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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Edith Wyle, 1993 March 9-September 7

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Transcript

Interview

EW: EDITH WYLE
SE: SHARON EMANUELLI

SE: This is an interview for the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution. The interview is with Edith R. Wyle, on March 9th, Tuesday, 1993, at Mrs. Wyle's home in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles. The interviewer is Sharon K. Emanuelli. This is Tape 1, Side A. Okay, Edith, we're going to start talking about your early family background.

EW: Okay.

SE: What's your birth date and place of birth?

EW: Place of birth, San Francisco. Birth date, are you ready for this? April 21st, 1918-though next to Beatrice [Wood-Ed.] that doesn't seem so old.

SE: No, she's having her 100th birthday, isn't she?

EW: Right.

SE: Tell me about your grandparents. I guess it's your maternal grandparents that are especially interesting?

EW: No, they all were. I mean, if you'd call that interesting. They were all anarchists. They came from Russia.

SE: Together? All together?

EW: No, but they knew each other. There was a group of Russians-Lithuanians and Russians-who were all revolutionaries that came over here from Russia, and they considered themselves intellectuals and they really were self-educated, but they were very learned. Some very famous people came out of that group in terms of artists and playwrights, different kinds of people. Musicians, many musicians.

SE: Do you remember any of those names?

EW: Well, Arthur Schwartz comes to mind, and he was a motion picture director, producer, wasn't he?

SE: I don't really know.

EW: Sidney Howard was another one. These are both in the motion picture world. I know they were out of that group. I'm trying to think of the. . . . Oh, dear. I'm having trouble with names lately, so I can't give you the names of some of them.

SE: When did they come?

EW: Oh, let's see, it must have been in the late 1800s [1880s?]. My mother was born in 1860, so it was before that, because she was born in America, and my two aunts, her sisters, were born over there, and then my father's parents also came around the same time. And they formed these Brodsva groups in New York, and they used to get together and read books, and sing songs for each other, play the piano for each other, violin, all the instruments, and it sounded like they had a marvelous time. And most of them were anarchists and had revolutionary discussions. And there were really two kinds of anarchists. There were the kinds that were the bomb throwers, and the ones who really just advocated changing things and doing away with legalities, but were not the bomb throwers. At least I can say that my half of the family were not the bomb throwers.

SE: How did they feel about the United States? They just thought there were too many laws?

EW: No, this was mostly a reaction to Russia, of course, but they carried that over to here, and they didn't believe in anything like legalized marriage. They were against that, and so they lived together as common-law husbands and wives, and I must say that they stuck together more than any contemporary people you can think about, except that there were love affairs going on, and I know that my grandmother on the paternal side was very much in love with. . . . Oh, god, what's his name now? Alexander Berkman. But anyhow he was supposed to kill Carnegie. And he missed. He planned to shoot him. Carnegie was gone, but Frick was there, and he wounded him.

SE: Was Berkman a Russian also?

EW: He was Russian, but he was upper class, and he was not a Jew, which my grandparents all were. However, they were also totally nonreligious. They didn't believe in organized religion, although I know that they started out by having to go to synagogue. I mean they lived in ghettos, so. . . .

SE: As children they were raised religiously.

EW: Yes, right, they had to. I've heard stories about my grandfather on the maternal side. . . . I heard most of these things from my mother. My father, whose family life I thought was even more interesting, didn't talk much, and I wish I'd gotten more information from him. But I know that one of the most famous anarchists, Johann Most, was on his side of the family. He did throw a bomb, I think. [chuckles] I'm not sure.

SE: Here or in Russia?

EW: Here, back East, and I remember when I was in high school taking a course in civics we had to write papers on well-known people in America and deliver them. Somebody chose Johann Most for his paper, and when I heard that I sat up with such pride thinking, "Gee, that's my great uncle." He then began describing him as the worst criminal that ever lived. [laughter] So I did not own up to being related in any way, although I was not a blood relative anyhow. [laughs]

SE: You don't think you were a blood relative?

EW: Well, it's so mixed up when you don't have legal marriages. I might have been; I don't know. I really don't. Anyhow, music was something that meant a great deal to my grandparents.

SE: Can you give me their names?

EW: My mother's mother was named Edith-after whom I was named-or Yudif, as they call her in Russian. And her husband's name was Nathan Robinovitch, and I was named Edith after my grandmother and Natalie after my grandfather. And the other grandparents were. . . .

SE: Do you know their last name?

EW: Rubin. Well, it was Robinovich.

SE: Both of them?

EW: They went by the same name. Sorry. I don't know her maiden name. Robinovitch is all I know. On the paternal side, my grandmother's name was Anna and Minken was her maiden name. And they were called Rovinsky. But when he arrived at Ellis Island he changed it to Robinson to be American.

SE: What was his first name?

EW: Samuel. And an interesting side of that is that my father, Louis, when he became a musician, changed it back to Rovinsky, because it was a better name for a musician. But when he gave that up and became a dentist he changed it back to Robinson.

SE: So your grandparents also were musicians?

EW: No, they weren't musicians at all. They just loved music. They loved it. And it was so much a part of their lives that my mother has told me that her father insisted that she and her sister study instruments. My aunt Elena had to study the violin, and she was terrible at it apparently, according to my mother. And my mother, who was the youngest, studied the piano and was exceptional from the start. So my aunt Elena studied violin with the same teacher that my father studied with in New York. And my mother's father used to say, "Why can't you play like Louis does?" That's my father's name. He drove her crazy till he finally let her stop.

SE: And that's how they met?

EW: Well, they knew each other as small children.

SE: Do you remember their teacher? Was he of any consequence?

EW: Not that one, no, I don't. I wish I knew a lot more about all that, because I've been wanting to write their memoirs for the rest of our family. I've got all the available papers, but nothing really interesting has come out of it.

SE: So your parents were then both musicians?

EW: My parents became musicians. My mother. . . . Well, my mother was orphaned by the time she was ten. Both her parents died of pulmonary diseases. My mother was orphaned at ten, and I lost my grandparent on the paternal side by the time I was ten. Okay. I'd better stick with the grandmother on the maternal side to begin with. Mother's parents had started. . . . The father started a dairy, as he called it, which was a shop in New York City, and Mother loved to reminisce about how immaculately clean it always was and how he was. . . . He was a hard taskmaster apparently, but she adored him. He was going blind. She read all the classics to him, all the Russian classics to him every night. Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, etc. This at the age of eight years. She was gorgeous. She was exquisite-a very beautiful child, and the pampered baby of the family. She had piano lessons. Nathan had saved enough money, when he knew he was going to die, that was put aside for the three girls, and they made an arrangement with another family that was in this group (which I think was called a Brodsva). The people were the Siebel family, S-i-e-b-e-l. They were close friends, and they planned to take the three children and the trust fund would help to support them, and also help maintain the Siebel family, so the three girls unfortunately had to move in with them.

SE: What was your mother's name?

EW: My mother's name was Rose.

SE: Rose Robinson?

EW: Well, it was Rosalia Clementivna Robinovitch in the beginning. [laughs] But of course it became just Rose Rubin. She was very unhappy living in that house. She had to share a bed with one of the daughters of the house, who was very big and fat. Mother claimed that she was like Cinderella there. She was doing all the cleaning and dish washing and all that stuff all the time, and there was nothing but misery there. One day she managed to get hold of a quarter or a nickel or something and she went. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: Anyhow, I was always intrigued by this story because she took the nickel and took the streetcar, trolley-they lived uptown New York-and she took the trolley downtown to the New York Conservatory of Music (now Julliard) and walked in. A lady saw her and asked, "What are you here for, little girl?" She answered, "I'm here because I want to have a scholarship." I can't believe Mother did this.

SE: At what age? Like twelve?

EW: Ten. And they said, "Well, the trials for scholarships are over for this year, but if you'd like to see the man that. . . ." I think he headed the school-I'm not sure. Alexander Lambert, who was a very famous musician-more of a teacher, wrote many books on the piano. He was very well known. He knew all the great artists in the music world. They gave her his address, and she took herself to his house, which was a big brownstone on Lexington Avenue. She rang the doorbell, and made the same speech. "I want a scholarship." And he said, "I don't give scholarships. I don't teach much. Come in and play for me anyhow." So she did, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I will give you three lessons a week if your sister will pay for one." Her older sister had a job being a dress designer at that moment. "If she can pay for two of them or one of them," or something like that. And her sister, of course, said she would, so Mother started studying with Alexander Lambert. And she became something like his ward. I mean, he really raised her. She used to perform for all the world-famous pianists, such as Paderewski and Joseph Hoffmann. Those people came to his parties all the time. Lambert would have her perform. He then became upset about the middy blouses and skirts she wore and dressed her for the concerts. He took her to Carnegie Hall to the concerts. When she was older she fell in love with my father, but passionately. He was in California at this point, in San Francisco, and Mother went to visit him. He suggested that they get married. When she told Lambert this he was not happy at all about it. But she made her choice and she came out to San Francisco where they were legally married. This upset his parents a great deal, to think that they would get legally married. And it certainly made me happy when I found it out later on. Anyhow, by this time my father was a professional musician, and he was very good. I think he was. . . . Most people seemed to think that he, as a musician, was probably better than Mother, although I thought she was superb also. She really was a fine pianist-not like a lot of women pianists I've heard who sort of slither around the piano, but she always had a firm, wonderful touch and a sensitivity that I thought was marvelous.

SE: Did she ever play professionally?

EW: Oh, yes, they both did. They played together a lot, and had tremendous battles, because they always were interpreting the music differently. And they loved chamber music. I grew up with chamber music in the house, which was one of the really great recollections of my life. I loved going to bed as a little child and hearing it in the living room. And they always had fine musicians and composers who came to the house for music. But my father was the first viola of the San Francisco Philharmonic, and for a while he was the concertmaster as well.

SE: Do you remember what period of time this was?

EW: I was born.

SE: So it was in the twenties, teens or twenties?

EW: Oh, no, it was in the. . . . Began probably around 1920, 1919.

SE: The twenties, right?

EW: When I was on the Board of Cal Arts, there was another trustee by the name of Alan Becker. He's probably still on the board at Cal Arts. He's a developer in San Francisco, and he was elected head of the Art Archives of San Francisco. I once told him about my dad having been with the San Francisco Symphony, and so one day he decided to look up some of the programs from that period in the Archives. Oh, he was also in a quartet called the Persinger String Quartet. That was equivalent of being in the Budapest today, or the Julliard, you know; it was a very famous quartet. Louis Persinger was the man who taught Yehudi Menuhin, from childhood up. And getting into that quartet was a real coup.

SE: What was Persinger's first name?

EW: Louis, same as my dad's. And Dad was a member of the quartet for quite a while. But he was concerned about the lack of security, him being a musician, and he always had really wanted to be a doctor. He always claimed that his parents, his mother, who was a real. . . . She was a matriarch and she insisted on his being a violinist. I always admired her a lot. I used to try to fashion myself after her. My mother just hated her, however, because of the tight hold she had on my dad. [laughter] But I thought she sounded like a great gal. She was. . . . Well, I think the reason that I liked her so much is that she had two sets of Ibsen. I still have one of those sets, and, I mean, I'd open them up and find pressed flowers in the pages. She knew every word of Pushkin by heart, of all his works. And these kinds of things really impressed me a great deal. But she really had an Oedipal thing with her son and made life very miserable for my mother. So anyhow, Dad decided that he needed more security. He knew he couldn't afford the time to learn to be a doctor. But he could be a dentist, so he got a job with, I believe, the Geary Theater, which is still there in San Francisco. It was either the Geary or the Curran. It was one of the two of those, and I think it was the Geary. Conducting the orchestra. That was a legitimate theater, with plays including Ethel Barrymore, etc. He conducted at night. He could go to dental college during the day, University of California. He did his research, his studying, in the green room during intermissions-or while the play was in progress. He went through dental college that way. This was after I was born. A very funny story about his college studies is that when they were taking the last final exam in dental college he was unable to take it with the rest of the students because of a concert at that particular time; so he had special permission to make up this test by himself at another date. Well, when the rest of the students in his class went in the professor told them the honor system would be in effect as they identified things with microscopes. The professor left the room, and the students began comparing notes immediately, which, of course, they were not supposed to do. When he came back in and found out that they were doing this, the entire class was flunked-except my father because he wasn't there.

SE: That's great.

EW: However, he was very good as well, and they tried to get him to stay and become a professor in the college, but he didn't, which is too bad.

SE: Well, he probably felt the pressure to earn a better living.

EW: No, the reason for that was his family got in the way again. They were living in L.A. at this time, and my grandfather had gone into the insurance business and was doing very, very well. Aetna Insurance, you remember. And he persuaded my dad to come down and go into the insurance business with him, which was a terrible mistake. My father was no business man at all, and we moved down here.

SE: Do you remember what year that was?

