floor, really tightly chosen, with a good, serious essay.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And no [inaudible]. But that obviously --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's hard to do a Castelli artist without [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: That's not true because I've done a lot of Castelli artists now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but Morris [inaudible] Rosenquist did. [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: No, no, not like that, really not like that. You know, big traveling things and Tokyo.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, well, that's the new - a new idea of the Whitney going international.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but now I think you can get so much fancier. I mean, no. I mean, it wasn't the era of the - you know, the line-them-up-around-the-block show had not yet arrived. I would have done [inaudible] show. But did not want to do one after she died, was more interested in doing one before. I think I like working with living artists and don't want to sacrifice that to do something not --

MR. CUMMINGS: Gestalt. Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Barry Levay, somebody always wanted to do his show. But I mean, you know, guys - I've got something I'd use for a show if it came in - and it goes on and on and on. But I was very sorry. I wanted to do a Cy Twombly show. And I still want to do a Serra show. But now I think that there's too much almost instant history about him.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you mean?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I saw a show of his - see, I think that that show that we did at the New Museum called, you know, "Early Works by Serra's Contemporaries". I think it started this very strange wave of galleries suddenly showing early works. [Laughter] And I went with this - up to LA sometime after, a long time after. And they had all of Serra's early pieces up in there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Uh-huh. And I had such déjà vous. It was horrible.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you think of them, though?

MS. TUCKER: I thought they didn't look so hot.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Ooh la la.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Ooh la la. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, they didn't. You know? Whereas, you know, some of these early pieces look real interesting to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: What about [inaudible] to sort of move away from the big shows for a minute, you did sort of a whole series of exhibitions in the Lobby Gallery from Nancy Graves and her camels at [inaudible] and the New York Correspondence School.

MS. TUCKER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you decide to do Ray Johnson, for example? I mean, he had never really been looked at in New York.

MS. TUCKER: Because Ray had been sending me stuff. And it suddenly occurred to me that he had never [inaudible] in New York [Laughter].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And that it was opposed to a museum exhibition because I had to put all his correspondence on the wall and because I had to get involved because they were going to send me stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And that it was going to be an impossible show to install and an impossible show to organize - it was just impossible. So I got real interested.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think it worked?

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Oh, yeah, sure I do. I mean, it was a wonderful show. The only thing was that I couldn't figure out how to make it look good. And at the last minute I got this idea of taking areas - we stapled everything up - and masking them off with masking tape to make little --

MR. CUMMINGS: Frames.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And it worked. But I also - you know, I have this - very clearly, this tension for the unknown and underexposed. And anything I see - like when I went to Torpo's studio - that deserves that and hasn't got it just got me crazy to do it. And I was must say that part of the reason I was - see, I was averaging four small shows and two big ones a year, if you include --

MR. CUMMINGS: The biennial.

MS. TUCKER: -- the biennial from - yeah. And a couple of biennials I installed all three floors myself. And I liked that.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like doing the biennials?

MS. TUCKER: I thought they were great. I was the only person who thought they were great. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: The reason I thought they were great was that, number one, I could travel to see work. And I thought that that did more for the Whitney than any other thing could have done. To go into studios in Baton Rouge was very important. It also changed my attitude about works of art and made it far less provincial. And the --

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean seeing bodies of work by people who are local artists around the country?

MS. TUCKER: Sure. Yeah. I mean, it really began to move me away from the idea that everything was going on in New York. And I felt that the Whitney was more than just the building and the art that the building housed, that it was a state of caring about things that's going on in America. So I just got tremendously anxious, though, around that time. I mean, I was like - I would love to have done those shows myself, except for the fact that I would have lost so many friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I felt very good about them and I don't care if they were lousy shows. I think they gave exposure to a lot of people who really were very important. And --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think has happened to a lot of those people? So many of the pieces have almost disappeared.

MS. TUCKER: No, so many of them haven't disappeared at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah?

MS. TUCKER: Well, if you give me a catalog from three to four years ago, right, I could tell you something about what they were doing. But you have to still continue to travel to know what's happening because they don't come to New York. So they didn't disappear. They're in new communities working. Bill Allen is still working well and happily. So is Joseph Rafeus [phonetic] who had the retrospective. Joan Brown's first show that way at the Whitney - I mean, all of that was just tremendously, tremendously important. And the idea, you know, Patterson said - I remember him saying, "All the good art in New York sooner or later, you know, gets into the galleries." And I know for a fact that that's not true. I would have thought - you know, in a funny way, I mean, I suppose that we're continuing the biennials by doing outside-New York shows. The only thing was, it was a big mistake to have one more per person.

MR. CUMMINGS: You think so?

MS. TUCKER: Well, you couldn't see enough.

MR. CUMMINGS: Particularly when they're not seen in the course of a year at a dealer's. People don't know.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. But if I took any of those catalogs, I'm sure I could tell you what was happening to most of those people. But what's important is not the one show, but the contact, the personal - the sense that artists in a small community have that a big museum sends someone out who really cares about going to them, instead of their having to come.

MR. CUMMINGS: What happens, though, when you go to a town - you know, Baton Rouge or Kansas City or something, where hardly a curator is ever seen?

MS. TUCKER: Yes?

MR. CUMMINGS: You know one artist? Are you handed around from door to door, studio to studio?

MS. TUCKER: Well, what usually happens is, if I know I'm going to a town, I will - I keep very extensive files. I'll call one artist, get a list of names, and then I'll call a museum person if there is a museum person. Then I'll call a dealer. And then I'll put the list together and see where they overlap, and begin.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And then, really, I take all the information from artists. As soon as I see one, I say, "Who else shall I go see?" And I check on the list. And I generally - you can get a very thorough view of what is happening. Or I go

to something like - when I first went to California, I went to Phil DeMayer's [phonetic] for the Bay area. And I said, "Can you take two weeks and show me everything?" And he said sure. I mean, he was the director of the gallery. He could do anything he wanted to. So we get in the car, and for two weeks, I saw - I mean, you wouldn't believe who I saw that first trip. I remember hitting Ralph Gallin's studio at 2:30 in the morning.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And when he was still painting nude.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Right? That was long before [inaudible]. McQueen, Defta, all those photo-realists. It was amazing what I saw on that trip. But we started out in the morning and we went - well, but see, that whirlwind tour is something that I think nobody really has much of the energy for. When I was in Los Angeles the last time for the biennial, the time before this show, I was in 80 studios in 10 days, and that didn't include Fresno, Sacramento. This looks like large - and not - and an hour in each. What's important is not whether the work comes out for the show or whether the art's going to become famous or not famous. But the quality of the time that you spend in somebody's studio, whether they're a bad artist or a good artist is essential to the institution that you represent, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And to your own knowledge. You can sit and talk about real estate with somebody. You're going to find out a lot. But I think that's why - most curators don't really want access.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's the only place you'll learn about a living artist, is in their studio.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but they don't want that so much. I mean, they go in there, but they use it for something else. I don't quite understand why people feel that way about artists.

MR. CUMMINGS: I've had a lot of artists, though, tell me that a lot of curators are uncomfortable in studio situations.

MS. TUCKER: Yep. I think they are.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why, do you think?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'm not uncomfortable. But I suppose that's because they think the artist wants something from them, which is quite true, because they're also called upon to say something smart in the first five minutes of seeing people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, something they may have never seen before.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. What they don't understand is that they can simply say to the artist, Listen - because the first few minutes of seeing something - I'm sorry if I'm not being articulate. I would prefer to just look for awhile." I mean - or you learn to talk about the weather. I have some ideas about that, you know, that in the early days of looking I used to really struggle to see if the art met my terms.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, you talked about that.

MS. TUCKER: And - yeah. I just changed all that so completely. But I think they think they're on the spot, that they have to produce something or promise something. And what actually happens, the nature of the exchange, is far more relaxed and reasonable than that.

MR. CUMMINGS: You like to travel, don't you?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yes. I love it. I love it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, this is an ideal situation for me. I get off at a place I've never been before. Someone comes to me. Someone wants me there. Someone takes me around. I mean, someone puts me up. I have company when I want. I can get to anybody's studio I want to get to. I love being in New York. But I also - I keep saying this - something very important is happening outside of New York. And I don't think people realize it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I don't think the people outside New York realize that it's really happening out there. I don't think they realize that they can, you know, live in Chicago or St. Louis or wherever and do something.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. But what I meant is that - you know, I've spent hundreds of hours in studios in really obscure places - Galveston, you know. I mean, Houston is no longer obscure. But I've done it. I've done the tour there, you know, 30-40 studios.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: It's very different. And their attitude toward someone coming to their studio is different than a New Yorker's attitude.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MS. TUCKER: Well, they don't see it quite so much as business. They don't have so many expectations. You're coming to visit.

MR. CUMMINGS: They don't know what the expectations should be.

MS. TUCKER: Should be, right. Well, you know, what happens, of course, is you make friends. I mean, part of the reason that almost everything in my house is by somebody totally weird and obscure is from these, you know, friendships that - well, it's not true that --

MR. CUMMINGS: They're not all obscure.

MS. TUCKER: Well, most of them are fairly obscure.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That guy, Douglas Bourgeois, is a wonderful painter from New Orleans. Nobody had ever been in his studio before.

MR. CUMMINGS: But how do all these people survive?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he's barely surviving. I found him because I was in another artist's bathroom. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] There was one of his.

MS. TUCKER: There was a little tiny one. I said, "Who is this?" And the guy said, "Oh, it's a friend of mine." And I said, "Well, can I go visit him?" He said, "Sure. I guess so." It was the guy who gave me those alligator salt and peppers. He makes these weird shoes. I mean, all you have to do is keep your eyes open.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: The tattooed dogs are from an artist in Texas. One of the wonderful things about people from out of the way places is like - these guys from Texas, they send me slides and they send me packages of Doritos to eat when I'm watching the slides. [Laughter] They're great. There's a much more informal attitude about their work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That three-dimensional Jesus Christ was given to me by Bruce Nauman. [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Pretty good, huh?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Sure. I don't know why it is, but, you know, I think that a lot of people don't really enjoy their work. There you are. I think most people working in our profession probably don't enjoy it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do it for strange reasons.

MS. TUCKER: Well, you would know more about that than I would. Do you know why they do it?

MR. CUMMINGS: They fell into it. They got terrified. Or they couldn't stand being a dealer or something or another. Who knows? Not - I suppose we should finish that.

[END OF DISK SIX]

MR. CUMMINGS: This is side seven, September 8, 1978, Paul Cummings talking to Marcia Tucker at 140 Sullivan Street. And that was the Joan Mitchell adventure, which you said was rather unique.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Before you - yeah, my Joan Mitchell.

MR. CUMMINGS: This is Joan Mitchell. How did the exhibition appear? Was it your idea?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I never did any exhibitions [inaudible]. I didn't initiate it. Even those that seemed as though I had not initiated them. But that was one of the things that was interesting about Jack because he thought that he didn't want people - that you would not do as good a show if you were handed it than you would if you initiated it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Created the whole thing, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And obviously some I was less interested in than others when I started, or I did for different reasons. For example, I did Lee Krasner's show because I felt that it was historically something very important, that her work had been neglected, hadn't been shown in the proper context, hadn't been examined as part of an era socially important, in addition to liking the work. But I didn't do it because the work posed for me certain aesthetic or intellectual problems that were very radical. I did it for --

MR. CUMMINGS: For historical --

MS. TUCKER: Well, art historical reasons and - I mean, you can't do a show for art historical reasons without being tremendously interested in the work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: It's not that. But I mean that Lee's contribution didn't have to do with a radical departure - a radical aesthetic departure. It had more to do with an incredible kind of strength that she had in her work and some innovations that had not been properly, I think - not innovations, but some - how do you say it? Some insights [inaudible] that hadn't been properly credited. Joan - I've just always been interested in Joan Mitchell's work. And I found it odd that --

MR. CUMMINGS: What was the appeal?