EW: Well, I must have been about five or six. I was six years old when we moved down here. Right, six. And that did not last long. He decided he had to get back into being a dentist, but even there he was not a good business man, though he was an excellent dentist. Building up a practice was difficult. And then the Depression began to creep in, and they really had a hard time. So he began playing in the studios at night as a musician. Now there all the very cream of the musicians also played in the studioes, and as long as I can remember of his life, that's what Dad did: played in the studios at night. When he started there were no unions, and so they could call him at any hour of the night. At two in the morning they'd call and say "Get here," and he would have to go, and then he'd have to go in his office the next day and be a dentist, which was a killer. And why I think he didn't live a very long life, actually. When there was finally a musicians' union it was much better, and then he worked largely for one person: Alfred Newman, who was well known, Al Newman. For years he was the first violin there and/or violist. With. . . . United Artists was where Alfred Newman was primarily. And at one point he [EW's father-Ed.] was the conductor himself, and he went on location to Canada with some film company. I can't remember. But George Brent and Lois Moran were actors in the film. Mother taught piano to make a living-a lot. But the

pleasure they had was in the chamber music, and then they did sometimes prepare musicals when I was growing up and had people over, and that was amazing.

SE: They did musicals in your home?

EW: They would have them at home, and those were great because we had a long living room that extended like that, like this [gesturing-Trans.], and they would set up chairs. Mother was a fantastic cook. She was the best cook. Anybody that knew her will agree with me. They used to send their cooks over to be trained by her because she was really very good, and I. . . . In fact, I'm going to give you some schnecken for lunch, which I'm testing, which I sent for because they said it was the best I'll have ever eaten, and that was what she made and I want to see if they're as good. . . . I don't think there's anything that was as good as what she used to make.

SE: Not in your memory, I'm sure.

EW: Right. And she had insomnia-and migraines. I grew up with both of those things. As an only child, that was a big burden, because when she had a migraine if you were in the front of the house-and it was a long house-when she was sick in bed in the back, if I tiptoed I was making too much noise. We had to talk in whispers, and it happened so frequently. The only thing that would help her was morphine occasionally, and she was just a wreck from it. When she didn't sleep, I could always tell that she hadn't slept if I smelled schnecken that was being baked in the kitchen, which she would do during the night. But I also knew that I had to be careful of what I said to her, because anything could lead to an argument and we had plenty of them. She and I fought a lot all during my growing up period. She was a perfectionist. The house was microscopically clean and. . . . I felt as though I could never do anything right, ever. That was my entire. . . . I felt like I was the bad example the whole time I was growing up for all the other children that were around.

SE: I'm sure not to their parents, only to you.

EW: I couldn't play the piano as well as some of the children, and things like that, couldn't sew. Another thing is that she made all my clothes, and later on wove the material for some beautiful garments.

SE: Oh, my goodness.

EW: She was very good. She was a very capable and gifted lady.

SE: So is that your first introduction to. . . .

EW: Textiles?

SE: . . . textiles?

EW: Well, when she got around to weaving I was grown up. I think I even had gotten married when she started studying weaving, and I know she made a beautiful evening skirt for me. She then wove two little herringbone coats with velvet, and tailored them for me. She knew how to tailor. She tailored them for Nancy and Diana, my daughters, when they were little. And I can remember them. I wish I'd kept them. In fact, I can't understand how I didn't keep those coats. They were beautiful. And I had, as you can probably gather, a really ambivalent relationship-real love-hate one with her. Because she was a fascinating woman also, and she was very self-educated because she dropped out before graduating from high school because Alexander Lambert pulled her out. And so most of the things that she knew she taught herself, and retained what she learned. She retained things in a way that I envy, because I don't retain. I was an English major. I remember that when I was in college the first couple of years, when I was in college down here at UCLA, she took a lot of the same classes.

SE: How interesting.

EW: And read a lot of the same books, and she was remarkable at that.

SE: Did that bother you that she did?

EW: I don't think so, though I must have been jealous of her retentive abilities. And I don't know if you remember; she used to show up at some of the lectures at The Egg and the Eye. No, this was before your. . . .

SE: I think she came to a few in the early days.

EW: But way back she came to them, and she used to always ask questions and I used to get embarrassed, as I always got embarrassed with Mother. Mother always embarrassed me.

SE: Because her questions weren't. . . .

EW: No, because she was much. . . . First of all, she was very demonstrative, very Russian in this way, and I'm not. My father and I were not. I've always kept it inside and so had he, and I always thought that was much better.

SE: So you felt she was just too dramatic and. . . .

EW: And Mother, she would have a tremendous migraine headache, and we'd all be worrying about her and there would be a party in the evening that I would be invited to. This happened to a lot of them that I wasn't invited to, I'm sure, but I'm thinking of some that I went to. She'd get dressed up and look beautiful, go to this party, and become the life of the party because she felt it was her duty, she used to tell me. "I have to do that; I can't. . . ." But it wasn't her duty at all.

SE: Do you mean it helped her forget the migraines?

EW: Whatever it was, when she was home we suffered; when we got there, she was a flirt. My father was number one as far as she was concerned. She always, always loved him enormously, but my father had his. . . . Apparently he had a few affairs when I was very little. I'm not aware of it. He was very handsome. They were a handsome couple. They were very beautiful. And he was tall and when he had hair, he had red, curly hair.

SE: That's where you got your red hair, then.

EW: Yes, I got it from him. I look like him. I used to want to be like him in every possible way. I tried to even write. . . . My handwriting is as close to his as I could get it. My mother used to say that probably the reason that he looked so good all the time in my eyes is because I saw so little of him. That may be so, but I worshipped him. I always did. As many daughters do with their fathers I guess.

SE: Did you do special things with him?

EW: Not a great deal, no. We were together as a threesome a great deal. We went to concerts together. I loved music. I always loved it. I was not good at the piano at all. I studied piano, because I had to. Not with them, not with her, but with a person who lived on the other side of the street-behind our house rather. I used to go through a hedge and get to her house from the back, I remember. And I was just not good, and I wanted to be, but I. . . . I'm sure that there was an emotional problem that got in my way, and when I would come to practice I'd sit down at the piano and all of a sudden I'd hear from the back of the house, "E flat!" and the two of them would rush in and sit on either side of me and show me. They couldn't stand what they heard. That's probably why. . . .

SE: So even he was not so forgiving in that regard.

EW: Yes, it drove them both crazy hearing me practice. So I was very thankful when I was able to stop. But my interest at that time became dance. I knew I had to have some art. Art was our lives. I mean all we saw, all I met, in my whole growing up period, were either musicians or medical people-because dad began to be friendly with a lot of doctors too, but mostly it was people in the art world in some way.

SE: Do you remember any of the names from that time?

EW: Well, they were musicians.

SE: You don't remember any musicians of note that were around a lot?

EW: Yes, well, this is when I was already in my teens: Ernst Toch, composer, became a good friend of theirs. Another composer was. . . . Brodislaw Kaper used to come. Oh, what happened. . . . When Toscanini began doing his NBC, was it? It was NBC, wasn't it?

SE: I don't remember.

EW: Symphony. CBS or NBC, I can't remember which it was. [NBC Symphony-Ed.] They broadcast his concerts, and I think it was on a Thursday night they used to do it in their entirety, the whole concert from the New York Philharmonic. It was a big deal. We made a big deal out of it in our house, and we used to have people over. And I was in college, a freshman, around that time. I used to invite a lot of my friends, and they would invite people that they knew, and Brodislaw Kaper used to come to them all the time.

EW: He's been many Oscared, a motion picture composer. And another one was David Raksin, who is now a friend of mine, who was brought here by Charlie Chaplin to do the arranging for Modern Times, that film?

SE: Yes.

EW: He was just a young genius, a very brilliant kid, whom dad brought over, and has since become well known in Hollywood. Dad was in the orchestra and got to meet him. He got to know Chaplin pretty well, too, but not to bring over.

SE: And Raksin came from the East?

EW: Chaplin brought him from New York to do this, and he stayed after that. So there were a lot of people like that he used to bring-film people, whose names I don't remember.

SE: Daniel Selsnick used to be on the [Craft & Folk Art Museum] board. Were you friendly with his family before then or. . . .

EW: No. My best friend when I was. . . . Oh, I had a cousin on my father's side. His cousin actually, first cousin, who was an artist, commercial artist. Alice is her name.

SE: Alice Robinson?

EW: Alice Rovinsky. She kept that. Her father was a physician, Alexander Rovinsky. That was my paternal grandfather's brother.

SE: What did he do?

EW: He was a physician, the great uncle, who was married to a woman that was also a physician. Bedona was her name. And then there was another sister whose name was Belle and was married to Will Robins. The names are all similar. And Uncle Will was a civil engineer who lived in China and did a lot of work on the railroads in China, I'm told. Their house was filled with really ugly Chinese furniture that they brought back, but it was the worst kind, you know. And Aunt Belle used to strike me as being one of the dullest people that I ever knew. All of us felt that way. She was one of those kinds of people who came and sat and didn't open her mouth in the house.

SE: And Alice, what did she do?

EW: Second cousin. She was the daughter of Bedona and Alexander Rovinsky. I'm filling in on my grandfather's side. I'm sorry.

SE: That's all right. And Alexander Rovinsky was your great uncle. So what did Alice do?

EW: Alice was an artist, a commercial artist. She went to the Art Institute in New York, and then she eventually found her way to Paris, where she managed to live for twenty years. She was really a nutty person. She was going back and forth all the time. She once came back on a boat from Paris to borrow money so that she could continue to stay in Paris. Also, she was the kind of person who did not know how to live with success. She achieved the editorship of a very fine fashion magazine back there, and then quit as soon as she got it, and came back and settled in L.A., where she brought her mother eventually, after her father had died. She [the mother] was very diabetic and Alice took care of her like a nurse. It ruled Alice's life, and eventually Alice moved to Palm Springs and lived-and died. I've scattered her ashes at our ranch, to which she never came, unfortunately. But Alice was there in Paris and she used to suggest to my parents that they should send me over to be with her. I was dying to be with her in Paris. I used to love it when she came to our house when I was little, because she would draw for me. She drew princesses in beautiful gowns and all that sort of thing, and I wanted to be an artist like she was. My first thoughts were to be an illustrator of children's books, which probably I should have stuck to. But I didn't. Anyhow, that was one artist of that type that was around us quite a bit.

SE: But you never went to stay with her?

EW: They never allowed me to do that. They had another friend, who was Francis Tour. This was in San Francisco, and I don't really remember her because I was very little. I don't understand how this could have happened. I must have seen her later on in life also. She went to Mexico when it was not done and lived in Mexico City and became very close friends with Diego Rivera, and the entire art world became her beat. And she published a little magazine for a long period of time about them, which she sent us, and then she wrote a book called Folkways of Mexico.

SE: Do you have those?

EW: I don't have the magazines anymore, but I've got the Folkways of Mexico book. It's at the ranch, but I have her book still. But everybody knows her. I mean, if you mention her name to anybody. . . .

SE: It's very familiar to me.

EW: Francis Tour in Mexico. They all know her name. She also wanted me to come and stay with her. And I can remember that one well. I remember having fights with my parents because they wouldn't let me go, but they thought I was too young. I was too young probably, but I never got to do that.

SE: But by then everybody. . . . I mean those two women obviously realized that you were interested in art.

EW: I don't know why, but they did.

SE: So as a child you were pretty involved in art?

EW: I always drew a lot, though. I did draw a lot.

SE: You were an only child. And weren't you alone a lot?

EW: A lot. Yes. I was. And lonesome, and was desperate to have a brother or a sister. I can remember once being taken to an orphanage, not realizing that my parents took me there because they were making a contribution of some sort. I think they gave a concert there. I thought they just weren't telling me, but that they were going to bring home a brother or a sister for me. And even I remember the tantrum I had when I found out it wasn't so. I threw myself on the floor and kicked my feet and went through. . . . But anyhow there was one side of it that I always considered good, and that was that I had time to fantasize and to be alone, and as much as I hated being an only child, I loved that alone period that I had. And we had a vacant lot next door to our house. You've heard of those, haven't you?

SE: Yes, we had a few. I got picked up by the police in one once when I was in fourth grade.

EW: Oh, you had them of course where you lived. And anyhow that vacant lot was my domain and I used to have imaginary villages that I made out of rocks. I remember everything about that. I mean, that was heaven for me. I just loved it. And I remember that the one little girl that I played with, who lived across the street who was about a year younger than I was, when I got friendly with her I used to allow her to come and try to share in that, but she couldn't, so we did other things together. We did plays for each other.

SE: And then the polio epidemic came.

EW: Oh, she was the one that had that, yes. Frances Wilson was her name, and when the polio epidemic came. . . . We played across the street from each other. We used to play house across the street from each other.

SE: Calling back and forth.