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's what I was going to sort of try to focus on. I found it odd that I would like her work so much, considering what I thought was my taste. The appeal was partly that she was one of the few people I knew whose work, while it was very closely tied to an abstract expressionist, the abstract expressionist period, style, point of view, had seemed to me to maintain its freshness over all those years. Secondly, the work seemed to have an incredible amount of integrity to it that - she wasn't someone whose style fluctuated according to contemporary present taste. And I felt that the work was more than it appeared to be, that she had not - she had been, not underrated at all, but simply not had an opportunity to be seen. And I just thought her work was incredibly exciting. I liked her early '50's. I liked the '50s work, I like the recent work. I've seen that she's gotten better and better. I still wrote and asked her to do a show. And I didn't know. She said she would be in New York at a certain time. We could meet. She seemed to doubt that I really wanted to do a show. I sort of had to convince her that I really liked her work. She agreed to do the show. But it became very clear right away that she drank a great deal and that she was a very tough cookie to do work with, very tough cookie. As, you know, it's been clear through all the tapes, it has very strong feminist theories. And I think she objected - in some ways she questioned them. And from our very first meeting she did not - she played devil's advocate, really pushing that aspect of things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why, do you think?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I think that she grew up - she and very few women [inaudible]. In that era, which was a man's time, a man's period, it was living in a macho men's abstract expressionist - Jackson Pollock was doing fighter planes, heavy drinking, [inaudible] tough stuff, you know? It was a certain muscular thing to the work. And I think that those women, who were very good artists, had - because there was no women's movement and because there were so few of them, felt that they had to compete in that way or not at all. And so they hung out in bars, too. And it seems to me that Joan became the exact counterpart of any of those people - tough as nails, smart, heavy drinker, very fiercely independent and argumentative, and didn't take shit from anybody. And there wasn't a support system for women at the time, and then I think that they were - their position was that [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. So they just battled along the same way the guys?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And what happened with Joan, of course, went to France, living with Jean-Paul Leotelle. And she missed the change. She escaped this enormous change in attitude and, more than that, I think - the tremendous importance of the support structure that women, starting in the late '60s and early '70s, were able to give to each other. Not knowing what it was about, she mistrusted it. The other thing was, Joan had never worked with a woman before.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, she was a friend of Martha Jackson's.

MS. TUCKER: I don't think so. I don't --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, for awhile. [coughing]

MS. TUCKER: Well, when I got to France, David Anderson was there and that's who she was working with. And she - I do not believe that she had experience - this is my sense of it - that she had experience of women, not painters, but women in this profession, as being quite competent, and had to push and test harder, that somehow she had been the recipient of that old view that if a woman does it, then she must be an assistant or she must be --

MR. CUMMINGS: Secondary.

MS. TUCKER: Second-class.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: In fact, I saw her about a year or two ago, two years when she had a - two years ago she had another show, the one before the recent show at Fourcade [phonetic]. And she was drinking very, very heavily. She could barely stand up, smoking and coughing very badly. And she said, in this drunkenness, she said, "Well, you know what they're saying. They're saying that you did that show not because you believed in the work, but because you needed some feminist credits." And I said, "I'm very sorry that you feel that way." I knew why I did the show. And it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. But I'm very sorry that you are so insecure about your work that you would possibly ever think that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Hm.

MS. TUCKER: It was very sad, to me. But it didn't - she was trying to hurt me, I think, in her - not to hurt, but to test, to push.

MR. CUMMINGS: But how was it working on the exhibition with her?

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's what I was going to tell you. We agreed to do the exhibition. I took off for France. I landed in Paris. I could speak French well because I lived there. And Paris was a friend - I'm very at ease in Paris. Stayed a couple of nights and went with a woman friend - I don't know her too well, but I went with her in Milan. And stayed in Paris a couple of nights. Met a friend who was panning John Bennis who also apparently was quite a close friend of Joan Mitchell's. And my friend Loren Keller also knew Joan. And I set out the next day to go to - I forgot where she lives. Sorry.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, anyway.

MS. TUCKER: She lives in Monet's - the town where he lived.

MR. CUMMINGS: Giverny?

MS. TUCKER: No. The other one.

MR. CUMMINGS: I know the other one, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. I'll remember in a moment. And I went with Jean Folliet who owns the Gallerie Folliet, who is a man of - a small man of exquisite intellect, exquisite intellect, and a man of such absolute refinement and grace and delicacy and knowledge - a very impressive man. And he was going out to visit her. So we drove out together, and he doesn't speak English. And we had what I consider an extraordinary conversation on the way out because Gallerie Folliet is also a librarie and he publishes all these books. Now, we had a talk about the [inaudible] and about Wittgenstein -- all this in French. My French was very rusty because I hadn't been there in years. But little practice, boom. And we were into this extraordinary conversation about the phenomenal art scene when we finally arrived. I do need to remember --

MR. CUMMINGS: The name of that little town.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm. Isn't that horrible [inaudible]? I believe it's Verteuil.

MR. CUMMINGS: I can't think of it either.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] So we arrived in Verteuil, and it was as Monet did it, exactly. It was incredibly beautiful. We arrived in the early evening. Joan greets us, sits us down. And there's a man there named Denise Verjeralle

[phonetic], who was Joan's assistant. And we had told him not to show up for a couple of days. And there was a woman who cooked and a frail young poet with - not mononucleosis, but worse than that. What's it called? The blood disease.

MR. CUMMINGS: Leukemia?

MS. TUCKER: No. It's called -- it begins with an H. What's the matter with me?

MR. CUMMINGS: Hemophilia? I don't - it will come back.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And so we all sort of - I sit down, of course, to drink. And David Anderson was there. And we began this very uncomfortable and very extraordinary few days, which really almost did me in.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you stay there with her?

MS. TUCKER: I stayed there, yeah. I had a little room in the back. And this man Christian was staying there. Phillippe was staying there. David Anderson was staying there. Eventually Luanne and John Bennett came and stayed there. What happened was that we started to drink. And Joan launched into a description of how David Anderson had gotten drunk the night before and had run to the bathroom nude and not made it, but thrown up. And she got down on her hands and knees in front of him to imitate him, which I thought was one of the crudest and most extraordinarily vulgar and harmful things I have ever seen. David did not defend himself at all. He sat there. I was shocked beyond belief, and Folliet was really scandalized.

MR. CUMMINGS: But he was used to that. He mother used to treat him like that.

MS. TUCKER: Who? David?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Well, let me tell you. We were going to sit down for supper, and Folliet and I were still trying to talk literature. And Joan got very mean to me and began to call me Madame Lupine [phonetic] - "Madame Lupine." Then she turned to poor Philippe, whose jaw was swollen out to here and began to tell the assembled house Philippe's wife and child - wife had left him, taking the child. Philippe used to work for Riopelle. Riopelle hated him and fired him. So immediately Joan hired him to get back at Riopelle.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And he'd been kicked out of the house, had no place to stay. She was insulting him. This went on and on into - again, she leapt up from the dinner table, got down on her hands and knees to imitate David throwing up.

MR. CUMMINGS: My god.

MS. TUCKER: I was just watching all of this. Folliet excused himself and went quietly and gracefully and elegantly back to Paris.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] He knew, didn't he?

MS. TUCKER: And Joan and I went out to the studio where Philippe was to help us move paintings around. I had a new camera, a little Rollei. She looked at me, and the first thing she said was, "You can't take pictures with that camera." I said, "Yes, I can." The studio wasn't big enough to put all the things out at once. And we worked well into the night. She likes to work very late. I had just gotten - no, it wasn't two days there. I had just gotten off the plane. It was only one day, one night. I was very tired, very confused. I did not know - I wasn't familiar with the new work because it had never been reproduced anyplace. How would I have been familiar with it? And she kept pouring me Scotch. And I was going to the bathroom and emptying the Scotch, trying - I can't drink and work. And pretty soon it became clear as she got drunker that this man Philippe was a complete angel and patient, nice, and funny. And we found out - he didn't speak English. But we found out in speaking to each other that he was in a theater group that was very much, almost exactly the same as my theater group here. In this little town of Verteuil in France. And there were about eight, ten people in the group. So we started to lighten up the evening. As we were moving things, we started doing pantomimes to each other.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was very funny. And I began to relax and not feel so strange and enjoy myself. Joan got drunker and drunker and pretty soon began to try to throw the two of us together. I also having, by the way, neglected to eat by this time it was three o'clock in the morning. I had eaten one meal, one very small meal. I was ravenously hungry and faint from moving paintings, trying to photograph, all this excitement, all the drinking. So

[inaudible]. So Philippe finally said - when Joan got extremely abusive, Philippe said, "Listen. Let me - come to the kitchen. I'll make you some eggs." I said, "Thank you." So we go traveling back to the kitchen for him to make me some food. And Riopelle has arrived. Joan walks into the kitchen, looks at Riopelle, and says, "This is Madame Lupine." And she says, "And she is not here to do a show for you, and she's not interested in your fucking art!" So there ensues a violent brawl in which Joan throws plates at Riopelle. I duck.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Poor Philippe is just - is trying to beat eggs, you know, just looking around. I am stunned. I'm not used to violence at all. I finally sit down and eat some eggs. We sit and talk all night about Joan's work. And Joan is near inarticulate about the work. She loves dogs and clearly does not like human beings. So around 4:30-5:00 o'clock in the morning, I stagger off to bed, go to sleep, get up in the morning. Joan never comes down until the middle of the day. And I can't remember the sequence of events because I was there about three days. But somewhere in the next day, Luanne came up from Paris, who knows Joan. And John Bennett came up. And there was a lot of drinking. David Anderson had finally retired with his tail between his legs, with me saying to him, whispering in the corner, "Why don't you stand up for yourself? Why don't you do something?" Hm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Terrible.

MS. TUCKER: Terrible. I mean, humiliation beyond, you know. So he went. Luanne and John came. More drinking, heavy drinking. Riopelle there screaming and yelling and so forth. And Luanne somehow seemed to have gotten to be very friendly with the frail poet upstairs, who was suffering from mononucleosis and - hepatitis is the word for it [inaudible] hepatitis. He was a very, very nice man.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: John Bennett went to the studio with Joan and apparently told her - huh - told her not to do a show [inaudible] told her not to do a show with me, that I was only doing it to advance my career, that I was not trustworthy. He didn't even know me. Convinced Joan, naturally, and then proceeded to do - I don't know what happened in the studio because I wasn't there - proceeded to break the windows. He threw a chair through the studio windows.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And he was going to drive us all back to Paris. And he was too drunk. I wasn't going back to Paris with that guy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Meantime, we find out that there is a train strike. I have no French money. We can't get back to Paris. Luanne has gone up and is sitting in one of those 48-hour conversations, mystical conversations with the poet upstairs. And Philippe is the only sane person around. Philippe had also, one of these three days, had taken me out of the kindness of his heart - had taken me to his theater group, which was a great treat for me. And I just sat and watched them do all these wonderful things. And then he took me - this whole group, the theater group, even though, you know, I wasn't part of them, we all went to this wonderful little restaurant and all sat around talking about theater and drinking. And it was one of the nicest - I mean, it stands out in my mind as a fantastic act of hospitality toward me.

MR. CUMMINGS: A moment, right, right.

MS. TUCKER: Okay. So I guess it was whatever night. No, the theater night was the night before, before Luanne and this guy arrived. Anyhow, Joan had been particularly abusive to Philippe and had told me his whole story. And Philippe's landlord had come to take his keys away from him and eject him from his house. And the humiliation, more humiliation in front of all of us. And his jaw is out to here.

MR. CUMMINGS: What happened to him?

MS. TUCKER: Well, he had had some kind of infection, and he couldn't afford to go to the dentist. And it was just horrible. He was in agony. How he managed to smile through it even is quite beyond me. He - oh, so we came back from theater, sat up talking, did more work with Joan till the middle of the night. Joan was just really bad. And I went - I guess I went to bed. And I was lying in bed figuring out what the hell all this was because I have to say, in the middle of all of this, that in a funny way, the more Joan was abusive, the more I cared about her. That is, the more I realized that she - I liked her very much when I met her. I had - felt like I had, an incredible connection with her. And not only did I love her work, but I thought there was something very special about her, even if she drank a lot, no matter what. The more abusive she became, the more I realized that she was so afraid of having a friend or having anybody care about her that she put a lot of obstacles in the way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And I was determined not to let those obstacles do me in or destroy the friendship or the feeling I had for her. And so I really - I tried very hard in that regard. And it didn't change my feelings of love for her. Yes, that's what it is. It was - I would say that that was - yes, that that was what was really developing, some very deep and good feelings for her, despite all that. So I'm in bed and I'm lying there and trying to figure out how to get through all this. There was a knock on the door. Philippe comes in, asks if he can talk to me. I say, "Sure." He sits down and proceeds to tell me the horror story of his life, which made me so sad that I just didn't know what to do. I mean, it was one thing after another. And he obviously just had this terrible [inaudible]. So by the time he had finished it must have been six o'clock in the morning.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I gave him a kiss, patted him on the back, sent him out, you know, went to sleep, got up. Joan, of course, immediately decided that he and I were - right?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I actually didn't really say anything. I could have been left engagée. Anything or anybody, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I mean, I felt like, you know, the mother of us all. And so Joan began - you know, Joan will try to get to you on whatever level she can. If she can't shake you professionally, she'll try and shake you personally.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: So she began to an

nounce to everybody around that Philippe and I were engagée. And the more I protested, of course, the more --

MR. CUMMINGS: Of course. Right.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, she hadn't, so I simply stopped protesting. So then, why bother? I said, "Absolutely, we're eloping tomorrow."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And then the next time, John Bennett and Luanne arrived, and the scene with him throwing the chair through the studio. And I looked around at what was happening, at the screaming, the crying, the agony. I had also instantly developed an ulcer. And I could not drink, and I couldn't eat anything in the house without being sick, except for the dog's yogurt.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So I'd sneak to the refrigerator, eat the yogurt that was saved for the dog, crushing my stomach like this. I couldn't drink a thing. I know it was protective. I'm so glad that happened. I'd also just stopped smoking. It was about three or four o'clock in the morning. No food had been on the table because there was all this commotion and screaming and drinking. I had no French money. And suddenly, the dogs, Joan's special dogs - I hear this - oh, no, I decided to leave. That's what had happened. I'm sorry. I was going to go. I was going to go. I packed my suitcase and get my suitcase down to the car, thinking still, for some reason, that John Bennett is going to drive us. And I suddenly hear screams and barks and carryings-on. I race back up to the house and her two dogs had attacked each other, and there was blood all over the dining room and the kitchen. And one of the dog's ears is torn, and Joan is screaming and crying. John is nowhere to be found. I mean, it was amazing. It was really amazing. And I [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I didn't want to [inaudible]. Skip it.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: So I went and [inaudible] I found Philippe. And I said, "I cannot stay here any longer. What shall I do?" And he said, "Well, I feel exactly the same way. Let's go." I said, "I have no French money." He said, "Neither do I. Let's go." We go out in the middle of the night in this town of Verteuil. There is no taxicab. There is no hotel. There is nothing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But there is a small café owned by these friends. So we go in there. He eats, and I sit there clutching my stomach. And we get out on the road and hitchhike a ride five miles to the house that he was then thrown out of by his landlord, break in the back window, and sit in freezing cold in the middle of all his kids' little horse and all the boxes and debris of his life, which is wife is moving out, right? And sit up yet another night awake, right, huddling in front of the dark fireplace.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: While I try to figure out what I'm going to do, because no one gets back to Paris because there's a huge strike.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MS. TUCKER: Getting angrier and angrier and angrier. Next morning, as soon as it's, you know, daylight and there are cars on the road, we stagger out of this house onto the road to hitchhike to a café so I could find out if there's a bus, anything, to get me back, right? I call Luanne and I said, "You've got to get me some French money. I have no French money. Come down to this café and meet me. Bring me some money. I'm going to get back if I have to - I don't care what I have to do." So it takes - I think it took the two of us - it took us an hour-and-a-half to hitchhike the five miles back. We go to the café. We have no money for which to even pay a coffee, right? Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible], yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. No money at all. Haven't slept for what by now is really days and nights.

MR. CUMMINGS: Four days.

MS. TUCKER: Right? I have this incredible ulcer. And Joan has been beating on me beyond - although all during this time, I've been taking notes, looking at the paintings, making - you know, still very - in my way, very organized. And so I wait for about three hours. Luanne finally comes in with Joan, Christiane, Joan's dog, Riopelle, and some - oh, and some other kid from someplace. You know, there's this great entourage. And Joan announces that she's buying us all lunch. By that time I'm ravenously hungry, even though I can't eat anything.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And I say okay. We all sit down to lunch. And Joan turns around to me. First she announces to the assembled that she was right all along, that everything she had said about me and Philippe was clearly proven.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: The fact that we had gone off and eloped together.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: That [inaudible] saying it was totally out of hand. And then she says I forgot all my notes. I left them on the billiard table at her house, and she does not feel that I am competent or equipped to do the show. So I looked at her, and I said, "Joan." I said, "That is not even the issue. The issue is whether I am going to do a show, despite what I feel about your work - whether I am even going to engage with somebody who has been acting this way. Either you shape up this second, now, apologize, cool it, or it's over. That's it." I said, "I don't need this." She got very quiet, very contrite. "I'm sorry." That's it. Um-hm. And proceeded to be real sweet, right? I went back to Paris. I said I don't want to talk about it anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: She did her act for you.

MS. TUCKER: Um-hm, she'd done it. Yeah. But I cannot remember when I was so angry. And I would have - I mean, with Jack Fowler there, I would have gone back and said, "Jack, this is not a situation in which I can work." I would have told him exactly what happened. So I went back to Paris and then to London, met Linda Cathcart briefly. That was quite funny. Luanne and I went from Paris to London, where we were going to catch our plane. Met Linda, couldn't find a pub open. It was freezing cold. We walked and walked and walked, and we finally found a hotel that had a pub. And we sat down to drink, and we drank for a long time. My ulcer miraculously cleared up.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Really, quite miraculously. I mean, we were sitting there drinking hot rum toddies for hours.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that will cure everything.

MS. TUCKER: And I finally got up and discovered that everybody was rather short. And I looked around, and we were the only regular people left. It was an all-dwarf convention. They were all - I'm serious.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It was - once a year, all of the - it was the small people - "International Small People's Convention" at this hotel. [Laughter] Somehow.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I said to myself, yes, smallish. All of this makes sense. It makes sense. I mean, nobody came above my hip bone. Okay.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I went back to --

MR. CUMMINGS: And quit drinking immediately.

MS. TUCKER: Immediately. Well, I thought, you know, uh-oh, something's wrong here. No, no. But there are really - there must be 600 small people in this room. And they - I mean, can you realize what kind of a jolt I experienced? So I went back to the States and proceeded to work on, as best I could.

MR. CUMMINGS: How was she after that, though?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I didn't have too much contact with her. I put the show together. I wrote the essay. I did everything I was supposed to do. And I said - paintings were shipped. I said, "Look, Joan, I'm going to install the show." She said, "I want three days to look at the show." And she said, "You won't be able to do it right. I'll have to make changes." I said, "I will be able to do it right. You won't have to make changes, but I'll be glad to give you the time to do it." I said, "But you can only have two days." "Okay. I'll arrive on such-and-such a day." So I went out. And I knew she was going to arrive two days. There was no mistreating me. So I got all the guys together. And I said, "Listen. Joan is crazy. She's going to come here three days early and see chaos and say, 'Aha. I told you you couldn't install it.' So would you mind trying to get the show up for me ahead of time?" [Inaudible] So we got the show completely, completely hung and labeled and lit three days beforehand. And sure enough, she walked in, sure enough. And she looked around for a really long time. And she said, "Looks fine. Looks fine," and stalked out. Then she read the catalog. She loved the catalog, but she couldn't say that she loved the catalog. She said, "How could you describe this as black when it's actually a combination of, you know, ultramarine blue and something brown?" You know, if you put dark blue and dark brown together, looks black. That was mistake number one.

MR. CUMMINGS: Discolor, right.

MS. TUCKER: Mistake number two was that I put Librarie Folliet instead of Gallarie Folliet, and she told me that Folliet was going to be horrendously upset by this. Folliet could have cared less. The catalog became almost was fun. It was fun. She liked it. She liked the installation. She didn't change anything. But the whole relationship was one of my constantly trying - I don't think that's really true in this story - of my constantly reassuring her, constantly expressing my affection, devotion, and belief in her and her work, and her doing everything she could to undermine me in every way that she could - not to other people, but to me. I don't think - I do - I believe that she likes me. I believe that she speaks well of me and of our relationship. I think that she is powerless to help herself. I think she's self-destructive, and that that's what happened. But the night of the opening, Riopelle wouldn't even come to the opening. He was at dinner afterward.

MR. CUMMINGS: They battle all the time, don't they?

MS. TUCKER: Constantly, oh, very much.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Well, she even went after Tim, too. She said, "Well, you and Tim couldn't have a good relationship." So she started attacking Tim, you know. Then she attacked me to Tim and Tim to me. And we weren't biting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But yeah. That was the hardest time I've ever had with somebody because my - I think my nature is a fairly trusting one. It's not - I don't believe that people - it takes a long time for me to believe that people are

really going to do me in. But she did. She always knew where to hit when you were defenseless, somehow.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, she's been at it for a long time.

MS. TUCKER: You know. Well, you know her.

MR. CUMMINGS: I've met her over the years. I don't know her. But I know of her.

MS. TUCKER: I just --

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, I was curious, though, about all the people that you worked with in major exhibitions. Have you remained friendly with them over the years?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, most of them I have, sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: You don't run to France?

MS. TUCKER: No, but I have seen Joan at least three or four times after that. I've had dinner or a drink. But it depends - if - I can't go to dinner with her if she's drinking too much. Generally, I drink almost not at all when I'm around her. But should she come in and call tomorrow I would go and see her. See, I'm very interested in her, but it's painful for me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And also, because I'm not on automatic self-destruct. And I don't want people around who make me feel, you know, bad.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I'm close to Tuttle, although Richard and I don't see each other very much. I have very strong feelings of friendship for him. And I think that he does, also. I'm very close to Bruce. Rosenquist, who is quite difficult to work with, I - see, now that all the work stuff is over, I feel the same way about his paintings. And I find him now quite delightful, when you don't have to be around him all the time. He's egocentric, very egocentric. He can't - he doesn't mean to be. But he talks - he tells stories constantly. So he takes the center of attention and doesn't listen carefully.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: But I think that in recent years he's mellowed quite a bit. And the time that I worked with him was the time right after the terrible accident with his - where his wife and child were so badly injured. And the accident was a result of his temper.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. Well, somebody beat him out in a red light, and he chased them and went through an intersection.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I'll show you, Charlie, huh?