EW: Called back and forth, right, because we couldn't be next to each other, and she got it. She got polio and she died of it right after I got married. I can remember that on my wedding night I was very happy and in love with Frank, and I broke into tears when we arrived at the hotel. Frank couldn't understand why, but I began thinking about Frances and how my life turned out to be so very wonderful and hers was. . . . She was all strapped up and couldn't move and died very soon thereafter, I guess. And the comparison was so sad.

SE: So in terms of art, when did you start doing that more?

EW: Well, I had another friend that, when I was fourteen, became my best friend. When she first was introduced to me through other friends of my parents who were in advertising. . . . There was a whole circle of people. Well, they were. . . . It was a Mayer. . . . I don't know. They were very. . . . I can't describe what they were. All their friends had children that were much younger than I was, and so that I could never really be a part of that group either. Those children have all stuck together and still are friendly now, but I was too old to be a part of that. But nevertheless we were very close to a lot of families that had businesses and did other things. And the Mayers had an advertising business, I remember.

SE: You were telling about a friend that was introduced to you.

EW: Oh, Doris Herold was my friend. Don was her father, and he was well known throughout the country. Everybody knew him as a cartoonist. The magazine that came before the New Yorker was Life magazine. It was called Life I think, but it was like the New Yorker. It was not like the Life magazine of today. And Judge. There was one called Judge, too, I believe. They were. . . . Anyhow, he was a cartoonist for those magazines. His drawings were easily recognized as Don Herold's; he was nationally well known. And they thought that we could be good friends because we. . . . But she went to John Burroughs Junior High and I went to Thomas Star King, which was across the city. We were sort of forced to spend weekends together and I didn't like her and she didn't like me at all. She thought I was a sissy, prudish little girl and she was a real tomboy type. She also drew very well, by the way. She inherited her father's ability. And one weekend I was forced to spend the weekend with her, which I really hated, but I found there was place that made rock candy that looked like rocks. And I brought her some and I put a real rock in there. [laughter] She bit on one and almost broke her teeth, and she was so filled with

admiration for my spunk in doing that that she became my devoted best friend. We were best friends for years after that. That did it. [laughter]

SE: Hysterical.

EW: And we became awful. I mean, when she came over we were always playing tricks and doing things, and she has a much better memory than I. I wish that I could get a hold. . . . I don't know what's happened to her. I gave her up in later years, but. . . . She later started writing some stories about our childhood, and she has total recall. She wrote children's books, and then Doris was taken East and went to the Lincoln School. They moved back east, and I was just desolate when she left, the fact that she left L.A. and I was here, and she was there. Her letters were fantastic because she was going to wonderful dances and. . . . It was a private school, the Lincoln School, off Fifth Avenue or Riverside Drive, somewhere. I don't know. The whole thing was very glamorous to me, and so I missed her a great deal. But we kept up very close friendship. She went to Swarthmore College. She was very bright, and had a younger sister named Hildegard, Hilde. They were both redheads. Hilde was the attractive, really pretty one, but "Dordee," as we called her, was not as pretty-not pretty, but had red hair and was very bright and had a great figure, which I envied, and she knew how to draw anything. She became an artist. She had a job right off the bat with Young and Rubicam and. . . .

SE: In New York.

EW: In New York. And they used to have the Ivory Soap ads up on the billboards. They were all Doris's. She did all those kinds of things. And then she illustrated lots of books-children's books. At that time, you couldn't write and illustrate the same book unless you were somebody like Sendak. I think that is. . . .

SE: That's still difficult.

EW: Yes, still difficult. So she was an illustrator primarily. Or she was a writer and didn't illustrate. I guess she did some of each, but never both. . . .

SE: Oh, one or the other. She did both, but never in the same book.

EW: Then she got married to a guy named Sidney Lund. They lived in Rowayton, Connecticut, and if she's alive she may still live there. They had three children, and the oldest one was named Meredith. They called her Muffy. And that's how Muffy Palmer, by the way, got her name. You know, the Herbert and Lillian Palmers? You probably know.

SE: Yeah.

EW: I named her after this. . . .

SE: But she doesn't use Muffy. Oh, no, you named her Meredith, not Muffy.

EW: Well, I suggested Meredith and that they could call her Muffy for short, which they did.

SE: Oh, she doesn't use it now.

EW: She doesn't care if people like me call her Muffy, because I can't think of her any other way.

SE: Herbert and Lillian Palmer? Lillian's her mother.

EW: I was matron of honor at their wedding. She wanted to name her daughter after me, so Meredith included Edith. I think it had something to do with that.

SE: Great. Doris and Sydney Lund had Meredith and anybody else?

EW: Yeah, they had a son named Eric, and then they had two others and I can't remember the other two daughters' names. Or one daughter. I can't remember. And incidentally, Meredith [Lund] is an artist. And one's a pianist. I don't remember, but Doris has had all kinds of trouble with Sydney. He became an alcoholic, and every time I went to New York I had to spend hours hearing about her problems, and then she began having an affair and living with this other guy, who was an artist, and they came out here and you may have met her, because she was here once.

SE: What's his name?

EW: I can't remember his name. But they stayed with me, and I remember I was on the Board of Cal Arts already, because I took her to listen to some panel. Nathan Shapira once had a panel discussion about something to do with Africa or art at the Craft and Folk Art Museum [CAFAM]. And I was on it, and she was there

in the audience listening because she was my house guest at that time. Well, anyhow, that's the last time I've seen her, I think. I've lost touch with her.

SE: Do you want to go back? You started talking about your interest in dance.

EW: Yes, let's go way back.

SE: You talked about getting interested in dance as a child when you were able to give up piano.

EW: Yes, oh. I began taking dancing lessons and I loved it and I thought it was wonderful. My parents didn't. I mean, that was a very much lesser art in their eyes, so they wouldn't pay much attention to it, but Doris Herold and I took dancing-ballet lessons-together from Eleanor Putnam, and I think that my major thing was that I got such a crush on Eleanor Putnam. It was mostly because I had the crush on Eleanor. We spent most of our time comparing our arches [laughter], and the excitement of the first toe shoes and all that business. Eleanor Putnam was a Christian Scientist, and she lived in Glendale and I decided that I would become a Christian Scientist. She picked me up on Sundays and took me to the Christian Science Sunday School, and then took me home afterwards and that gave me a chance to be with Eleanor.

SE: And your parents?

EW: And my parents did nothing but ridicule. I mean, they didn't care what I did. They thought it was funny that I needed to go to a Sunday School, because they didn't believe in it. I mean we didn't go to anything. I went, and I used to think that I was a Christian Scientist, and if I put "mind over matter" I could pass my algebra tests, but when I flunked them I quit. [laughter]

SE: Did that mean you didn't study, too?

EW: That's true. I was a terrible student. I was a very bad student in school, and I know that a lot of emotional reasons were behind this, because I found out later on I could become a good one. I've a had family of late developers. Stephen [Wyle-Ed.] was that way, and I see that Alex is, who has just been. . . . My granddaughter, you know. She's just been elected to the honor society at Cal Poly in graduate school, but she called up and said, you want to hear something. . . .

SE: Cal Poly?

EW: She's getting her Master's in Animal Science there. And she's going to vet school next year. She went to Colby actually, undergraduate. She went from being a total nonstudent to now being a 4-point something student.

SE: In a difficult field.

EW: Yeah.

SE: So how did dance continue?

EW: Dance, well, they had no use for that and. . . .

SE: What age were you at this point?

EW: Well, I think that I was just getting to, I was going through puberty around that time.

SE: Thirteen, maybe-twelve, thirteen.

EW: I went to camp a lot in the summers and I was. . . . I had a hard time with that changeover. I remember that. I don't have to go through this whole camp thing.

SE: No.

EW: I went to eight of them, however.

SE: [giggles]

EW: And it was a good thing that they sent me to camp, I suppose, because it gave me a chance to live with other children; but some of them were pretty awful. One of them was very good though, but most of them weren't very good. I didn't get to do trips with [my parents] of any sort, except mother used to, when I was a little girl, take me back and forth like a commuter to New York. She felt she had to be with her sisters all the time. She was very tied to them and wanted to care for them because they were worse off than she was. One

sister never married, but had a lifelong affair with a married Catholic. A real back street situation. In those days that's what it was.

SE: Well, with dance, did that. . . .

EW: I gave up ballet. I knew I wasn't going to be very good at that, and I'm trying to remember how I got to Benjamin Zemach, but he was a big deal in my life.

SE: He was a dance teacher?

EW: He was a dancer, and he was a well known dancer.

SE: Modern?

EW: Oh, before I got to Zemach I studied dancing with a woman named Bertha Wardell. That's right. I can't remember the kind of dancing, but it wasn't ballet strictly. It was everything. In fact, she taught me a Russian dance, and my mother made me a Russian costume, and it was a recital in which I wore that. And it was beautiful. Later on I embroidered that costume for Nancy and Diana's bedroom, a picture that now is at the ranch in Sonia's [Romero-Ed.] room.

SE: Oh, I see, you made a picture of it in embroidery for their room.

EW: Of a person, and I embroidered it, right. Anyhow, I studied with Bertha Wardell for quite a while, and I liked that. And then I studied with Myra Kinch. I think she may have studied with Bertha Wardell and then began to teach, and I loved studying with Myra Kinch. And they [EW's parents] drove me. . . . They humored me. They never took my dance lessons seriously, which upset me. I think in those days I wanted to be an actress and a dancer, and I put on plays all time. We were constantly putting on plays, and I would get. . . . We had a mother's helper/maid-type person named Adelaide Slowensky, who was with us for years. And she moved slowly, too. I mean, spoke slowly. [laughs] I used to drag poor Adelaide into all those plays, and we'd put on performances for everybody. This was Frances Wilson across the street or Doris Herold when she was around. [break]

EW: Yes, and that was while I was in junior high school.

SE: Okay.

EW: Then I think through Myra Kinch I must have learned about Benjamin Zemach. That's the only way I can seem to remember hearing about him. He was a man that came over from Russia with his brother, who was Nathan Zemach and they had been with the. . . . I think it's called the Habima, which is the Jewish branch of the Moscow Art Theater, and they were famous for their production of The Dybbuk, which is a well-known classical Jewish play. I think that Benjamin Zemach danced in it. Nathan directed. That was their original claim to fame. And dance became something. . . . It was modern dance, but he wasn't glued to the earth. I liked his method of dancing at the time very, very much, because he believed in leaping and getting off the ground and not being held to the floor as it seemed to me that Lester Horton was, who was at that time in the next studio, and his chief dancer was Bella Lewitsky. She was in that room at the same time that I was with Benji all those years. I spent years studying with Benjamin Zemach.

SE: How long?

EW: Well, all through high school, and I loved it. I was the. . . . There were a couple of professional chances. Well, the first exciting one was that he was asked to do a ballet at the Hollywood Bowl, and I was able to be in that; but I was the youngest person of all his students that were asked to be in it. I became the scapegoat, and he was just merciless with me when they had rehearsals with the whole L.A. Philharmonic up there. He would stop everything and point to me and say, "Edith, go home." [spoken in dialect-Trans.] [laughter] He'd had it because I did something wrong, and I can still remember wondering how I got off that stage, my shame was so awful. I'd be sitting in the box getting my stuff together and he's suddenly turn around and say, "What's the matter with you? Why aren't you up there? Get up there." Anyhow this kept on so much, after rehearsals I used to come home crying and my parents said, "Why do you put up with this? Why do you go? Why do you stand for this?" And I began to think that maybe they were right. I stayed home from the class once, and he phoned me, so I told him, "I guess I'm terrible because you yell at me so much," and he said, "Don't you know that I only do that with people I'm interested in?" So, I decided I'd made it. I was all right after that.

SE: [laughs] He gave you a lot of attention.

EW: And I even began to notice that that was so. So at one point, after the Victory Ball, which was such a success-that was the ballet we did at the Bowl, in which I played the part of a dead soldier. I can still remember the steps of that thing we rehearsed so much and so long. I mean it was day and night forever. All over town we

were placed in halls that were hired so we could rehearse. And he had some top dancers who all became. . . . Most of them went into Martha Graham's group after that.

SE: And stuck to the earth.

EW: And stuck to the earth more, yes. But. . . . And Carmelita Maracci was also teaching up there at the time. She was the pure ballet, superb teacher. Carmelita was a fantastic, fiery, wonderful ballet dancer, and fantastic teacher, and I'm just telling you that it's interesting that we were all up at the Perry Studios in Hollywood, which became a pretty well-known place. I've bumped into so many people that were there, and I didn't know it, at the same time that I was.

SE: Did you know Bella and Lester Horton?

EW: I saw Bella. She was his prime dancer then. She's the same age I am.

SE: It was in what part of Hollywood?

EW: It was on Cahuenga and Hollywood, between Hollywood Boulevard and Franklin. I went there so much that I can tell you. Because later on I went with Diana, who studied with Carmelita.

SE: Your daughter.

EW: That was her teacher. But I found out then years later that Judith Stark. . . . Remember Judith?

SE: Yes.

EW: She was Milton Stark's wife. She was on our board. She was also on the Cal Arts board when I was.

SE: Milton Stark. What does he do?

EW: They started (founded) the Vanguard Theatre. Anyhow, I found out that Judith was in Horton's class at the same time that I was in Zemach's. She was trying to be a dancer as well.

SE: Was Horton more grounded and less aerial?

EW: He was the one that was more grounded. I thought he was too sexual, too. I mean, it seemed to me that they were all over each other all the time. I didn't like that. I loved Zemach. I thought he was great, and I was completely devoted to the dance. That's all I cared about in life. I loved going out with some of the dancers afterwards so that we could do nothing but talk about Zemach, and all the other dance concerts and things to which I went, and I kept scrapbooks and I still have all their programs somewhere around. I saved every program of every dance performance that came. And at the same time, I think inside me I had a suspicion that I wasn't very, wasn't great, could never really be good, but I thought. . . . I wanted to be in a group. Just around that time Max Rhinehart came to America, and he was going to do A Midsummer Night's Dream in New York City for the stage. He contacted Zemach and hired him as choreagrapher. Zemach took with him his small group, professional group that he had formed, in which I had recently been inducted. I was in high school. And once again my parents stepped in and said, "Forget it. You're not gonna leave and go to New York for that," so I couldn't go to be in it. But, well, I was too young. I really was too young.

SE: Your mom couldn't go along?

EW: No. I just had to stay home and study. [laughter] And try to get into college, which was very iffy.

SE: What theater did he stage it at?

EW: It was on Broadway. It was a big, big, big, well known at the time production of Max Rhinehart's. Anyhow, that's it. So when he took his group back to New York for that, I think after that, that's when many from the group joined Martha Graham's group. Anyhow, so I had to give up being in the group. When Zemach returned much later, I studied with him some more until he finally moved to New York and decided to leave there. I went on to college. I took dancing in high school, and felt they didn't appreciate how good I was. Also in college; the dance recital at UCLA was a big deal and they only took the pretty ones for most major roles. But I was in the dance recital while I was at UCLA, and that's where I met Bob Lee, who was a professor of costume design. Robert Tyler Lee. He was teaching there, and he also danced and he designed the costumes for dance recital, and in those days people came from all over the city to see the yearly dance recitals that Martha Dean put on-she was the head of that department. I was in it, but I wasn't stellar. That was when I was sure that they didn't understand how really good I was, and not just like these others who were performing, but without passion and expertise. But I had some good roles, and in one role Bob Lee was my dance partner. There was a picture of the two of us dancing together that made the front page of the Daily Bruin once, which I kept for many years. Then

did you ever hear about when The Egg and The Eye [Wyle's gallery-Ed.] opened in 1965?

SE: No.

EW: The first week that it was opened, I was upstairs in the restaurant, and I see this very portly man with big. . . . What do you call those, mutton. . . .

SE: Muttonchops.

EW: Muttonchop side things.

SE: Sideburns.

EW: Sitting there with a big bottle of champagne next to him and eating, and when I got up to walk out past him-this was only in the first couple of weeks after the place opened-I looked at him and he looked at me, and he said, "I know you." And I said, "I know you. What's your name?" And he said, "Bob Lee." And he said, "I remember you from UCLA, Edith Robinson." I couldn't believe that he remembered me! He said, "I see you've got good taste, too." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You are eating in a place like this." And I replied, "My taste may even be better. I own it." [laughter] Anyhow, he became a regular. I'm sure you must have seen him.

SE: I don't remember.

EW: He was there every week. At that point and for many years thereafter he was head of costume design for CBS, and so he used to come over there and have lunch and introduced me to a lot of his fellow designers. Bob Cecci, from whom we [CAFAM] just received a huge hat collection was one of them.

SE: Bob Cecci?

EW: Yessh, I even gave Bob Cecci a show. He has been the head of design at CBS ever since Bob Lee retired, I believe, and he's also done lots of movies and written plays. Bob's quite a guy. And Proctor Stafford was a good friend of his.

SE: Proctor Stafford's a collector.

EW: Yes. Oh, I went to junior high with Proctor.

SE: You did? That's how you got to know him? I mean originally then?

EW: He was a shy little boy at junior high school. We recognized each other at college. He was at UCLA when I was there too, and he was still not . . . what he became, by a long shot.

SE: You mean he was still shy?

EW: I guess so. I really can't remember him very well, but I remember him from junior high vaguely, and he remembers me.

SE: What did he end up doing? I can't remember how he earned his living.

EW: Well, he was in real estate, but he also inherited quite a bit. Proctor's living in Hawaii most of the time now. Let's see. . . . So anyhow I stuck with dance, but I was always interested in art. I didn't mention to you that I went to art school on weekends.

SE: No!

EW: All through high school, and even some in junior high school. I went to Chouinard, and I went to Art Center. I went one whole summer and on weekends to Art Center. That used to be on Seventh Street downtown. And before that. . . . Where else? I know I went to Art Center. I know I went to Chouinard a lot.

SE: Did you know Mrs. Chouinard at all?

EW: I'm sure I did. But I can't remember her. I don't remember any of that.

SE: You don't remember any of those people that were there when you were there?

EW: No.

SE: What years would that be? The Disney program wasn't there yet?

EW: No, it was long before that. It was a separate little school, which was amalgamated with a Hollywood Music Conservatory.

SE: Did you know any of the artists? Like Phil Dyke or Phil Paradise or Millard Sheets?

EW: No.

SE: Or any of those people that studied there?

EW: Not that studied there. There was a Kaminsky that taught there, that I remember vaguely. That was Art Center.

SE: But the years that you were in high school. What year did you graduate from high school?

EW: '36. After which, well, the art business was beginning to sneak in a little more again, but I hadn't really thought of being a serious painter for a long time. That was later. In fact, I think that I was married when I really began to do serious easel painting more than thinking of being an illustrator. No, that's not true, because in high school. . . . I remember when I was a freshman in college I spent the whole summer at Art Center and. . . . I can still. . . . [chuckles] I had a friend named Pearl Gersh. Phil and Bea Gersh are big contemporary art collectors. That's her brother, Phillip. Pearl was my closest friend during those first years of college. She was a lot of fun, and I liked her a lot. We went to art school together that summer, and one day we went to the local drug store to have a Coke afterwards and the soda jerk came up to us and said, "What can I get for you two artists?" The two of us looked at each other proudly and said, "He knows! How did you know we were artists?" And he replied, "'Cause your faces are all smudged with charcoal." [laughter] But I never forgot that.

SE: Does Pearl collect also?

EW: I haven't seen Pearl in recent years, and I don't know why. I'm really sorry about that. Her husband died, and we just haven't seen other. No, she doesn't collect at all like that. She had a sister, Mildred Jaffe, who was married to Sam Jaffe. Mildred died, too, but Sam's still alive. Sam Jaffe, the agent.

SE: Right.

EW: Mildred and Sam were very big collectors. They had a fantastic collection, really fine, one of the best in Hollywood. Then they moved to London and lived there just before Marcia and Norman Panama moved there. They became very close friends in London.

SE: Norman Panama, yes, I know him.

EW: Yes, and Marcia.

SE: So you were talking about how you moved from dance into art.

EW: I took art classes in college-it was a minor-on and off.

SE: What was your major? Dance then?

EW: No, I changed that major nine million times. I was an English major when I graduated. But I had a minor in art. It didn't amount to anything in college in those days. If I'd known about some of the courses I found you could take there. . . . Well, I don't think they had them to offer at the time. And, incidentally, I hear they're closing the ceramic department at UCLA.

SE: Oh, no.

EW: I heard that on Sunday. I think I heard it from. . . . Ralph Bacerra was there, who had been a student of Vivika Heino's. Vivika told me, I was sitting with Vivika. Vivika and Ralph told me.

SE: Has Ralph been teaching there?

EW: No, he teaches in Pasadena. I think at the Art Center, doesn't he?

SE: Maybe.

EW: Anyhow, though I looked at art, studied it, took history of, and all that business, I wasn't doing that much of it. I was involved in being an English major, studying and all the things that went with it. It was when I first graduated and began-again-starting to do art. I studied with Keith Finch for quite a long time.

SE: UCLA or after?

EW: No, outside. Oh, there was a school called The Kann Institute of Art.

SE: The Kann Institute. I've heard of that.

EW: Well, it was on Melrose Avenue where the Figaro Restaurant now is.

SE: And Keith Finch taught there?

EW: Keith taught there. Arnold Mesches taught there. Saul Bass taught there. Mary Vartikian. They were all there as teachers, and there were others as well. Keith was the main one with whom I studied. I did not study with any of the others. I doubt that I took a class from Arnold. Diana [EW's youngest child-Ed.] was born at that time, and at this juncture I knew that art was it. It was interesting to me because I thought I had a perfect concept of space as learned from being a dancer, and I'd thought that was definitely going to bridge over onto the canvas with me. But then I found there was a different kind of space. I had a big struggle with that, trying to get the dance movement in another category from. . . . Maybe I should have done sculpture right off the bat. That would have been better perhaps. But anyhow I had that adjustment to do, and I realized. . . . Oh, before I get into any of that: I stopped college halfway through due to things that don't have to be in here. I'm not going to tell about that. It was an unhappy love affair. Anyhow.

SE: Oh, you're not going to tell us?

EW: No, I'm not telling that.

SE: Okay.

EW: My parents swished me off to New York to get me out of town. My liberal, free-thinking parents were horrified at me because I let D. H. Lawrence go to my head, but with whom my mother was madly in love. Oh, I left out a whole lot of stuff about that. When I was in my first two years of college. . . . I have to tell you about that. Next door to us. . . . No, that's really important. We had a house that was right next door to us, and you know how the houses are right next to each other in L.A. It was rented by a family named Zimbalist-Sam Zimbalist and his wife, Marguerite, and they had two children, two daughters. She did from earlier marriages. It turned out that Sam Zimbalist was the brother of Efrem Zimbalist, the extremely famous violinist. Oh, I left out so many important things on my mother's life, also.

SE: Okay, so let's do it now.

EW: When mother was a little girl, her sister was friendly with a woman who was the sister of a very famous opera singer, Alma Gluck. Anybody that knows anything about opera knows of Alma Gluck. She was "it" with the Metropolitan, and in those days she was a beautiful, beautiful woman and a wonderful singer. Her sister was Auntie Cecile, who was like my grandmother when I was growing up. She was the closest. . . . I called her Auntie Cecile. Well, Cecile Ableman was her name, and she started designing clothes. She hired my Aunt Anna to be the designer in her shop, and they designed the clothes for the Metropolitan opera stars, of which Alma Gluck was one. Alma Gluck had a daughter whose name was Abigail in those days, Abigail Gluck. Later she changed her name to Marsha Davenport, of whom you may have heard. She's written many books. She wrote one book called East Side, West Side, which was about her Auntie Cecile and Alma Gluck, her mother, and also she wrote a biography of Mozart. She had a love affair with I think it was. . . . He was the Minister of Czechoslovakia before the war [_____-Ed.]. They were in love with each other, Marsha Davenport. There's a whole book about that. Fancy. . . . I can't think of it. She's written many books. Anyhow, in those days. . . .

SE: Are they novels or historic?

EW: Historic. True. She's very well known. About a year or so ago they did a profile of her in the New Yorker in which it was said that she lives in Pebble Beach much of the time now and that she will see no one, which is too bad, because I always felt that our lives were sort of in the shadow of this family. Alma Gluck married. . . . She had divorced Gluck a long time before, and she married Efrem Zimbalist who was one of the major violinists in the world at the time. Oh, he was there with Mischa Elman and [Jascha-Ed.] Heifetz, but he was in that category. After Mother married Dad in San Francisco, she missed being in New York very badly, and Alexander Lambert was unhappy because she wasn't in New York as well, so she asked Lambert to see if Efrem Zimbalist would take Dad on as a scholarship pupil. Zimbalist never took pupils at all, but he did accept my father. And so they moved back to New York during that period. But I'm ahead of the story because when Mother was a little girl she got a job teaching Abigail [Marsha Davenport-EW] piano. She was her first piano teacher. And also she was the recipient of Abigail's cast-off clothes, because she had few clothes of her own. So there was this tie. And then Auntie Cecile was always a very close friend of the family. Her daughter was my aunt's closest friend. And the daughter had sons, and there was another brother that wanted to marry my mother and then. . . . So this went all the way through. Years and years later, there was a big coincidence: Efrem Zimbalist's brother and his wife Marguerite took the house right next door to us, which they either rented or bought. I don't know which it was. I

was a freshman in college. Marguerite was as different from her husband, Sam, as night and day, and had had an art gallery in New York called the Ten Dollar Art Gallery. She was a beautiful woman with DAR roots. He was a Russian Jew. Marguerite couldn't put up with many of the things that Sam liked. She had a terrible, terrible temper. I never heard such a temper in my life. For instance, he loved herring, and she said he couldn't have it in the house. Once she was cleaning and she smelled something around the piano. Sam had sneaked herring in the house and had hidden it in the piano. [laughter] By a previous husband Marguerite had had two daughters, named Jane and Margaret, and I think that Margaret was the offspring of somebody that was part American Indian. She looked like it. She had an Indian look to her. Jane didn't have that look.