MS. TUCKER: Well, no, not even that bad. Just a fit of temper.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And so it was a very bad period in his life. And the fact that we were able to do the show and do it well and so forth is really a big, big deal.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: The - I don't see Lee. But I've been quite close to Al and Sylvia, Al Hills and Sylvia Stone. And all the people I did small shows for, pretty much, I think I've stayed friends with, some closer than others. One of them, Joan Mulman, I was not very close to when we did the show. And we have become very good friends. She lives in Sacramento. Jack Whitten and I have always - but I don't - I mean, it would take something - I would not go to France, but that's because I just couldn't. Who else? I don't know. I guess I feel that my relationships with artists are easier than other relationships; that there's something very special about working together in that way that binds you together no matter what happens and where you always have good feelings about the person because you've shared something very special. I don't know what their feelings about working with me are. But I can't imagine that they would be that much different than mine about working with them. I mean, I would say that

Joan probably thought I was difficult. And Rosenquist thought I was erratic.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, a lot of people see their own reflection.

MS. TUCKER: Well, during that process of doing the show, I think you have got - if you're a curator, you have got to become anything that anybody needs you to be without losing in any way who you are and what that core is.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: There's a certain kind of flexibility around your center. But I've forgotten what other shows I did. But for instance, a lot of the people who I first met working with them in the "Anti-Illusion Show", I've continued to be interested in and follow on. Like Barry Levay, I finally got to do a show for him because I've always wanted to. Or, well, Morris was another one. Nauman was another one from that show. I have worked since with Neil Jennings, again, because he was in the "Bad Painting show". I became close to Eva Heffa after that exhibition. Rafael Ferrer, no more, but we did see each other fairly frequently. And he was in several subsequent shows at the Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: I'm going to ask you about one thing. And you had talked about how you write catalogs some time ago. And I'm curious if there were various critics, art critics or literary or political or whatever, who you sort of viewed or think about as kind of signposts along the way. Or does it change, depending on what the exhibition is about?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I don't think - I don't read very much art criticism when I write about art because --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I mean in general. Are you interested in Greenberg's ideas generally, or --

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'm interested in people in Cassira [phonetic]. I'm interested in Piaget, very much in the phenomenologists, who I have been in - in Gaston Bershlaw and in - I have been very much influenced by Merleau-Ponti, starting from, actually a very long time ago. The middle '60s I began to read Merleau-Ponti. I read, not the *Primacy of Perception*, but the *Phenomenology of Perception*, which is the more technical book. I'm interested in [inaudible] and people like that, Berickson. I think, oddly enough, I'm very - well, I don't know why it should be odd. But I'm quite involved with philosophy, but not with the rhetorical aspects of it, which I don't like at all, nor with the logic of it. I'm - there are just certain ways of approaching things that interest me very much. I was fascinated by Merleau-Ponti because, in the most simplistic sense, he says that one's understanding of the world begins with one's sense of the body in the world. And back in the middle '60s, that was a very startling thing to begin to think of in relation to works of art that were, not so much objects, but the results of the process of working. I worked for Leo Steinberg, and I have felt that Steinberg's writing, the quality of Leo's writing, was something to be emulated. It was - in his writing, as in his speaking, he's always been articulate and personal at the same time. And he has been able to say, although I don't necessarily - I may not be interested in what he writes about, and I think that he often suffers from being clever - he has such a marvelous way of making you understand that he, as one person only, is writing about what he believes and feels. So that there is a certain lack of arrogance, I feel, in his writing, that I like. And he's clear. He's just clear. I, very early, when I was still working - when I was at a seminar with Robert Goldwater, I did a seminar report on the relationship between Greenberg's writing and Kant. So I did a lot - I mean, I read everything and found what I would call plagiarism, that he had lifted whole sentences from Kant. And at that time it was quite unpopular to be talking against Greenberg philosophically. Goldwater had a philosophical - I mean, his background was in philosophy also, partly in philosophy. So he was interested in that. And then Leo did a long talk - a kind of an attack at the Modern one year on Greenberg and Greenberg's modernist theories [inaudible] progression [inaudible], which seems - which confirmed for me some of the things I'd been thinking about. But I felt less doctrinaire about it than Leo did. I would never have gotten up publicly and given a lecture against somebody, nor would I have even thought to publish what I had written in the form of an article, even though I thought it was quite accurate. But the people I admire, the critics I admire - well, I had a small thing with Pinkus Whitney, which I suppose I should tell you about. [Laughter] [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: What is that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, many years ago - it was the second big show I did at the Whitney, called the "Structure of Color". And Robert wrote a review of that in which he said that he felt that my choices had been based on the opinions of my friends, family, lovers, jejeune, collectors, and so forth. That was the only time I have ever felt that I should write back. And I did write a reply in *Art Forum*, very brief, saying that he knew nothing whatsoever. I don't know if I've told you this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm-um.

MS. TUCKER: That he knew nothing whatsoever of who my friends, family, lovers, et cetera, were and that if he couldn't stick to criticizing the work in the show, he had - I said it was an anti-feminine attack. It was a very nasty

review. And for several years after that, whenever I wrote anything, I would try to attack his [inaudible]. But Tim, who has always edited for me, would never allow me to engage in polemics in my writing and would force me to put something, if I had to say it, in the footnotes. So some of my early writings, if anybody read that carefully, you would find footnotes saying, "Mr. Robert Pinkus Whitney erroneously, stupidly" - [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: These real snotty little [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: And Robert came up to me at a Guggenheim opening quite a long time ago. Now it's now many, many years. Walked up to me. He wasn't drinking or anything - right up to me. And he said, "I must tell you that I have only regretted one thing that I have written in my career. And that is that review that I wrote about the "Structure of Color" show. And I would like to apologize." And I was floored. I was really floored. I didn't know him.

MR. CUMMINGS: You hadn't met him before?

MS. TUCKER: I think I might have met him once, but I - you know. It was really something. And I said, "Well, I accept." And he said, "Do you think the footnote war could stop now?" And I said yes, it could. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: He's a very funny man.

MR. CUMMINGS: I know he is.

MS. TUCKER: He's very funny. And what happened was, not then, but over the next few years, it became very clear to both of us, I think, that we were interested in very similar issues and similar artists and that I don't know what on earth all that stuff had been about. But Robert ended up being - I would consider him one of the major supporters for me, somebody who - it's not a public support. I mean, he doesn't write about shows that we do or anything - but someone who consistently for me has told me that he - especially in very bad times - that he felt that what I was doing was important or made a difference or mattered to him or mattered to other people. Whether he agreed with the artists that I showed or - was not the question. But I've always felt an extraordinary amount of professional support and understanding from him. And I consider him a friend, although, again, we don't see each other very much. I've always also admired his writing, although I think that - I think I would have the same reservations about his writing that he would have about mine in my work. But, for instance, here I am doing a Barry Levay show, and sure enough, the first - well, it wasn't the first, it was the second major article that ever came out on Barry. It was Pinkus-Witten. Similarly with Tuttle. I mean, he's really seems to have been very - oh, we have a big difference because I'm not involved with Noah Buckner and that kind of work at all. That's very [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Calculated.

MS. TUCKER: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. What about somebody like Piaget? What interests you in him?

MS. TUCKER: Well, what interests me about Piaget is not so much his writing, but the fact that he so systematically explored - systematically and not speculatively, but in terms of - concretely in terms of experiments explored the ways in which people evolve, the ways in which intelligence evolves, spatial perception, the ability to figure - to use numbers. And I have often thought that - well, I don't believe that art is arbitrary, nor do I believe that it stems from something completely outside the growth of the human being. You can't say what's the emotional part or the artistic part so that I began to wonder if - for example, if you were going to look at the work of an artist whose career to date had been concerned with diagramming, that it might be interesting to find out what the diagramming meant, how it evolved in human growth, the growth of a human being, stages from infancy to adulthood, what other kinds of - what other aspects of the human psychology, physiognomy, physiology, and so forth, it was connected to. And Piaget has done more work in that area than anybody else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's also, you know, his endless studies of children and [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Well, what I thought --

MR. CUMMINGS: Over and over.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but that's what's so interesting, that I was amazed to find that the evolution of spatial perception as Piaget explored it in the growth of children into adulthood parallels exactly the evolution of that spatial understanding in Al Hills' work from the earliest to the most recent. And I - although that may seem to be an arbitrary model, I don't feel it is. And Al, when he finally read it, also didn't feel it is. It's not that I want to make a word-for-word analogy. It's only that I can use things like that to understand some of the more profound bases for things. I don't believe that art is based on art. And I don't believe that art is - the best art, at least, and obviously what I consider the best art and the most interesting art is the stuff I'm involved with at any given moment. I think that it has very profound roots and implications. So it's not enough to talk about how spatial concerns in relation to the spatial concerns of other artists. I want to know how it belongs in the world, in the real world. And similarly, I've read lots of books on architecture. And I mean, part of that's early training reading anyhow, Siegfried Gideon. But Norbrook Schultz has always interested me. I think he is one of the most provocative writers. And I don't see how you can deal with sculpture without thinking about architecture and about all of the structures that one makes - that human beings make in their lives. But I guess I've always been interested in the significance of things beyond what they appear - beyond their external appearance. I think art is about more than appearance, I think. But I also don't know that I'll understand anything that I've done or thought about, if ever, for a long time, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, because when I think about writing, I do think about essays in the real sense of the word. These are attempts at understanding, not definitive statements about the nature of one thing or another. And I think that my work doesn't have to do with just one piece of writing and then another piece of writing, but a constant attempt, as it all comes together, to understand how I and others are situated in the world. The - I think that I could characterize my writing now or the work I've done, or begin to characterize it, because everything I've written has had to do with the relationship of art to other kinds of things. But I couldn't see that at first because I was too close to it. And even now, when I'm in the middle of writing, I'm not that self-conscious as to pick some field, you know, and try to get the art to fit it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Squeeze it in, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. If anything, I'm trying to let go of any kind of theoretical base or any feelings of certainty that I have so that I might be able to discover something because I think that - you know, I've said this before. I think that one's work is not in the particular or in the immediate, but ends up being what your whole --

MR. CUMMINGS: The accumulation of it.

MS. TUCKER: The accumulation of things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And each thing - each time you write something, you do a show - is just another step towards - it's not - see, it's not - again, not toward progress. It's not progressive. But it's another aspect, another facet of things that don't become clear, if they ever do, till you're, you know - till you finish your work, till you finish your life.

MR. CUMMINGS: I just want to ask you about the museum. When you went to work at the Whitney, what was your idea of what a museum was? Did you have one? Did you have any particular point of view? And did it change with the experience there?

MS. TUCKER: No, I think it changed far more - my idea of what a museum is has changed since the New Museum more than it changed in the Whitney. But when I was there, I told Jack Fowler that I did not believe in the museum as an archive, which meant that I had obviously seen museums as archives, repositories, places of scholarship and evaluation, exhibitions as the visual residue of the scholarship and evaluation. And I thought that that was putting the cart before the horse, that it was more important to put the art out, and then to evaluate it, rather than to use the art as proof of certain kinds of theories or events. So I --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did he like that? I mean, what was --

MS. TUCKER: He liked it fine. But I was being hired to do contemporary curating.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I felt that the museum should be many things at once. It should be a place for scholarship and a place for collecting - you know, conservation, preservation of artifacts. It should also be a cultural center in some way, also a community center in some way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think you can have scholarship in contemporary art, contemporary museums?