SE: These were other, both from the same father or. . . .

EW: I don't know how many husbands Marguerite had. She was a devotee of D. H. Lawrence, was schooled in everything about him, and I mean in those days people paid. . . . They created the place in Santa Fe where Mabel Dodge had lived, and D. H. Lawrence had been, and they would pay homage to the place, and the phoenix-rising thing. I don't know, there was a whole cult around that.

SE: And she _____?

EW: She and mother became very close. My mother was completely infatuated by Marguerite and her ideas. In fact, Mom and Dad's whole lives became intertwined with Sam and Marguerite and the girls. Margaret, the youngest, became a harpist and she was very, very good. She began playing in the studio orchestras while she was just a kid, like twelve or thirteen years old. I remember that we used to go to movies and theatre with them. One night we were up at the Zimbalists to have coffee or cake after a movie, and Marguerite suddenly had a fierce argument in the kitchen and as she came in with the tray she became so angry at something or someone that she just took the tray and threw it on the floor. Everything broke. Oh, and the kids had been in bed asleep. They both got up and cleaned up the mess and silently went back to bed! They were so used to this sort of thing. [laughter] But she was a fascinating woman, and she needed a lot of. . . . She bought all her clothes at thrift shops. That was before I heard of anybody doing that, which I've certainly heard of since. And she had some wonderful paintings in her collection, from her Ten Dollar Art Gallery, because she had a real eye. She discovered fine painters before they became known. Marguerite paid for her dental bills by trading paintings for dental work with Dad, and that's how we came to own some Elshemiuses, of which that's one over there and that's one there.

SE: Ah!

EW: I remember we once had. . . . Who was it that was the art critic before. . . .

SE: Oh, yes.

EW: Old, old. . . .

SE: Before William Wilson.

EW: Yes, way before him, too.

SE: Oh, before Henry Seldes?

EW: Oh, Arthur Millier was the art critic for the L.A. Times. Once he visited us and looked at the Elshemiuses. He said that that one over there was the best of the lot. [Note: The original Tape 2, side B, was accidentally not recorded during session one. EW and SE held another interview session in an attempt to reconstruct the missing portions from the original interview name list. The transcript of the new interview session follows-Ed.] [Unfortunately, throughout this tape, EW's voice is not clearly audible; she had vocal cord problems that, obviously, affected the strength of her voice-Ed.]

SE: This is the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, interview with Edith R. Wyle. I am Sharon Emanuelli, the interviewer, and this tape is to replace Tape 2B, which was originally left blank in the first interview. The date is February 26, 1997, and we're at my home in Los Angeles, California. Okay, Edith, at the end of Tape 2, Side A, we were discussing . . . you were talking about how you began to be interested in art and you had spoken about Marguerite and Sam Zimbalist.

EW: Yes, well, I don't think I began to be interested in art. I began to really study it more seriously although I had studied it before that in art school in the summers, but I began to know that I really hoped I could be an artist, although dance was still pretty prominent throughout that time. But I just want to say something that I'm thinking about now . . .

SE: Okay.

EW: . . . and that is when I was a young girl growing up, when I was real young, I used to envy my parents and think, "What was the use of going on? All the exciting and interesting things that occurred happened before I was born, in their lives-the people that they met and all the things that they did. And life was humdrum." Now, of course, I look back on my childhood at that point and it was really exciting. I mean, the people that I was involved with around that time, beginning to be around that time.

SE: Are you talking about in college . . .

EW: In college and . . .

SE: . . . as a child?

EW: . . . well, and afterwards. Right after that. Not as a child so much. And around that time that I met Sam and Marguerite, that period, Toscanini began having the Thursday night concerts [on NBC] [Radio-Ed.]. I don't know why Thursday sticks in my head, but, anyhow, he had them, and we started inviting people over to our house. I invited a lot of my college friends over to listen with us. My mother and dad had their gusts. And dad would [play] them the concerts. He invited a lot of really interesting people, such as Bronislaw Kaper, who came with his wife quite often, and he was new to America about that time.

SE: Kaper?

EW: K-a-p-e-r. He was one of the refugees from what was going on with Hitler and so forth. Also another person was Dave Raksin-David Raksin, R-a-k-s-i-n. He was a young man that was brought over by Charlie Chaplin to arrange the music for the tune that Charlie Chaplin invented for Modern Times. He was a quite young-about a year or two older than I. He was brilliant, and Dad brought him home quite a bit. He since rose to become one of the top Hollywood composers. He wrote the. . . . I think he's most famous for the theme song for Laura, with Gene Tierney. Other interesting people also came. But, anyhow, where shall we go from there? [Interruption in taping]

SE: Was there anything more you wanted to say about Marguerite and Sam Zimbalist.

EW: No.

SE: Okay, and Arthur Millier was the art critic that liked the Elshemius at your mother's house. That's been established before

EW: Right.

SE: Okay, so now we're into Toscanini.

EW: I just did it.

SE: Oh, okay.

EW: Oh, well, my father played in the studios, and he played under Alfred Newman, who was really the top conductor in Hollywood. In fact, I recently received a little monograph that David Raksin wrote about Hollywood composers, and he talked about the fact that he was brought over by Charlie Chaplin and that he was working with Alfred Newman, and he talked about the fact that Alfred Newman had the best orchestra and they were all virtuosi that made up that orchestra. Well, one of those was my father. That made me happy to see it in print. But, anyhow, it was lovely having these people over at our house during Toscanini concerts, and the college students adored meeting all these people. And they also loved my parents. They were crazy about them. So, meanwhile, I was still working with Benjamin Zemach and I thought I was going to be a contemporary, modern dancer, or a great dancer, which I should have known I couldn't be, because I really wasn't that good, my figure was wrong, and I just wasn't that accomplished. But I continued to do that and at the same time I was more and more interested in being a part of the visual art world. But when I graduated from college, it was right in the middle of the Depression. There was no way that I could go to art school or do anything along those lines. I had to make a living, and I went to Woodbury College to become a secretary-which was about the last thing in the world that I should ever have done. I probably was the world's worst secretary. But I went through it. I learned the shorthand-which was difficult with the left hand-and I was pretty good as a typist. I got a job with a fellow named Peter Rosenfeld, with whom I was going out at the time [laughs], and he had a garment factory. Brassieres and corsets-that's what it was. [laughs] He was really tough; he was very hard on me. He used to pick me up and take me downtown to the factory, and he would let me off a few blocks before we got there, so that it wouldn't look to the rest of the people as though I knew him well, and he made me walk in. And then he made me return every letter that wasn't absolutely perfect. I really hated working for him. And after I got through with that, I was offered a job at the jewelers and watchmakers and dental technicians union. They were all together. [Interruption in taping]

EW: And I loved working there. This job was terribly funny. I mean, the man that hired me was embarrassed because he didn't know how to be a boss and he had to be a boss. There he was in the union and it just was against the grain. So in the middle of the interview, he asked me if I could play Ping-Pong-I've never forgotten that-and I said, "Yes." So we went in the room and played ping pong and I was hired. I also was fired because the wife of the guy who hired me thought I was too attractive. [laughter] So I got a friend of mine to take my place. Then I had a job with Jesse Lasky, Jr., and Jesse Lasky was writing the life story of his father, who was one of the early motion picture moguls, which you probably know. I used to go to his house and take dictation. And I was such a bad secretary that I frequently forgot to take my notebook home with me, where I had to transcribe everything. I made great dinner table conversation for Jesse, Jr., who enjoyed my mistakes for some reason. But one day I typed something up and I blurted out while he was dictating. . . . No, I guess it was the typewritten pages that I had brought back. I said, "You know, if you took paragraph four and put it where paragraph one is, and if you took the second paragraph and moved it to the end, it would read a lot better." I didn't know I was going to say that, and I began to get panic-stricken to think that I dared to do that. And he became totally white in the face. I mean, he looked like he was going to erupt. And then he said, "Type it that way." And I did. And from then on I was his editor. We did everything he wrote. It didn't turn out to be very good even then.

SE: [chuckles]

EW: But then he went into the army and that was the end of it. Also, of course, I met Frank at that point and fell in love and married him. And I did get, briefly, another job with another screenwriter [_____-Ed.], who was writing the script for Sergeant York with Gary Cooper. I did that and then I quit. Something happened at the end of that; I was through. I was married and I think I got pregnant. I don't know, something happened like that.

SE: What year would this be?

EW: Well, that had to be 1942. Way back there. I started having babies right away, but I also started really studying at the Kann Institute of Art. K-a-n-n. That is bringing me in full circle, because I'm now getting my hair done right across the street from where the Kann Institute used to be, which was in what is now the Café Figaro Restaurant on Melrose. It was a wonderful place; it was really great. Keith Finch was my major teacher there. Arnold Mesches was on staff, Saul Bass was on staff, and Mary Vartikian, who later was at Art Center, was on staff. V-a-r-t-i-k-i-a-n. And I became very friendly with. . . . That's where I met Cornelia Brendel Foss. We became very closefriends, her in particular. But I also became close to Betsy Zill and Betsy Jones-these were all art students-and Sara Rafetto and Ralph Novak, who was another really good artist. We thought we were all the best in the place. Betsy Zill was a marvelous, eccentric woman-still is-and she was married to a man named Tony Zill and lived in West Hollywood, very close to Kann Institute. Her parents lived in Pennsylvania. Betsy was talking about how she needed a washing machine, so they sent her the money for a washing machine, and she took that money and sent it to England for an etching press-which is what she really wanted. This was a huge etching press. She set it up in her garage, and Cornelia Foss and Betsy Jones and I-and I think we were the only ones-joined her little etching group, and we went there and did etchings all the time. Which brought us all very close together. And Sara Rafetto. And I guess Ralph Novak came, too. But he died very soon after that, a very young death. But Cornelia and I continued to be very close friends. They were here from Italy. Cornelia met Lukas Foss, who was and is a composer, pianist, and conductor. They met in Italy at the American school in Rome-American. . . .

SE: Academy.

EW: Academy, right. Lukas was a resident, and Cornelia's father, Otto Brendel. . . . I think he was living there at the time, also, and she was there because she was Otto's daughter. Cornelia was studying sculpture there with Matta, I think. M-a-t-t-a. I think that's who it was. She was doing quite well. But now we can talk about this émigré exhibit that's on right now.

SE: Matta's in that, yeah. . . .

EW: As far as émigrés are concerned, I met them all at the Foss's house. I was right in the middle of all that. But not the visual artists so much as the composers. Stravinsky was there all the time. Aldous Huxley was there all the time. [Gregor-Ed.] Piatagorsky was there all the time. And we had fantastic evenings all the. . . . Rico Lebrun, of course, was part of that too. He had come from Naples years before. And that's when I say that I envied my parents their past. Now, when I go into the [Koplin] Gallery and see Marty [Koplin], who has a Lebrun show on right now, she says to me, "Oh God," she said, "I wish that I'd been there in those days. They sound so exciting." So she's doing what I did when I was young. But I guess it happens to all of us all the time. Oh, but I knew it was exciting then, at that time. I really did. With all those people.

SE: It's a real shame, though. Isn't it the Stravinsky Library that's going to Vienna?

EW: You know I don't know that.

SE: Was it Stravinsky or . . .

EW: [Arnold-Ed.] Schoenberg?

SE: Schoenberg.

EW: Could be.

SE: Schoenberg was at USC?

EW: I think it's Schoenberg, yeah.

SE: Was Schoenberg at USC?

EW: Yes, he was, definitely.

SE: His library was given to USC. They built the building for it. Now the family's sending it to Vienna, right.

EW: To Vienna. Right, I remember that. It was Leonard Stein who really got that whole thing going at USC-whom I also knew quite well. He must be heartbroken about that.

SE: I imagine. Is he a professor there?

EW: He was. He was at Cal Arts, too. So. . . .

SE: He's a musician, Leonard Stein?

EW: Yes. When I started The Egg and the Eye-I'm sure that future tapes say that-Leonard was teaching a class in my house, in music, contemporary music, starting with Bartok and coming up [forward to the present]. He started the class before I got involved in The Egg and The Eye. But when I really got involved-when it opened and I was being a hostess, even waiting on tables and doing everything in the place-I came home dead tired and I could hardly stay awake during his classes. And, speaking of him-Leonard Stein, [if I may]-we had concert, a Schoenberg memorial concert, at the Monday Evening Concerts at L.A. County Museum, and we opened The Egg and the Eye afterwards for people to come in the restaurant. Mrs. Schoenberg was one of those people, and Leonard Stein brought her. I was waiting on tables at that point. I came up to take their order. Leonard introduced me to her and everybody else and said, "I'm teaching a class at Edith Wyle's house, but she falls asleep during the class," [laughs] to Mrs. Schoenberg and I have never forgotten that. And I didn't fall asleep any other time, but I fell asleep after The Egg and The Eye. I was so tired. He once brought Ravi Shankar to my house.

SE: Wow!

EW: This was the time I really fell asleep, I think. And I was excited about his coming to the house. He brought people of that caliber all the time. But I decided that I would sit in the fourth row. I put seats up so it would be like an auditorium. But people didn't show up and they kept removing the chairs away from him so I ended up in the front row somehow. And he had incense that he was lit while he spoke. The incense and the ragas that he played were hypnotizing. I couldn't stay awake. I fell asleep right in front of him. That's what he was referring to. Okay, now. . . .

SE: Well, it's understandable.

EW: Yes. Now, the parents of Cornelia Foss-Cornelia Brendel Foss-were Otto Brendel and Maria Brendel. They were both art historians-or archaeologists, I think they called themselves. He was very well known. He taught at Columbia University and he shared an office with Meyer Schapiro. His specialty was the Renaissance and he claimed that he knew more about Dürer than Panofsky, who wrote so many books on the subject. But he was wonderful and I had the great good luck of being in Italy-on my first trip to Italy, Frank and I-[and-Ed.] Otto and his wife Maria were there and they took us all over Rome and to the Villa d'Esta and to Hadrian's Villa and everywhere. It was just wonderful.

SE: Were they actually Italian?

EW: No, Otto was from Nuremberg, and Maria from some part of Germany, but they spent so much of. . . . Cornelia grew up in Italy most of her life. They lived there more than they did in Germany. So that was all. . . .

SE: Did you have other contact with them?

EW: I saw them a lot.

SE: The Brendels?

EW: Oh, yes. They came to L.A. all the time and they always. . . . We became like family.

SE: And Cornelia was studying at UCLA?

EW: No, Cornelia studied at the Kann Institute with me.

SE: Oh, right.

EW: Then Cornelia and I got a studio together. And Marcia Panama, the three of us, in Beverly Hills, had a studio. I don't know if that comes. . . . I don't think it comes later or not.

SE: It may come later because Marcia's name isn't on this list [of names mentioned in the original interview-Ed.].

EW: I see. Well, later. . . . Well, let's go into this other thing. When the Kann Institute episode ended, Keith Finch, who was my main teacher there, whom I liked-and Cornelia worked with him, as well-he wanted to teach but he didn't know where to do it. I think the Kann Institute had closed. It must have been. I can't remember. I know that Howard Warshaw was looking for a place to teach, also, and the two of them got together and decided to open up a school, just the two of them. So that is how I happened to start studying with Howard Warshaw, as well as with Keith Finch. I began to. . . . I much prefer working with Howard Warshaw. I learned to draw from Howard. I think. I still think that he was responsible for that. And Cornelia was also there working with Howard. She also gave up Keith, too. They had a place on La Cienega, which was right next door to the Felix Landau Gallery. In fact, there was a connecting door between them. That was a pretty exciting time. And that was the time I first really listened to Rico. I'd heard him lecture elsewhere. He lectured at the Perls Gallery quite often, and I went to those lectures. But he came to our class-to Howard's class-and lectured one evening. And somebody said to him, "I'm just a beginner but. . . ." and Rico interrupted this person and said, "How old are you?" And the person said, "forty-seven" or something like that. And he said, "Well, you've got forty-seven years of experience in you, so you can't be a beginner." And I never forgot that. I decided, "There's hope for me. I can really be a painter still, even though I. . . ."

SE: So he was encouraging of people?

EW: He was very encouraging about that, at least at that time, yeah. Whereas Howard Warshaw, who was a wonderful teacher, had some. . . . I think it was personal problems more than anything, but he hated women artists. He really had a hard time with them. The top compliment that I ever received from Howard was, when he looked at something I did, "That is not necessarily without interest." All negatives. [laughter] I've never forgotten the sentence and I use it all the time.

SE: It's a good one. So was Rico ever affiliated with Warshaw in any way? They just happened to be. . . .

EW: No, Rico taught at Jepson and so did Howard, but Howard adored and worshipped Rico. He wasn't his pupil in the classic sense, but he considered Rico his mentor. And always until he died he _____ _____.

SE: So Rico was older than Warshaw? Or about the same?

EW: Yes, but not much. Yes, I guess he was quite a few years older. It wasn't just old; it was that he adored his work so much. But Billy [William-Ed.] Brice was a pupil of Rico's.

SE: At Jepson?

EW: At Jepson-and for years. He also, of course, worshipped Rico and still feels that strongly about him-about his memory. So now we better [return to the "script"-Ed.].

SE: Let's see Max Edel? Igor Stravinsky?

EW: Oh, Max Edel came and took classes from Howard at this place at night. He was a doctor, and he taught classes in anatomy at . . . did I say that?

SE: No.

EW: At Chouinard?

SE: No.

EW: He had been teaching anatomy classes to art students on the side, and he was part of this group that we

formed at the Finch-Warshaw school. When that closed, we began having classes at Max's house, which was on Barrington. It was just an apartment, but four or five of us would go there and Howard taught us-just Howard on that one. It was very nice. But that was when the other thing fell apart. We were trying to figure out what to do. I think Frank Wyle got in there in some way and tried to help Keith Finch and Howard set up a school, which they did. This house that they rented on. . . .

SE: This is the second one?

EW: After La Cienaga and after the little classes at Max's, there was a school that was set up on San Vincente in Brentwood, where. . . .

SE: Was it also called Finch-Warshaw?

EW: It was called Finch-Warshaw. . . . I don't know. Maybe. . . . I can't remember. Yes, it was Finch-Warshaw. Yes, it was definitely that. I don't think I studied with Keith at all there. I studied exclusively with Howard during that period. Keith lived in the house.

SE: In San Vincente?

EW: On San Vincente.

SE: Okay.

EW: And around that time Rico gave a master class at UCLA in the summer. You had to submit portfolios to get in. I did, Betsy Jones did, who was mentioned there [in the name list-Ed.].

SE: Right.

EW: I don't know, I don't think Sara Rafetto did. No, she didn't. I don't think anyone else did, except Cornelia [Brendel Foss-Ed.] and I both did. We spent the summer there and it was wonderful. We thought he was marvelous. At that time Rico had this big studio . . . he had a ballroom and across from his ballroom where his studio was, were three rooms that he also had to rent.

SE: And where was this?

EW: On San Vincente.

SE: Also on San Vincente.

EW: Right where Hamburger Hamlet now is-and Phil's Poultry and all that, where that little mini-mall is. That's where it was. He didn't know what to do with it. He decided that he would take three artists in-or six, if two wanted to be in a room. But he was going to go through a portfolio examination first. So I submitted a portfolio, as did the others, and I was the first one that moved up there because I think my timing was . . . it was possible. And then Cornelia and Teresa Ptaczinsky, who happens to have returned to her maiden name, which is Teresa Sorci-S-o-r-c-i-and I think you've got the spelling of Ptaczinsky somewhere . . .

SE: Yes, I do. That's where we began to talk about when Teresa Sorci was married to Bill Ptaczinsky, and Bill was a fine artist . . .

EW: Right.

SE: . . . became a helper to Rico.

EW: Right.

EW: Teresa, I thought, was a wonderful artist, and Bill was also a fine artist, but I, personally, liked Teresa's work very much. She also posed for Rico a great deal and then in several books of his work, she can be seen. The drawings he did of her. We always called her the Mad Sicilian. I don't know if I told about that, but I became very fond of her. She had been at Jepson. She grew up in the valley, on a farm with her Sicilian parents. But she was born with a paralysis. One side of her face was paralyzed, so that her mouth went up.

SE: Okay, so you were talking about Rostroprovich coming in. . . .

EW: Rostroprovich. . . . Oh, I know, I was telling you that William Schumann, who had been the head of Julliard School of Music, who was a composer-American composer-was having a concert at UCLA on that particular evening that Rostropovich had been there during the day. I can't remember whether he spoke or performed or what he did, but he did something which was a cultural exchange. Lukas had come home and said to Cornelia

that he invited Rostropovich to join the party that was being given for Schumann at their home that evening. And Cornelia became hysterical and excited and said, "You can't do that! You'll get fired from UCLA." This was in the late fifties or early sixties. I think it was like '59 or '60, something like that. And, well, it was the first cultural exchange so you can figure that out. She said, "I just know! I know that [someone] is a real spy. I saw that guy. You'll see he's a spy." In the evening we went to the concert. I sat with Cornelia. I saw Rostropovich, who had been invited to the concert as well, walk in with his entourage and Cornelia said, "There! See that man with Rostropovich, right behind him? That's the man. That's the spy. I know he's a spy." And I laughed. I burst out laughing. That was my father's dental technician . . .

SE: [laughs]

EW: . . . a mild little sweet man who happened to be Russian but spoke English as well. So he was simply translating for Rostropovich. Everybody came to the party and everybody was happy. And it was a good party and . . .

SE: . . . nobody was fired.

EW: Yeah, nobody was fired. [laughs]. So I was saying that the parties were wonderful and I don't know if I talked about Piatagorsky. . . .

SE: No, talk about him.

EW: Well, Piatagorsky-who was writing his autobiography-came and insisted on reading his latest chapters to us, which I enjoyed thoroughly. I remember Norman Panama falling asleep right smack in front of him during his reading. Another person who came all the time was Michael Kidd, a dance choreographer, and his then-wife, Mary, who were friends of the Panamas at the time, and friends of ours, too. And Solly Chaplin, the composer, came to all those parties. And Leonard Bernstein, when he was in town, came.

SE: You were talking about Stravinsky's aviary.

EW: Stravinsky. Not his aviary. Oh, yeah, at one of the parties. . . . Oh yeah, did I describe the aviary?

SE: Do it now.

EW: Okay. This house that they lived in had been John Barrymore's aviary, which was attached to the main house up on Tower Grove Road, behind the Beverly Hills Hotel-way up-and the aviary which. . . . You entered a bottom room, which was very small, just big enough really for the piano-a piano was down there-and then you walked through to a very small kitchen, which opened out to a little patio. Then you went up the stairs and there was a vast room like a ballroom, really huge, with a balcony outside of it. That's where they slept, where they had parties, where they did everything. And I forgot to describe the stained-glass window that had Dolores Costello in it [put in by] John Barrymore, because he must have been married to her at that point.

SE: Did the Barrymore's live in another house?

EW: They lived in the house that's attached, which then was lived in by Hugo. . . . The head of Monaco, what's his name? Prince Rainier's. . . .

SE: Grimaldi.

EW: Oh, Grimaldi. Hugo Grimaldi, who was a cousin or a brother or something of the prince, claimed that he really should have been the prince. I remember that. He and his wife owned that house. We met them, too. And they were nothing much. Anyhow. . . .

SE: He was the brother of the Prince of Monaco, though?

EW: I don't know whether he was a brother or a cousin. His name was Grimaldi, and he claimed that he was the real prince, which may or may not be true. Who knows? I don't.

SE: And you talked about Stravinsky.

EW: Oh, Stravinsky was at one of those parties and I found him. . . . He was found out on the balcony that was looking over this canyon, and he was out there with Huxley and somebody else, and they were having a contest to see who could pee the furthest off the balcony. [laughter]

SE: But this was Stravinsky's house that we're discussing, right? The aviary. That was Stravinsky's?

EW: No, no, no. It had been John Barrymore's house.

SE: And who was living in it at the time you were giving the parties?

EW: Lukas Foss.

SE: Oh, Lukas Foss rented it.

EW: Yeah.

SE: Oh, that's where they lived.

EW: Right. I think I mentioned something about going to-I forgot to say that-about going to the house that they lived in before they got to the aviary, the Fosses, way back. Forgot to mention. . . .

SE: Talk about that.

EW: The first dinner that I ever went to at the Foss's house-way back-they had Stravinsky and his wife, Vera, and Darius Milhaud, who was a very famous composer. M-i-l-h-a-u-d.

SE: What was his first name?