MS. TUCKER: I obviously do. I think my whole life has been devoted to that attempt. I don't see that they are a contradiction in terms at all, providing what you're doing in scholarship is not trying to prove yourself right or wrong, but rather trying to - I say this, you know, as I'm not kidding myself - trying to place something in a context that will allow it to be what it is, but to be understood in terms of the larger world. And I think that that's as much scholarship as anything. You can do an analysis of Melville - one of Melville's books. You can also try to talk about Melville in relation to his peers, the writing of his peers. You can also do a sociological analysis of Melville.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Right. There are lots of ways of looking at it.

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's what I'm saying. And that doesn't mean that it's not scholarly. If I don't have the historical perspective, that still doesn't mean I can't make an attempt at other kinds of things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: The key in that is, if you're interested in being right, then I think you might as well not deal with contemporary art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why?

MS. TUCKER: Because I don't think you can know about those things. I don't think that right - I mean, I talked about that on another tape.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: It's the whole business of a track record is patently ridiculous to me. It's not whether these artists end up being famous and you were the one who, you know, found out about them and put - it's much more the whole attempt to understand what is happening at this moment, whether it's good or bad or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I've always said that, how are you supposed to know what you think is good until you know what you think is bad, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Yeah, but if you think this is good and this is bad, you've made some judgments. And they're based on --

MS. TUCKER: They're definitely based on them. But the difference is that, if I make judgments, which I do all the time, I don't necessarily say that they're accurate judgments. I only say that they're my judgments. And that's why I feel obliged always to back up those judgments with writing, to say - not just to say what, but to say why. And I feel that then, at least - you know, I've never said So-and-so is the greatest living American artist. I try to say what they're doing rather than how great they are or where they stack up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: It's the same thing about people. Are you the greatest living person? Who is the best person? Well, who's the best person among the blondes, brunettes? You know, I mean --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughter] Who is the chosen amongst the chosen?

MS. TUCKER: It doesn't interest me.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, were you interested in acquisitions a great deal or not?

MS. TUCKER: No, not so much. I certainly did my share of trying to acquire things. But I was interested in acquisitions before they got real expensive and in the idea of taking a chance on something.

MR. CUMMINGS: At a riskier point, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Sure. I mean, if you put 10,000 dollars down on the table at the acquisition board, I was the one who would try to get them to give me 2000 of it so that we could play around a little bit and put the other 8 into, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Do you feel that if an institution like that acquires the work of a young artist, it sometimes pushes them out of proportion in terms of their view or the world's view of them?

MS. TUCKER: No, I don't. I really don't. I don't think that that does it at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Doesn't make any difference?

MS. TUCKER: Basements of museums all over the world are filled, filled!

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: It's five minutes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: You know, at its best, at its best. It supports the artist at a time when he or she needs it. It provides you with an early, and, hopefully, good example sometimes of work that eventually may be very important. And if not, if you wait long enough, it will provide you with a steady collection that could be phenomenal. The fact that people - for instance, Jack Fowler saying to me today at lunch that he had gone to North Carolina to evaluate the collection of a small museum there. And he said the museum was full of academic work from the turn of the century on. And the museum director was rather nervous that Jack was going to say, "Oh, this is terrible and you can't do that." And Jack - instead exactly the opposite happened. He became very interested in the possibility of putting together a show of the academic art in America because now, suddenly, we can see that that also is a very essential part of our history. So if you hold on - I mean, minor Greek and Roman items, right? - can form the basis of a brilliant collection from a museum. I feel far more patient than I think other people around me. I feel that many, many things have values that we have no idea will have value. But we have no patience. And we're constantly trying for this - for the best. And I -

MR. CUMMINGS: Probably some new edition needs a new topic, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. So I just - I don't think that. I think that if you acquire things in some way honestly, or if you just do the best you can -

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you do that? What's that based on, the best you can? I mean, how personal is that? How informed by external influences?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I'm a great believer in what's unfortunately known as professionalism. And that means you don't buy the work of your friends because you like them; that you don't write about the people that you're close to simply because you're close to them and figure, oh well. That you have a responsibility in the profession to read, to think, to talk, not to take your work lightly, not to take - not to make assumptions about things. And you know, it's called responsibility. I assumed that when you are thinking about acquiring something, there are many factors that you consider. One, the collection that you're acquiring it for, the reasons for having the collection in the first place - if it's the Whitney, it's different than the Met.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: The Whitney's reasons for having a collection - there was a spirit there that I felt was in keeping with my desire to acquire the work of lesser-known artists inexpensively and early in their career. If I were working at the Met, I wouldn't feel that way. Or if I were working, as I did, at Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, if I had seen a really beautiful Henny McPhee or something, I might have wanted to acquire that for them to add to what they had.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Part of it -

MS. TUCKER: I don't know that keeping one's own counsel - that's a very delicate business. I think that when you're very young and new in the field that you listen very carefully to everything else. When you get some experience, you learn how to trust your own instincts because it's instinct based on education. And I don't mean to - I have the feeling that I might be sounding as though, well, it's a process that's sort of haphazard. And it's not. But it's like a Zen process. There are certain moments in a young student's life when you struggle to master a technique. When you are brilliant at the technique, that's the one moment when you have to let go of the technique.

MR. CUMMINGS: You then forget it, right.

MS. TUCKER: Forget it, which is very hard. The struggle to be unselfconscious and trust all of the years that you've put in training - once you've done that, you have to always, after a certain point, go back once again. You can't take things for granted. And it's like in theater. You go back to the old exercises that seem stupid. And they're, "Aw, those are beginning exercises." There's no such thing as a beginning exercise.

MR. CUMMINGS: Those are the warm-ups every day. And it keeps going.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, and also change. Go back. As soon as you start to take something for granted, go back again and ask yourself, "Well, why am I sure of this? What is the correct thing? What happened? What happens when I make a so-called mistake?"

[END OF DISK SEVEN]

MR. CUMMINGS: Side eight. I don't have a lot of questions about the Whitney, any many more because I want to get into the New Museum. But I did want to ask you a couple of other things. One is about dealers we haven't discussed. How have they been to you, with you, for you, against you?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I've always stayed away from them.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] [Inaudible] One of the few people who really - I knew fewer dealers and fewer collectors than anybody else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. Why is that?

MS. TUCKER: Well, because I always worked directly with the artists, and because I worked with so many artists who didn't have dealers. And there were some exceptions. But I always felt that, in the process of the show - for instance, I didn't deal with Emerick in the Al Hills show.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh really?

MS. TUCKER: Emerick is incredibly helpful - not Emerick --

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MS. TUCKER: But you know, they were all very helpful, the staff was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Exactly.

MS. TUCKER: You know, they'd put things together. But I just dealt with Al. Tuttle, the same thing. Rosenquist, similarly. I mean, all the shows - I did quite a number of shows for Leo's artists. Leo was never involved in that. He always came up the day before, a very polite man. Invite him up to see, and he would come up, and he would [inaudible]. He was very nice. But I never felt that that was a - I thought that dealers did one thing, and I did another thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: And what about collectors? You weren't that interested in these people? Did you -

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] I think I went through my life at the Whitney with blinders. I mean, just like that. I had met lots of collectors. I would say hello. I would write polite letters that, if I could borrow such-and-such [inaudible] thank you very much. But I never, never went out of my way to do that one way or another. I always thought that was somebody else's job.

MR. CUMMINGS: Whose?

MS. TUCKER: Well, the director's, probably. Anybody who wanted anything - I mean, if a collector called me up and said, "Would you give me the names of" - I'd be overjoyed. I mean, any information I had, I always felt was for the use of anybody who wanted to use it. So I was happy to provide anybody - dealers [inaudible]. I did that actually quite a lot. If a dealer called me and said, "Look, I'm interested in seeing some of your work. What's around?" I would instantly give them a list of unaffiliated artists. I did that for lots of dealers. And I sent lots of artists to lots of dealers. But I never had a close relationship with any dealer. In fact, I think the only dealer who's ever been in my house was Leo Castelli because I had a going-away party for Linda Cathcart, who had worked for me. She was my intern for a couple of years. And when she got the job in Buffalo, I had a going-away party. And Sylvia came because she was a good friend of hers. I'm close to Pam Adler. That's because she worked for me for several years. I think there is something very different between dealers. There's a difference between dealers and museum people. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: But what about collectors? So many collectors are intrigued by what curators are thinking about and what they glean. And they travel. And they know various bits of information.

MS. TUCKER: I can't remember any collectors who asked me about anything except for Vera Leftowitz was very interested always in what was happening and how and why. I remember taking Donald Marin to some studios once. You know, somehow I just can't remember what - now, of course, I have lots of contacts with collectors and go around to studios with them all the time. But I didn't do that then.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you know, the other thing is - because I want to - I do want to wind up the Whitney on this. What happens when Jack Fowler leaves and Tom volunteers? Change your whole -

MS. TUCKER: Attitude balance? [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Of course.

MS. TUCKER: Well, it didn't happen quite that way. Tom was hired as associate director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Came and worked with Jack. Tom has just this extraordinarily charming way about him. And the first thing he said to me - literally the first thing he said to me was, "I'm so glad to meet you. I've heard so much about you. I heard there was a rumor you were leaving, and I want to ask you, please do not do that. Please do not do that. We really need you here." I wasn't going to leave. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: I had no intention of leaving.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: But it became very clear that I was dealing with a different kind of person. And that, first of all, Tom was not interested in art in the way that Jack was. And secondly, he was just personally much more insecure, that he either didn't trust his people - that was one alternative - or he was threatened by them and trusted them. And that was the other one. And the first thing he did was, you know, rumors of - he somehow couldn't - he couldn't accept that somebody else would really know - really knew what they were doing. And he kept trying to hire a senior curator, which seems rather ridiculous to hire a senior curator when you've got a curator who's been there six-and-a-half, seven years, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: But he still talks about that.

MS. TUCKER: Well, he should hire me back, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: As the senior curator. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: You can suggest it. [Laughter] I know.

MS. TUCKER: Well, you said last week or whatever, [inaudible], right? I mean, it's a joke for all of us.

MR. CUMMINGS: But also, I think his point of view of what the museum was and what it should do is enormously different from Jack's. And I think that --

MS. TUCKER: It was enormously different, and he was tired because it was enormously different. And I have to put down on the record that when we were asked to make suggestions on a new director, that I suggested Henry Hopkins and supported Henry earnestly and fully until it became clear that they hired Tom. I was very disappointed that Henry was not made the director of the Whitney. I think the Whitney would have benefited enormously and that Henry, for whatever faults he may have, is a man who is respected and who is knowledgeable in his field [inaudible] and very easy to work with. I think so.

MR. CUMMINGS: I don't know him. So --

MS. TUCKER: Well, I know him fairly well. He's easy to work with. At any rate, Tom's background was not in art. It was administrative. And they actually counted on him to make a lot of money. And they counted on him for the right contacts. And I felt after all those years that I was there, and spoiled rotten by Jack - actually, I wasn't spoiled. I was just left to do my job. There's a certain point in your life when it's no longer feasible to - well, first of all, there's no way I can be a sycophant. And there's no way I'm going to lie about things. I have a certain amount of confidence in my ability to do things, whether they're right or wrong, and to do them properly. I'm a perfectionist. So that when Tom, who does not particularly write well, takes a major essay that I have worked on for a month that is fairly - for me, at least fairly adventurous, and says, "Nobody will understand this, so I can't publish it," there's going to be conflict.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: Right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I said, "If you don't want to publish it because nobody will understand it, fine. Don't publish it. But you cannot ask me to write at less than my capability." And if I thought that he had any sense that I really was not a good writer, I'm very able to take criticism. It's not that. I don't think that I'm such a great writer. But that was not what he was saying. He was saying, well, this is really a little too sophisticated for them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, you can't do that. Also, once - he got very drunk one night in his house. And he said to me, "Well," he said laughingly. "You know, this is your museum." And I said, "No, I'm sorry. It's not my museum." I said, "I work for this museum. And therefore, I work for you. And anything that I can do in that capacity for you and for the museum is what my obligation is. And I want to make that very clear." But I got an inkling of what was happening.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: Well, it got worse and worse because I had to fight so hard for everything I did. I had to justify things that I didn't - I didn't want to spend my energy justifying them. I like spending energy defending when it teaches me how to - when it teaches me something about what I'm defending. But there were some really bad social things, you know. I've always believed that the people who actually do the work should be invited to events. And I would get a note back after I'd given him a guest list that said - it went back to Katherine [inaudible]. He said, "No secretaries at this function." [Laughter] The things that I found that personally offensive - or a list, "These are the people that you are to cultivate." [Inaudible] So it became clear that our ways of doing things were not going to be the same.

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: I must say that now, being a director of a museum for this amount of time, I have much more sympathy. I shouldn't say sympathy. I have more empathy for what he was going through and the needs and problems that he faces in his directorate. Should the staff go to this function? Well, if they do, they only talk to each other or the artist, and will need all this and that and the other thing, because I feel those things now. So I'm more - far more sympathetic now than I was then when I was real pissed off and fierce. But the other thing was that after so many years of working with real support from someone, I could not suddenly switch my energy and have to fight someone all the time. And the museum became full of intrigue and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay, what - there must have been some intrigue [inaudible], wasn't it?

MS. TUCKER: Not as much as one would have thought. We had one very unfortunate incident when somebody in the museum in a responsible position, known to everybody, was propositioning people. And when they did not succumb more or less, they usually mysteriously got fired. And this situation ended very simply, which was that people would come to me and tell me in tears. As I was the only woman they could talk to, they would tell me what had happened. So I went immediately to two people in the administration, told them exactly what was happening. And they said, "Oh my god," and the three of us went and talked - sat down and talked to Jack and said, "Listen. We think you should be apprised that this is what's going on." I don't know what Jack did. But it stopped, and things resumed beautifully, and there was not ever again in all the years after that an untoward incident. God knows how he handled it, trust me, he was a diplomat. But it was much easier in those days, when something was going on, to talk about it. If I was - I mean, like going to Jim and saying "How much are you being paid?" And he tells me, right? There was not - I truly - I know I run the risk of glamorizing it in my mind. But I have all my journals from all those years. I did not feel horrendously competitive with Jody or with Monty. I didn't feel - you know, oh my god, what's going on in the education department? I felt a sense of trying to work together. Flora was around, and he was always, always just the most wonderful support.

MR. CUMMINGS: How was The Trustees?

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. Jack kept me away frosm them completely, or he kept them away from me. But I did get to know Flora and Barrett and a couple of people. Flora and I are, as you know, quite close friends. And we'll probably be close friends all our lives. I knew B.H. Friedman. I was on the acquisitions committee. And I was not afraid to speak up. But I wasn't close to them. I felt like I did what I did, and they did what they did. And there didn't seem to be any overlap or any conflict, particularly, in that. You understand, I was like single-minded about what I was doing. And I was allowed to be. I went to more studios, probably, consistently more studios in New York and in the country than probably anybody else ever did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you traveled a lot and lectured and had all sorts of things coming up.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, but like those things, I'd just go to studios. You know, I'd say, "Jack, it's time for somebody to

do a West Coast, you know?" And he'd say, "Bye-bye." And I would be gone for three weeks, and I would be - you know, I mean I'd be [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I know. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Once you get going, it would be every hour on the hour.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. Well, in New York I was doing - actually it was very sporadic. I didn't average any certain number. But in one day, starting at nine and ending at seven, it was at least an hour in the studio. Doing that, minimum once a week, probably, or sometimes three days in a row, you could see a lot and get to know a lot about what's going on. So I thought my priorities were to see artists, go out, have them come in. And by doing - here's an example of how Jack worked. I was in San Francisco with - I was staying at the Naumans' because I was working on Bruce's show, doing all these interviews and setting it up. And Jack called up. And he said, "Well, this very interesting situation has arisen. Larry Aldrich has offered to give the Whitney anything in his" - no, I wasn't working the Nauman show. I was just - I was on a visit, just a visit. "He's offered to give the Whitney anything that he owns that you are wanting to use in the "Structure of Color" show. And I'd like to know what you think of that." So I thought about that for five minutes. Five minutes there was dead silence on the phone. And I said, "That is an untenable situation. I will not use anything at all from his collection." [Inaudible] And Jack said, "Well, I thought you would say that." [Laughter] Very sympathetic. See, I thought - you know, this was early on. It was only the second show. I didn't know whether he would fire me even. Who knew? So I thought a little longer, and I said, "Why don't we do this? Why don't we give him a show of his own?" And that was called the collector - not the collector, but "Selections from the Larry Aldrich collection".

MR. CUMMINGS: Collection or museum or whatever.

MS. TUCKER: Right. And then he can give them all. And we can choose which ones we want. And Jack said, "What a wonderful idea." We proceeded to do that. And it was actually this beautiful show. And I arranged with the artists to be able to trade afterwards so that, if they wanted a more representative piece, that they could trade. And then I also tried to arrange to give the original ones to smaller museums around the country that - Richmond, places like that. So it worked out very well. Larry was very happy. Jack was absolutely --

MR. CUMMINGS: He's a famous collector.

MS. TUCKER: But there were some pretty good things in there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER: I mean, it worked out very well. So my obligation at the time towards the museum was less political and less expedient in a funny way. It was to see the art. And that's what I did. If Jack had ever asked me to do anything else, I would have done it immediately. It wouldn't have been a problem.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, you know, after Tom and Armstrong got set in, when did you feel that things were going to explode or fall apart?

MS. TUCKER: I knew they were going to explode within about two months.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MS. TUCKER: Oh sure. I have it in my journals. And I must say that I lost affection very quickly and tried not to show it. But at the same time, there it was. So I started thinking about what I was going to do. I had no desire whatsoever to leave the Whitney - none. At that time, my thought was that I would have as soon stayed there for the rest of my life, happily. And I started thinking - I had been thinking for many years about the ideal museum. At the moment when I think I was happiest at the Whitney, I started drawing out plans for how it could be perfect. And that's sort of natural to dream like that. And started talking to a lot of other contemporary curators about what art-specific problems in that context were. And I wrote - I remember writing in my journals about - I called it "Museum in the Sky" at the time. [Inaudible] The - I knew I wasn't going to be able to last because I wasn't able to work. I was used to doing two major shows and four small ones a year, with catalogs for everything. And I wasn't working at my full capacity. And if I - Tom started wanting us to - he had to sign permission slips for us to go out and lecture. And I began to feel like a child. I simply couldn't live that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm. Um-hm.

MS. TUCKER: And so I first started to look around. And one of the things that happened was that - oh, the LDM Center was constantly looking for somebody. I had decided that I wouldn't go anyplace for less than a certain amount, which was about twice the salary I was getting at the Whitney. That's because I wanted to be - I mean, I

also really didn't want to --

MR. CUMMINGS: A director.

MS. TUCKER: No, I didn't. I just didn't want to lose.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And I figured if I was going to go to Wisconsin, I would have to get a lot of money for it. I didn't want to go to Wisconsin. But I did get a very interesting offer from Cal Arts. They were looking for a new dean of the combined school of arts and [inaudible].

[A TELEPHONE RING TONE IS HEARD]

[OFF THE RECORD]

MR. CUMMINGS: Cal Arts.

MS. TUCKER: I went out there. They called me to interview for this job. It was a very good job because, when I went out there, it was very clear that they were interested in me. And I also said that I wanted to make a museum there. And they were - there was a new president. They were really ready to go. And so I came back, and they offered me the job. And I had thought about it and thought about it, and decided I do not want to go out to California.

MR. CUMMINGS: When you look back [inaudible] and everything was, you know?

MS. TUCKER: I didn't want to work in an academic situation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MS. TUCKER: I knew that what would happen is, I would have responsibility as a dean to two schools. And what I would be doing - well, where my heart would be would be in the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: And it would be about schedules and teachers and [inaudible].

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. And to try to make a museum and be a dean at the same time was senseless. And I also think that Valencia is bleak. I didn't want to do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: Didn't want to do it. I don't like Southern California. So I said no. So they offered me more money. It was like --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And then I thought, you'd really better think about this. So I did what I thought was the smart thing. I went in to talk to Tom. And I sat down. I said, "Tom, I've been offered a job as dean of the Combined School of Art and Design at Cal Arts at" - I can't remember what they offered me 35,000 or 37,000 - a lot of money, a year. He said, "Did they really?"

MR. CUMMINGS: He was ready to take it. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Poor thing. I mean, he was so - I mean, he was not, "Oh really?" "Yeah, you're kidding?" You know - I don't know. I said, "I would like - before I make a decision about that job, I would like to know how you project my future here at the Whitney; what you see happening, how you feel about me, about the direction of the Whitney." That's about as honest as you can get. He had a perfect opportunity. [Inaudible] talked a little bit. And he finally said, "Well, I would like you to stay." And I said, "All right." I said, "What kinds of changes would you like to see?" He said, "Well, I'd like to change your title to curator for contemporary art." I said, "That's fine with me." And I got up to leave. And I said, "Listen. There may be problems. But there is no reason in the world why we can't really work together well." Shook hands on it, and I left. He fired me four months later.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why did he fire you?

MS. TUCKER: I think he got - he panicked. I think that somehow I was a reminder of the old regime. I think also that I was not his - he wanted his people around. And I'm nobody's person. But that's not true. I was as much Jack Fowler's person as anybody, but simply because he deserved it. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: My feelings were that - I hurt my stomach. Whew.

[PAUSE]

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. I don't know what. It must have been very complicated. It must have been tremendously complicated. But it also was extremely unethical, I felt, knowing that I had responsibilities, that I was not - I was taking care of other people in my family. That I gave him a really good opportunity and then [inaudible] this very good job.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] And he did talk to me at that time. He said, "Well, you'd have a stronger power base elsewhere." And I said, "I'm not interested in power because I'm interested in my work." And he seemed somewhat confused about that. So he fired me. He had already fired Jim. He had forced Henri out. It was clear that he was sort of wiping the slate clean. But I joke about it. And I say - when people say, "Why were you fired?" I say, "I was fired for competence." And I believe that is why I was fired.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] You know, I mean, when somebody else [inaudible] speaks up all the time, I don't know. Anyhow, it was the best thing that could possibly, possibly have happened to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

MS. TUCKER: Because I'm a person who, although in my line I love and need and want change, I also am a person of habit. And I resist change. And I'm glad that - I think I would rather be in a place like this, where I don't know what's going to happen even next month, than to be in a place where I'm constantly frustrated, but know that I'm going to be there. Well, that could have also been a place where I was not constantly frustrated. But that - things don't last forever. I think that - well, right now I'm in a period of a lot of change. And I feel somehow very - I feel rather exhilarated by it. And certainly I'm happier doing this [inaudible] New Museum than I have been ever in my life except in maybe the early years with the Whitney. But --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, where did the whole idea for the museum come from? I mean, was it from those notes about the "Museum in the Sky?"