EW: Darius. D-a-r-i-u-s. Who died a very untimely death. Stravinsky and Vera and Milhaud and his wife and Frank and I were the only guests. And Cornelia cooked that dinner. And I found out afterwards from Max Edel, the doctor, that Vera took a bite of everything that Stravinsky was served first to make sure it was okay for him. She watched his food like a hawk. And she was very particular about all that. I thought about that when I remembered that first meal. The potatoes that Cornelia cooked were like little rocks that she served. It was the most awful dinner I can remember ever eating. And Stravinsky ate it all and was totally charmed by Cornelia, which everybody always was, so it was okay. It's just something I remember, that's all. [laughs]

SE: You also told a story about Rico and Picasso. Rico Lebrun. . . .

EW: I didn't repeat that?

SE: No.

EW: Oh, at one of the parties in the aviary somebody was talking about the influence of Picasso to Rico, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you about Picasso." He passed a fruit bowl and he picked up a plum or a peach, took a bite out of it, and put it back. And he said, "Now, who can touch it?" He said, "That's Picasso." And he claims that it took him years to get beyond Picasso. But he did get beyond Picasso-this devoted student, we'll say. He got on top of it. Particularly when he went to the Dante series.

SE: Was Picasso Lebrun's. . . .

EW: Mentor?

SE: Not mentor. Well, did he know Picasso?

EW: No.

SE: No. But then is that who he looked towards the most?

EW: No. He had a lot of, to quote him, "Bosses." He gave lectures; his lectures were marvelous. Somebody wrote about him that he looked like Savonarola when he stood up there giving his lectures. He was a very articulate person. Also he knew reams of poetry by heart. He knew all of A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf by heart. He was at our ranch once and we were walking, and I must have said something about that book, about that essay, and suddenly he began quoting from it, verbatim. He convered the entire essay as we walked. I couldn't get over this man. He knew French poetry, a lot of that, which he could also repeat. I don't know, where am I?

SE: You were talking about. . . . I was asking who his influences were. And you were saying. . . .

EW: Oh, Goya. El Greco. Signorelli. He worked on Signorelli frescoes in Orvieto for years, a couple of years. He was up there on the scaffolding helping to . . .

SE: Conserve it?

EW: . . . conserve them. And he loved. . . . Oh, his other mentor was in Colemar, the triptych. Grünewald. Loved. . . . I mean, he had a lot of "bosses," to quote him. Bonnard, for example. He loved many artists, but the ones that he talked about, I think, the most were El Greco and Goya. Very big on Goya.

SE: And when you were painting, did you feel like you had the same influences? Or did you. . . .

EW: Yes, they became very strongly my influences. I don't know whether that was in this little teeny bit, but I was in Italy with Rico and Constance.

SE: No there's, I think, more on that already that we have.

EW: On another tape?

SE: Yes.

EW: Oh, okay. Well, I think we've covered. . . . Don't you think we've covered enough?

SE: Yes.

EW: Okay. [End of replacement tape; original interview continues on following page]

SE: This is the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, interview with Edith R. Wyle. This is Sharon Emanuelli, the interviewer, and this is tape number three, in the second session. Okay, what were you speaking about?

EW: Let's see. I was talking about the studio. Right, which became the center of my life and how I would get home late, late in the evening and how when I. . . . It took me a long time to get over resenting my family for interfering with the fact that I really needed to be up there painting, till I finally came to terms with that and realized that it wasn't their fault. And I began to give them quality time even though it wasn't quantity time. I was never good at the PTA or any of that sort of thing, and a lot of other people I knew resented that in me, but I think my children turned out all right, so. . . . Anyhow, the group that were up there that. . . . Teresa Ptaczinski was up there. Teresa, she's gone back to her maiden name, Teresa Sorci. And she was married to Bill Ptaczinski. [pronounced tah-shin-ski-Trans.]. Bill was a fine artist. He was very good. He was Rico's. . . . He became sort of a helper to Rico [Lebrun-Ed.] in his studio, and I thought Teresa was. . . . I liked her work even better. To me, Teresa was the best painter that we had up there. She was awfully good. I just loved what she did. We called her the "Mad Sicilian." She had a Sicilian heritage. Have you ever met her?

SE: Hm-mm. [shaking head no]

EW: You never have. She was awfully, really very good. Eventually Bill obtained a job teaching at UC Santa Barbara, and they moved up there.

SE: Where was Howard [Warshaw-Ed.] teaching at this time?

EW: Howard also had a job teaching at UC Santa Barbara first, and he may have had something to do with Bill getting there. I don't know. But he became one of their shining-light professors at UC Santa Barbara. He loved it.

SE: Did he move up there?

EW: He moved up there, yes. He really took to it. For a while he came back and forth, and then when it became a sure thing he moved up there. He loved the academic life, but unfortunately he became sick. Amazing. It's dstill hard for me to believe that such a healthy, strong, strapping man could get so sick and could die so quickly, but he did. Anyhow, the group up at the studio was very nice and we were all very close, and my closest friend was Cornelia [Foss-Ed.]. We shared a studio. No, I guess she had the room next door to me, that's right. They opened into each other. Our work was very different, but she goofed off a lot and I didn't in those days. Now she exists to get into her studio! And I think that's fine. So I was in that studio until Rico became. . . . Well, first of all Rico was asked to be the artist in residence for a year at Yale, to replace the abstract artist who was the head of that department-that school there practically. Beginning with an "A."

SE: Joseph Albers.

EW: Joseph Albers. He took Joseph Albers' place for that year. And as I understand it, the graduate students almost all had nervous breakdowns because the contrast between Albers and Lebrun was enormous, and Albers was supposed to stay away and didn't. Albers used to come in and look over the students' work and get upset. It was a tough situation. Some good artists stayed happily with Rico. One of them was Sheila Hicks. Interestingly enough, she became a really close friend of Rico's and Constance's [Rico's wife-Ed.]. After that Rico had a year abroad as the artist in residence at the American Academy of Art in Rome, so he was also away during that period. I was up in our studio, of course, that whole time. We all were there. Except I guess Cornelia by then had moved east. Ruth Greenberg was up there. She was the only more or less beginning painter. He took her as an experiment. Actually. She had been a wood carver, and she was good at that, but as a painter she had a way to go. But we all had a good time being up there together. Phyllis Shapiro came up for a while. Then she became

Phyllis Contini. She was a good painter.

SE: Ruth Greenberg came as a sculptor, in other words.

EW: No, she came. . . . She started painting up there; she was painting.

SE: But what was the experiment?

EW: Well, as I said, Rico had been upset about the little copying Lebruns that were coming out of the Jepson [Art Institute-Ed.], and he had decided that one didn't have to go through the fundamental things that one always went through in art school, like having plaster casts of legs and arms and ears and all that sort of thing to learn from. But if you were wanting to do a painting of a man running you took a look at a man running, and if you learned how to look at him and did it correctly you could do a man running without having to go through all that. Well, I don't think that worked myself. [laughter] I don't know. Anyhow, as I said, we were up there, and we were definitely a group, and we met with him every Monday-with Rico. We used to read philosophical tracts. We read Jacob Bronowski. There was an article about science and art in The Nation magazine, and we went through things like. . . . We discussed that sort of thing, which was great. It was wonderful. I really enjoyed it. Oh, another person that was up there very briefly was Ruth Mellinkoff. She argued with everything then and we were all glad when she left. Subsequently she went on to get her doctorate at UCLA in art history, which was fine. And write her books.

SE: Talk about Bill Brice a little-if you're finished with the studio.

EW: Well, Bill, I didn't have any real. . . . I just met him socially, primarily, through Rico, but I think I have to. . . . The important thing about him in my life is that after Rico died. . . . I had a studio at that point that I had built in the rear of our garden.

SE: Where were you living? In Westwood?

EW: We lived in Westwood, and we had a badminton court back there, and over the badminton court we built this large room, which was almost exactly like the one in which we're now sitting, same shape. I moved in to that studio about, oh, I think two months before Rico became really, really sick and. . . .

SE: Did he have cancer?

EW: Yes, he did. And he spent about the last two months of his life in our house. He almost died there. Two weeks later he died in his own house. But that's another aspect of this story. Anyhow, after he died I felt there was nobody I could talk to. I mean, Howard [Warshaw-Ed.] was way off in Santa Barbara, and there were no people that were following the same kind of, the line of painting that I was interested in, that I was a part of, except Bill Brice. So I called Billy up and I asked him if he'd come over and talk. So one Sunday morning he came over to my studio, and we spent the whole morning talking. It was wonderful. I loved it. We talked about what I was trying to do, where I was going to go, and what direction and all that sort of thing. And after he left, as we were walking out, he turned to me and said, "Of course you and I both know that we need to paint to survive." And I agreed, and that's the last time I ever really got in my studio. By a peculiar quirk, I started the. . . . The Egg and The Eye began to take over at that point, but I was sure I would get back to work in my studio. I would never let anybody even walk in that studio, because I didn't want anything moved. I was going to continue what I was doing. One thing led to another, and I became more and more involved in getting The Egg and The Eye going. And I enjoyed it, I have to say, so that was the end. I never got back.

SE: Would you go back now and talk a little bit more about Rico at the end of his life? After he came back from Italy.

EW: [coughing] Came back from. . . . Oh, turn it. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: . . . from Italy, sick. He was very depressed. He'd been extremely depressed over there, and it was a real sickness, in which he stopped painting, he wouldn't do anything. But at the same time he had this commission to do a huge mural in Pomona, at the college.

SE: Was this in the same year he died, or earlier?

EW: What do you mean?

SE: He died in '63, you said. I was trying to place. . . .

EW: Oh, it was before that, of course. Oh, no, no, it was before. And he. . . . I have his letters and they're dated, but I can't put my. . . .

SE: Okay.

EW: They're in the house.

SE: That's fine.

EW: This was at the American Academy in Italy. Most of the time that he was there. . . . Oh, I forgot to tell you that before he went to the American Academy Frank and I and the kids, who were-Diana was 12, Stephen was 15, and Nancy was 14-we took all of them on the Constitution and sailed to Italy, and we went to Capri where Rico was staying. He and Constance were there for the summer in a house that his mother and brother and sister had rented for them at the top of Capri. We went there. We stayed in a pensione nearby.

SE: Did his family still live there?

EW: Well, I think that his sister and. . . . I think they've died by now. His mother died about a month after he did, and we met. . . .

SE: I mean, at the time they were living in Italy, his family.

EW: They were. . . . Yes, they'd been there all along, in Naples. And we met. . . . And we took. . . . We were with David [Lebrun-Ed.]. Their son came with us. David was going to the same high school. . . . The Lebruns and the Wyles were like family. We were very, very close. We did everything together, and Rico meant something different to Frank than he did to me. For Frank, he was somebody he went hunting with, and he was his best friend. He was his pal, and he was like a brother. And that's the way Rico spoke about Frank. He adored Frank. And Constance. . . . We were all very good friends. Constance really ran the business-Rico's business-so she was up at the studio all the time and every day. And we had talked them into sending David to Verde Valley High School, in Sedona, Arizona, and then when the Lebruns were gone in the summer. . . . The first summer David spent a lot of his time with us in our home.

SE: Your children were at Verde Valley also?

EW: They were at Verde Valley, yes, at the same time. And he went. . . . He wasn't on the boat with us, when we went to Italy, but I guess he might have been there already when we arrived. I still remember, the only time I ever fainted was climbing up the steps to the little villa that Rico's sister, brother, and mother had rented up there at the top of the mountain, because it was about 250 steps up. It was the height of the day and it was hot. I made it to the top and just collapsed! It was really amazing. And then we ate lunch outside under an arbor, and Rico's mother, who had piercing eyes just like Rico's-it was amazing; she really had the same kind of eyes-made me realize that it wasn't just Jewish mothers that tell you to eat all the time, because it was "Mangia, mangia, mangia" the whole afternoon. You had to eat it whether you liked it or not. Rico's sister was up there, who had been a singer in La Scala Opera. And her son, whom she named Rico after Rico, and also Rico's older brother who was . . .I don't remember anything about him, much. But they had all been up there. Constance was miserable and couldn't wait to leave, and I don't think Rico could wait either. We were the saviors that came along, and Rico was ashamed. He had not been back to Naples for years, and he had the kind of shame that you can have for your, if you've grown out of something and you come back. He looked at these people and their political discussions, and all these things upset him a great deal. He couldn't wait for us to meet his very best friend when he was growing up, a man named Mario, who was a Communist. When we met him, we were down at the pensione and Mario came along. Rico introduced us, and Mario, the Communist, wouldn't sit down with Frank because Frank was an industrialist. Frank was shocked, and then he thought, "Gee, I'm an industrialist." [laughs] I mean, he didn't realize it until that moment. But we were with him quite a bit and. . . .

SE: He got over it, huh?