MS. TUCKER: Oh, definitely.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you do it?

MS. TUCKER: Well, it came from one of those tiny little ideas. You say, you know, maybe the only solution to all of this crap is to make your own museum. You know, one of those little --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Huh? What do you mean, make your own - wait a minute. Wait a minute. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: But it actually built over a lot of years. As I started to talk to people about what it is they wanted in a museum - all kinds of people. And people would get a thrill and excited in talking about it. So I started taking notes. And I took more and more and more notes and thought more about what it is I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. But never actually thinking I was going to make a museum, just making a model for thinking. And then something very funny happened, which was that Robert Irwin, who I had been working on a show for - Irwin came to me and said, "Look. There are some people" - I was just doing [inaudible]. He said, "There are some people at the Pasadena redevelopment" - "a Pasadena redevelopment agency who would like to do a feasibility study of building a museum on a parking" - I mean, not - "building a museum on a shopping center, the roof of a shopping center mall. And I wondered if you might have some ideas about it." And I started to laugh. I said, "That's very funny because I've been working on a museum in my head and have all these notes down already, plus people," because among the people who I'd been talking to were Phil [inaudible] in San Francisco, Brenda Richardson, Linda Cathcart, Jack Bolten, a couple of others here and there. And we were all real interested in how this might work. So Irwin put the Pasadena people in touch with me. I was at theater school in Washington at the time. They called up, and they all flew in, took me to dinner. And I sat down and talked to them. And they gave us the money to do a feasibility study. The feasibility study was three days of Linda, Brenda, myself, and Jack Bolton sitting around and going crazy trying to work it out - budgets, everything. Brenda is by far the most experienced and practical of all of us. When this man came back, gave him a three or four pages of hard questions, none of which he ever answered.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Yes. That was the end of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That was it. It. We were far more serious than they were, far more serious. Well, what we realized was that, you know, the audience for Creske's is not going to be the audience for a contemporary museum. So wait a minute. They were hoping to pull more people into Creske's.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. Doesn't work that way.

MS. TUCKER: So by the time this all broke up, and we were all totally frustrated and had been fighting about whether to have a community arts gallery or not or it would be this institution, where the budgets were --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: You know, Brenda was - Brenda is good in math, you know. Linda, I think, has finally decided that what she really wanted was just to work in a major museum and the hell with it. [Laughter] I don't know. Nothing was ever done about it. I got fired. I sat down and really thought hard for about 10 minutes. [Laughter] I thought really hard. And I said, well, I never want to work for anybody else again. Oh, I have to tell you of the horrible things before that. There was a whole other thing before that, which was that I went - when I was at the Whitney and remember I was unhappy, I went to Henry Hopkins in San Francisco as he had moved to San Francisco by then. And I said, "Look. I would like to paint," and he said he thought it wasn't a very good idea, you know. "I would like to make you a branch of the San Francisco Museum in New York. You give me stationery and 10,000 dollars, and let me see what I can do." So we really talked about it. We had many meetings there. And he was very interested, very excited. I needed more than 10,000 dollars, obviously.

MR. CUMMINGS: A lot.

MS. TUCKER: But I didn't need a whole lot to do it. Ten thousand was, what? Three or four times as much as I had to start the New Museum. And I said, that would make the San Francisco Museum the only museum in the country that existed in more than one place. You would have access to all kinds of information and work from New York. New York would be able to have your shows. It would be an incredible thing - very little cost or effort for you.

MR. CUMMINGS: Except it would grow.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: It would grow.

MS. TUCKER: Of course. But I was willing to be the fundraiser. I was willing to do exactly what he was doing. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: In my mind, I said, okay. After this went on and on and on, I said I'd give it another - I'll give him another month to answer. And if he can't answer by then, that's it. I'll scratch it. And in that month, he didn't answer. And my scratching it was, well, why not do it myself? Ha! You know, if I had all those plans and ideas and so forth, why not just do it?

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm, right.

MS. TUCKER: So I just did it. And I remember talking to Jack Fowler in the lobby, and he said, "What are you going to do?" and I said, "I'm starting a museum." And he looked at me real seriously, and he said, "I think you're crazy. But it's wonderful."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Everybody told me I was crazy - everybody. Practically the only person besides Fowler who really took me absolutely seriously - besides Tim - was Tom Messer. But I have also a very funny story about that. It was just after I was fired, I was invited to a lunch at the French Consul, partly, I assume, because I spoke French. It was for the people who had built Bobul [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: So I didn't know, I thought it was a little buffet, you know. I went trotting up there. And what I considered - I was teaching at Columbia that morning. And I was dressed in my compromise outfit. It was a very elegant dress with a big stain on the front.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I see.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] And it was a tunic, not a dress. So I walked in and discovered it was an extremely formal sit-down luncheon for 14 people - I mean, very formal, you know, five courses, different wines.

MR. CUMMINGS: Big huge thing, huh?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, tres chic. So the first thing as I walk in, I'm introduced to everybody, and the woman says, "Ah, Mademoiselle Whitney." Right? No one knows I had been fired. And so I walk up, and Tom Messer is standing with this group of distinguished French gentlemen, and bless Tom Messer, who is very, very diplomatic. And he introduced me around, and he said, "Well, what are you going to do now that you're leaving the Whitney?" He's very diplomatic. And I said, "I'm going to start a museum of contemporary art in New York." And all of these French gentlemen just stopped right in the [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Looked at me, a blank face, and burst into these hysterical peals of laughter. Ah ha ha ha ha ha! Like that. It was wonderful.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: So they quieted down after awhile and turned away. And Tom proceeded to --

MR. CUMMINGS: He must have lost it, too.

MS. TUCKER: Huh?

MR. CUMMINGS: He must have lost it, too.

MS. TUCKER: Well, he proceeds to ask me a lot of questions about how, where, when, certain problems he thought I would have to face.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I always remember arguing - I remember arguing with him about bureaucratic procedures, indeed about what might happen. But he was very serious, and he was not the least bit patronizing to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, I wouldn't - yeah, I would agree with you. But he has thought more about what museums do than most directors.

MS. TUCKER: Well, that's what I thought. And that's what we talked about. The luncheon was really a disaster. The first thing I did was, when I had a glass of wine in my hand, I blinked and my contact lens moved over. So I went to --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And spilled the wine all over, then had to correct the contact lens.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: They sat me next to Monsieur Bordars [phonetic], Rodair Bordars, who was the presidente [inaudible]. And Monsieur Bordars could have cared less to talk to Mademoiselle Tucker.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: And I also made some kind of a terrible gaffe in missing - never try to joke in French, even if your French is good. We were talking about food. Monsieur Bordars is enormously fat. And he said to me - something - what was it? Something about what the Americans were interested in. And I'm sorry. I can't even remember the joke now. But I said that Americans basically ate sports equipment, something like that, and equip de sports. I think I used it wrong. And it meant something else. And I suddenly thought, my god.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Oh dear, "What have I said?" Because it was met by just the most profound silence, the most

profound silence. I just [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Cold gaffe, you know. And across from the old gent, across from me, I was sitting on the wrong side of the table, and I'm deaf in one ear. So I did not hear the entire conversation at the table at large. I mean, Monsieur Bordars and this old guy is sitting across from me. And he kept saying, "Well, we've just acquired a David," and his French was terrible. Nous a vole. Acurele. Jamais de vamais d'accurele en David." [all three sentences phonetic] Fine. Okay. "Who's we?" I kept yelling at him. "Who's we?" And he finally turned around to me and said, "The Met." And I said, "Well, who are you?" I couldn't see his last name and he took his place card and folded it into a little airplane and threw it at me.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: And it said Douglas Dillon. [Laughter] I said, "Oh, I see who 'we' is." By then I was [inaudible]. I didn't care anymore. I mean, I had done everything. I cut my duck with the wrong side of the knife. I mean, it was just --

MR. CUMMINGS: I love Douglas Dillon and throwing the paper airplane.

MS. TUCKER: That was pretty good. But anyway, Douglas Dillon was another one who was very interesting and very nice. After lunch, he took me aside, and he introduced himself properly. And he said, "What are you going to do?" and so forth. And I said I was going to make this museum. And he - we talked for a few minutes. And he wished me a lot of luck. And he was very - quite serious about it and also very humorous, very nice. So that was my lunch that day. But the whole - this whole business of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what did you do when you decided that's what you were going to do? What kind of procedure? Who do you call? Where do you go? How did you start?

MS. TUCKER: Well, I --

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, you had to have a place, the people.

MS. TUCKER: The first thing I did was I called a lawyer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: That's the first thing. And I said, I'm going to - it was a - actually, Allen Schwartzman was working as a curatorial secretary. And his father is a very, very good tax lawyer at a huge firm. I called him up. And I said, "I'm going to start a museum. I would like to know what the procedure is to incorporate. How can I do it? How many trustees do I have to have? How much money?" And he - we talked for a long time. And then he finally said, "Well, here's how I think we should begin." So I knew I had him. He has done all of our legal work free of charge and brilliantly and well for us. The next thing that happened was I started the incorporation process. I got one trustee. My first trustee was Allen Goldring, who is a businessman. I called him, and I said, "I don't need somebody else who knows about art. I want somebody who knows about business. I would like you to be a trustee."

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you know him?

MS. TUCKER: I met him at a young presidents organization meeting in Acapulco, where I gave a lecture. And he was my sponsor. He was the [inaudible] member who was instructed to take me and Timmy around. "Show these kids a good time."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: So - and I absolutely fell in love with him and his wife. They were wonderful. So they became friends. I had an intern, a young woman who worked for me for several summers whose name was Buffy Easton. And she had been sent to me by Margo Barr who taught at Spence who always sent me each year a bright student to work. And Buffy's father called me and said he had to dispense of a Jasper Johns, so he wanted to dispense of a Jasper Johns and a Cornell, and how should he do it? And I told him what I thought. And I said, "You know, I'm leaving the Whitney. I've been fired." And he said no he didn't; what was I going to do? And I said I'm going to start a museum in New York. And he said, "Oh, are you really serious?" "Sure." He said, "Get up." And he turned it off. And I said, "Thank you very much." And I said, "I would send you a prospectus." So I sent him a prospectus. And he called me back and said, "It turns out this is really interesting. I see you're quite serious. I'd like to introduce you to somebody who might possibly be able to help." I'd never met him. "Why don't you meet at the City Athletic Club." I went up to have dinner with these two unknown gentlemen, and by the time the evening was over, one of them had given me 600 and the other had given me 2500 dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hm.

MS. TUCKER: Hm. And I said, "Thank you very much."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Laughter] And then I went and talked to Julian Prato at the Fine Arts Building, and I rented an office. I got the cheapest one I could. I paid him a year's rent in advance. I took 1000 dollars of my severance money, put it down, got the office. Edward Fred wrote "The New Museum" in his incredible graphics on the door. We started borrowing furniture, borrowing typewriters. I used the 600 to set up the telephone system, got a designer to design the stationery, and we began. I took the two young people - my intern, who was Susan Logan, and the curatorial secretary, Allen Schwartzman - took them with me. A Japanese woman decided she wanted to work, so she came. This is now another whole long story.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Because the museum has been through many, many changes. And some of the things that happened have been very difficult.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. TUCKER: But I began without - I began by assuming that there was a tremendous need for a skilled, or eventually skilled, and interested professional staff in that area. And what the hell? What the hell? So nobody was paid, you know. Now - now that I took a staff of eight people and everybody is paid except me, and 3200 payroll every two weeks and an irascible board who likes to know what's going on, and they want financial reports and an accountant and a preparer therein, in a very short amount of time. I would like to take a break because - yeah.

[A RECESS WAS TAKEN.]

MS. TUCKER: Well, so what happened was that the museum started that way with no - I mean none of us having any experience, and very idealistic, very, you know, non-hierarchic. It's going to be a wonderful place to work. We'll borrow spaces. And in fact, we did do three exhibitions, and we promised to do catalogs with all the exhibitions. And we did. We offset them. And it was hot and tiny in that place. But we still managed. It became clear that the building was going to be sold. And the day that - I was sitting here in my house with the trustee, with Allen Goldring, and with the, at that time, development officer, who I subsequently fired, trying to figure out how, where, when, and what. And I got a call saying the building had been sold and we had to vacate in two months. And I said okay. And I got a call 10 minutes later saying that the New School was giving us that space that we have now on [inaudible]. I had been with Zira to see the president because Zira had thought it would be a good thing. Macani [phonetic] was retiring. I told him if they gave me 12.5 a year I could make it. Totally unrealistic.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Well, I didn't know anything, you know? Well, I'd spend the 12.5 a year - I mean, that's crazy. But what it meant, you see, is they give me 12.5 a year now. And it just offsets my telephone expenses and so forth, and I don't - still don't have any obligation to them; whereas if they funded the whole thing, look what would happen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: So it turned out beautifully. Beautifully.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh I see. Do what do they call you in there?

MS. TUCKER: Nothing. [Laughter] They call it Zira's project. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Oh I see.

MS. TUCKER: I don't know. I truly don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I mean, do they list you in their publications and catalogs and things?

MS. TUCKER: No. No. No. We are completely autonomous.

MR. CUMMINGS: But the school just pays you that to stay in there?

MS. TUCKER: Yeah, to stay in there. Well, we've renovated for them, and, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: Well, we won't be there more than three years, I don't think. I know we're already looking to - I want to phase it, 2 to 3 million dollars. Two to three million dollars to get a small - so we can have a small endowment fund. And I'm starting this year. I'll probably try and hire a fundraising firm and a big benefit and all that. I mean, I'm very - I don't want to raise money. I mean, I don't want to be one of those organizations.

MR. CUMMINGS: What happens then?

MS. TUCKER: I don't want to be an organization that just goes hello and goodbye. I really want us to be solidly based. And I do not have any realistic way of assessing the financial situation right now. I've never been in it before. I am not knowledgeable about budgets, about fundraising. I am very sure that this is something that is needed and wanted. And if I can get the people who don't even know that they need and want it to need and want it, then I'll be all right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: There are a lot of interesting problems with the museum. Anyway, we moved to the space. We completely redid the space ourselves so that I think it's quite beautiful. Michael Cortland designed it. We designed the walls. We've had to learn a lot. And I really have had to learn how to be an administrator and manager. And we all have to do everything. So that, you know, one person ends up being - doing all the registrar work, organizing the installations, looking at all the art that comes into the office. I mean, it's just - and doing all the catalogs. Another person does all membership, volunteers, interns, openings, and all of the administrative work that involves finances. I mean, it's a constant overlap.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find your other trustees?

MS. TUCKER: Well, a year I asked, a long time ago. It became clear that once - that I was going to change from being a foundation to be a not-for-profit organization. You have to have a certain number of trustees. And I had thought, idealistically, to have one artist, one patron, one businessperson, one art historian.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And one person from outside New York. So the outside New York one was Jack Bolton. The patron was Vera List. I called Vera, and I said, "I would like you to be on the board of this museum because I think you really care about art and because that's why we're doing this." And she said yeah, and so there she was. Okay. Brian O'Doherty, as an artist, who is also knowledgeable about lots of other things, myself as the art historian, and Allen Goldring, who is the businessman. I added Henry Luce recently and Jaclyn Rothschild-Grosvenor by asking them. Luce had expressed - although he's not very interested in contemporary art, he had showed up at the "Bad Painting" show, was a great supporter of Jensen. And he and I really hit it off. I admire his honesty, and I like his acumen, his business acumen. And I also think that he and his wife really are very supportive of the mad-dog aspect of the museum, that it started like that. And I asked him. I just - we were at lunch, and I was asking him about his experience on other boards. And he said he was not on a museum board. And I said, "Why on earth not?" And he said, "No one ever asked me." I said, "Would you like to be on a museum board?" and he said, "Yes, I would."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: Just like that. I was overjoyed. He had been thinking about it, obviously, for a long time or he wouldn't have agreed.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: He was not cavalier about that stuff. So I feel very, very good about that. I have a very small board. I'd like to expand it a little further.

MR. CUMMINGS: Carefully.

MS. TUCKER: Hm?

MR. CUMMINGS: Carefully.

MS. TUCKER: Very carefully.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I also, in part, have an attitude that nothing can go wrong, although everything goes wrong. I don't know where this attitude that nothing can go wrong comes from. And we're near killing ourselves with our [inaudible]. I had worked harder than I thought a human being could work when I was at the Whitney. But there is nothing in my experience ever to compare with this, or in anybody else's. One of my staff, who is very young, has already developed this, you know, stomach - spastic colon because of nerves and tension and overwork.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But now, what do you make a living on? Because you obviously can't live on that amount of money.

MS. TUCKER: Oh, I don't get any salary from this, no. I make a living lecturing around the country. I don't make much of a living. In fact, I owe my soul to American Express.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible] thousands of dollars in debt. And I own the New Museum movable walls. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Useful things like that.

MS. TUCKER: Yes. I mean, what are you going to do, you know? Five tons of movable walls. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Oh.

MS. TUCKER: But, listen, I'm fortunate. I'm very fortunate that I can make a living, meager as it is, lecturing. Not everybody has that ability. Not only that, I can make a living lecturing and have it benefit the museum or at least spread the word about the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MS. TUCKER: I get to see a lot of art and a lot of things in different parts of the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: You travel.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah. The only thing is, the older I get, the harder it gets on my physical system because what I do is, you know, I'm in town Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday. Thursday afternoon I get on a plane, give a lecture Friday, go to studio Saturday, come back in time for theater Sunday, try to write a catalog in between that. And I have to do all this fundraising. And you know, I mean, I'm like the typical New Yorker [inaudible] have a book. Something dreadful may happen to me. [Laughter] But I'm not complaining about it. I assume that I will be able to get some salary sometime in the future. I just think that it's the most - the truth of the matter is, it's the most exciting thing I've ever done. It's the most exciting thing I think that's happened in terms of art in New York for a really long time. I'm very - you know, I really feel that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Are you totally open to ideas? Do you have program development activities? Do you know where it's going to go, or is it still very arbitrary?

MS. TUCKER: Well, part of this help is in not making the decisions so far ahead of time that you don't have the room for thinking creatively. And we don't have a specific program. We're trying to accept that it's - I must have said this 900 times. But to give exposure to works of art, artists, ideas that wouldn't - that deserve it and wouldn't ordinarily have it, and to fill this enormous gap that's been left by the fact that cultural institutions are tending increasingly toward box-office shows, toward shows which will be popular [inaudible] raise a lot of money.

[A TELEPHONE RING TONE IS HEARD.]

MS. TUCKER: I have to answer that.

[OFF THE RECORD]

MS. TUCKER: The only other thing I wanted to say about the museum is that this was started at the extreme edge of idealism and of optimism. And we don't know whether it's going to work. It is working, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: It is working. We don't know how long it's going to work, under what circumstances it's going to

work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, are you going to take exhibitions, organize elsewhere? Or --

MS. TUCKER: No, probably not for awhile. But we certainly have in guest curators and trying to expand what we can do. The point is that when you start a museum, it seems to me that there are lots of other places that can take the exhibitions organized elsewhere. What we need to do is, while we're in this small state, begin to perfect our own skills and find out what the staff is like, what their interests are, how their interests differ from each other's. There's a lot of pain because we have to do what no other place has to do. We have to do everything. It's not a gallery and not an alternative state. It has to be done with the same degree of professionalism, and you have to do condition reports and alternative state doesn't do condition reports.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But are you going to then - as you organize an exhibition, would you travel it to California?

MS. TUCKER: We would hope so. We hope to. But that also takes an amazing amount of work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: My idea about this is step by step. Learn it, do it well, see how far you can go, don't bite off more than you can chew, although of course, we already have.

MR. CUMMINGS: Of course.

MS. TUCKER: And most important, I think, is to get this museum to a point where it is no longer - where it no longer has the reputation of being my museum, because I am the obvious one who started it, and I'm the most experienced person, and so forth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MS. TUCKER: But where it is a museum that not only functions without me, which it can do to a large extent even now, but where the people who are involved with it have - where the museum as an entity becomes more than any of us. And I think that's the next thing. But who knows? Who knows what's going to happen? I've said this before. Unless the museum simply folded tomorrow, every second of it would have been worth it. I mean, I think it's the most interesting thing I've ever done. And I think that each of the people on the staff feels similarly for themselves for different reasons. So without being unrealistic about the exhaustion --

MR. CUMMINGS: Burning out.

MS. TUCKER: [Inaudible], you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: It's terrific.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: And it was a joke. I can't remember who put it in my mouth, right? But someone said, "Well, everyone knew the deal is, you were filling a gap. But who knew that it was the Grand Canyon?"

MR. CUMMINGS: But, you know, what's the gap? How do you define that? What are the elements of the vacancy?

MS. TUCKER: The elements of the gap are that nobody really is able to - able or willing to take these incredible chances, to assume that a museum, with all of its seriousness and scholarship and so forth, the museums can afford to venture into the unknown and uncharted. The other thing is that there are thousands and thousands of artists in New York and elsewhere - no one wants to see their work. No one - it's not just the question of showing the work, as a museum. It's also a question of the support, the dialog, the encouragement, our own education, ways of facilitating certain things. I think it's really tragic that artists have to be salespeople, businesspeople. It seems to me they should --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's basically small business.

MS. TUCKER: They should do their own work, and there should be other people to take care of other processes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, and they become business - you know, dealers do that, sometimes.

MS. TUCKER: Sometimes. But for us, we don't have any ulterior motives, in that sense. We don't have to earn a

living from the art. We have to earn a living from the national endowment [inaudible]. [Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Right. Yeah.

MS. TUCKER: But I'm very optimistic about the museum. I think more because I just leave them the whole thing. So [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you feel it's an enormous extension of you, more than even being involved with the Whitney? Or do you feel [inaudible]?

MS. TUCKER: Oh, it's not an extension of me. I mean, it's - no, I don't feel like it's an enormous extension of me. I feel as though the parts that came from me were a small - you know, a seed, a germ, a small thing that blossomed into something that is - I was like a kid. What am I talking about, right? It has its own character, its own means, its own ways of doing things that are very, very independent of me. I mean, I hope I give it some guidance, direction, the benefit of whatever I know now. But that's not perfect.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MS. TUCKER: No, the thing that's so wonderful about it is that it surprises me. It's an individual sense outside of any control that I have over it or any expectations.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's reached that level already?

MS. TUCKER: Oh yeah. Yeah. Sometimes that's frightening. You want to go back to the time when you could really see what everything was - what was going on and who was doing what and listen to all the phone calls and make sure and read the letters and make sure they went out right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MS. TUCKER: It's way beyond that now. In order for me to get information, I have to go to people in our museum who know more than I do about it. And that means it's gone someplace.

MR. CUMMINGS: Terrific.

MS. TUCKER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Great. Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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