EW: He got over it. After we were in Capri for a week or so, the Lebruns left with us. They said goodbye, and we all went to Naples, where we spent a very funny night, because in the hotel we suddenly found that there was no water, and Constance at this point had had it. I mean she had it. We were going to go out to dinner. She said, "I'm not leaving this place. I'm going to bed. You go out." There was no water, so we said, "You've got to come with us," but she said her feet were dirty. She couldn't stand it. She had to wash, so we found some bottles of champagne or wine or something, and we washed her feet off for her to make her come. [laughter] So when we got into town we found out it wasn't just our hotel whose people kept telling us it was just our floor which was out of water and it would soon be fixed. They weren't telling us the truth. It was the entire town. The water main had broken, and that whole section was closed off. There was no water. But the next day everything was okay and we began looking at things together. From there we went to Venice, where Rico had never been, and for me this was a tremendous treat because I went to see Tintoretto in the Scuola di San Roco with him. In fact, I saw many of my favorites with him at that time, and a very funny thing was the. . . . I said Tintoretto was lucky because he could fill in the negative space with halos and wings and stuff, but I couldn't figure out how to do that. [laughter] And the next day I found a cartoon, this document that he had written up, saying, "This entitles

Edith Wyle to put halos and wings in her paintings anytime or anywhere she wishes." I've lost the paper, but he had that kind of humor, which was fun. And it was wonderful seeing these things in his eyes. In Florence we saw the Massaccios and Ucello and. . . . He came running back one day; he had been out by himself, and he said to me that I had to go immediately. It was during the siesta period and. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: At the moment I'm having trouble remembering the name of the artist who he had just seen, but he had talked the keeper of the church into letting me in during the siesta period when it was closed. My orders were that I had to go and sit there and look at the mural on the wall facing me first and not turn my head to look at the next mural until at least after 10 minutes-then look at the one on that wall. And then I could come back and we would talk about it. But that was the sort of thing that was fantastic on that trip. It really was great. And when we were in the Massaccio frescoes, we wanted to put money into the little plate so that the electric light would go on. The kids wanted to do that. We were all together on this. And Rico said, "No, you may not do that. You have to first look at the Massaccio the way Massaccio looked at the wall when he painted it and there was no electricity. So first you look at that for at least a half an hour, then you can put the money in and see it if you want to. So we did that and we all appreciated all this a great deal. I mean, it was a fantastic trip that we had, just the two families together. And then we went to. . . . In Venice, as I said, he'd never been there before. We all had very good time with him there, particularly in the restaurants when he. . . . We sat down in one restaurant and he said, "I don't want anybody to ask me what he should order. I'm not here to do that for you. You have to figure it out for yourself." Then he picked up the menu and he said, "You've gotta have this. You have to have that." [laughter] And he ended up by ordering everything that we should eat. Anyhow, when he left us he went off to the American Academy in Rome. That's when he began that stint, and that's when he began. . . . After a few months he suddenly became more and more depressed. And he wrote us long letters telling us about his depression.

SE: But he didn't know it was associated with illness? Or he knew he was ill and. . . .

EW: I don't think so. I don't know that it was, myself.

SE: Oh, I see.

EW: But it might have been. I don't know. Whether the two came together or not I really don't know. David came back with us to America-I know that-and they were by themselves. And he stayed with us till school was ready, and then he went off to Verde Valley. But then Rico got a commission to do this mural in Pomona on Genesis, and he had done a great many drawings for that and he did an enormous amount of the work at the American Academy to get ready for it, which he continued to do when he came back. Oh, before that he had a Dante show, when he came back. That was the first. . . . As far as he was concerned, that was a real breakthrough for him, that Dante show. The Dante. . . . You've seen some drawings from that series.

SE: Some of them, I have seen some.

EW: He felt that he had finally broken free of Picasso and all the influences that. . . . And was really himself doing his own work.

SE: Where was the show?

EW: The Dante was at SC [USC-Ed.]. Everybody knows about that. I've got all the programs and everything; the catalog's in the house somewhere. But the Smithsonian has all that too, so. . . .

SE: They do?

EW: I think so.

SE: Oh, yes, they. . . . A lot of that they will have eventually.

EW: I know they have his letters because I've sent copies of my letters to the Smithsonian.

SE: Oh, you have.

EW: I wouldn't give the actual ones, but I sent them Xeroxes of the whole thing.

SE: Well, later you'll have to, I mean, something will have to happen with the actual ones. What will you do?

EW: I don't know.

SE: You said he felt he was free of Picasso's influence.

EW: Yes, at that point he was free. I mean, it was obvious. But he was obsessed. I mean, he was really. . . . He

was trying to get himself in the canvas. That's the only way I can describe it. He really was trying to get inside that canvas, and it was painful almost to watch, and I think that he broke. I think he got that decorative, that Picasso-esque look out of him and began to dig in and do his with sweat, blood, and everything else, which is what he was after. Then he went out there and began doing this mural and he. . . . He had Bill Ptaczinsky helping him. He also had Jim Pinto, who was another very close friend of his. Jim taught at the Instituto in San Miguel De Allende in Mexico. He was from Czechoslovakia, a refugee. He and his wife Ruska were. . . . They had become very close. Rico lived in Mexico for. . . . He taught at the Instituto for a year or so, and that's when they became close. Jim also came up to help on the mural. It was extremely hot out there. He had a 75-foot-high wall that he was working on in the foyer, and it was the height of the summer in Pomona, and if you have any idea of what that weather is like.

SE: Hot.

EW: It was scalding. The heat was just awful. He had to stand up on that scaffold, way up there, and he was just encapsulated by the heat. So on weekends he used to come in and stay with us to cool off. For me that was a very nice time, because Rico would sit in the garden and he would relate to me his ideas. He would discuss his breakthroughs and all that sort of thing. It was wonderful. But then he began to get sick, and gradually he got very sick.

SE: He didn't finish the murals?

EW: Yes, he did. But I think they've deteriorated. I don't know if they've been kept up like they should. I thought they were fantastic. Did you ever see them?

SE: I think I have seen them.

EW: They were. . . .

SE: But I don't remember seeing them in. . . . I remember the Orozco.

EW: The [José-Ed.] Orozco was in the dining hall, and he was in the foyer, this big thing.

SE: Right. I believe I've seen them.

EW: But there were other ones. . . .

SE: Well, because I was there for about two seconds, that's why. I didn't have a chance to stay. I haven't been out there a lot.

EW: Right. It had to be seen from two vantage points, from down below, and then you could go up some stairs and look across at it from the balcony, so that he had to think of that when he did the whole thing in terms of what he was drawing. The Genesis was the theme.

SE: I saw the Orozco. I remember looking a long time at that, and then I had to leave, so I didn't get to. . . .

EW: Well, this was in black. . . . The acrylics were just coming out. Nobody had used. . . .

SE: Black and white, right.

EW: And this was black and white, the whole thing. And gray.

SE: Right. And he used acrylics on the mural?

EW: Yes, he did, on the whole thing. Which was interesting. I suppose that may have caused some of the deterioration, too.

SE: May have.

EW: I don't know, but he was concerned about things like that, so I don't know. Anyhow, it was. . . . When he finished that, he was really beginning to get very sick-if I'm thinking correctly chronologically-maybe not for a while. But then he became very, very sick and it was obviously cancer. Soon it was obviously terminal and he was in the hospital. Frank was the one that had to tell Rico it was terminal. Nobody else could. I have to say that the only time that I've ever seen Frank cry ever was when he came home after that day. Not even when his own parents died. I mean, he really. . . . It was. . . . We were all so emotionally involved with him, with Rico, and we didn't even have to discuss. . . . They had lived in a tiny little apartment off Barrington, on Chenault, and they had bought a lot in Zuma Beach, which Frank-and I-both talked them in to buying it and building their own house and having his own big studio right there. And so we'd gone out looking for land for this. We looked in

Palos Verdes. We looked all over for land with them. Finally, they found a beautiful lot and bought it. They had hired their architect and it was all designed and. . . .

SE: But they were still at the apartment.

EW: It was being built and they were still in that little apartment. We knew that that wasn't a very pleasant place to have to go back to from the hospital, and Frank and I didn't even discuss it. We both said, "Of course, they'll come to us." Rico instantly accepted. This was very hard on Constance. I mean, I know it's not what she wanted because she's more of a New England type, you know, a different kind of background and she didn't want to accept our. . . .

SE: Largess.

EW: Our largess, yeah, right. But she couldn't go against Rico, so they came. They came right from the hospital, and we had a hospital bed sent up and we rearranged a room. Then every single day all the so-called "disciples" arrived. They came. . . . They met downstairs; about fourteen of them, it seemed to me, were milling around wanting to do something. "What could they do," you know? And Frank, the very day that the Lebruns arrived. . . . I went out to do some errand, and when I came back I found Bob Portis, who is an orthopedic surgeon leaving our house. And I asked him what he was doing there and he replied, "Oh, didn't you know? Your husband leaned over, and he has crushed part of his vertebrae. If you looked at it, it would look like crushed crab. And I have just ordered a hospital bed for him and he's got to be in traction in bed." So Frank was in our bedroom in a hospital bed in traction for I think about eight weeks. And Rico was in his hospital bed. In between there was a little room that was like a darkroom that I had decided would become my office, my sanctuary, and I was in there and I could listen to both hospital beds going up and down all the time. And then, of course, there group for lunch every day, and for dinner they'd stay because they were there to help. Aach! [untranscribable sound meaning something like a cross between "Yuck" and "Help!"-Trans.] And at that time he had a big retrospective given for him at Newport Harbor, which was at that time on the water there-you know, in that big like a boathouse kind of thing there?

SE: I don't think I ever saw it.

EW: Well, he had had a lot. . . . He'd been. . . . Doing sculpture was late in his career, and he had had the foundry in San Francisco, which he watched very carefully with everything they did. . . . They really wrecked a couple of his last pieces, but he had a helper, George Goyer, who is still over. . . .

SE: So George [Goyer-Ed.] was his [Lebrun's-Ed.] right arm.

EW: George was his right arm. We had a big deck outside the bedroom that housed Rico. He was in my daughters' bedrooms, but they were away at school, so it was fine. They put the sculpture on the deck and, with Rico directing him from his bed, George made the corrections in the sculpture. It was an incredible thing. And got them ready at. . . . The night before the show opened down there, he managed to get it in place and hang that show, which was a huge exhibition-to which all of us went. The disciples, as I put it, were all there-I think very unhappy, but also happy about this splendid exhibition that did take place.

SE: He was able to be there?

EW: The show. . . . Oh, Rico was in bed. No, he couldn't go. No, just the rest of us went. And Frank couldn't go because he was in bed, and Rico was in his bed, and we came back and told them about it afterwards. But that was a very difficult time because Rico was in great pain throughout this entire thing. It was like he became one of his paintings. It really was. That was all I can say. I mean he was. . . . He kept talking about feeling like a caged animal, and he used that metaphor so often that after he died I prevailed on Frank to take me to Africa. I had the desire. . . . Oh, I know, I went to the zoo in between to draw. . . . I was drawing from some animals, and I said to Frank, "I've got to get these animals out of their cages. Let's go to Africa." That's how we happened to go. Because I wanted to see, I wanted to free everything. [laughs] We were all in there. Anyhow. It was a very. . . . I don't think there was any time in our lives that was more dramatic than that, or more poignant. And the house was finished in time for him to be in it-his house-so he was there for the last two weeks, I think, of his life.

SE: How long did he stay with you?

EW: Well, I thought it was about two months, but I don't know if it was that long, quite that long, but I think it was. Or close to that.

SE: By the time Frank was out of traction was he still there?

EW: No, Frank got out.

SE: Before that.

EW: Yes. [reflecting] Yes. Oh, there were so many things that used to happen. I mean he'd be one minute. . . . First of all, we could close off the suite that they were in. Upstairs our master bedroom was on one side of the hall, and on the other side were two bedrooms, which had a sliding door closing the whole thing off. And those doors were closed most of the time. It was heavily monitored about who was able to see Rico, including me. I wasn't allowed in there very often either. And. . . .

SE: Constance did the monitoring.

EW: Constance did that. [laughs] And then sometimes they would ask me if I would stay with him the whole time and talk to him and so forth. But people would come in the evening and hope that they would have a chance to see him. Sometimes she let some come up, sometimes she didn't, depending upon [who] she felt he would like to see and could be with.

SE: What he could handle.

EW: Right. So it was. . . . Ruth Levin, who was Ruth Schireson then (she was married to Sylvan), had become good friends of Rico's. They used to come over. And of Constance's as well. And a lot of their friends, many of their other friends that we got to know, too, pretty well, so. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: To go back to the early days when I first met Cornelia and, therefore, met Lukas Foss as well, her husband, who was brought out here to head the music department at UCLA, and they were very social. They gave lots of parties and they knew all the German artists that were here-like some of those in the Decadent Art Show. I mean, they knew Stravinsky very well. They knew Thomas Mann. They lived in the Thomas Mann house when I first met them. Thomas Mann had gone, but they were friendly with one of the sons-I think it's Michael, who was a violist and who took them in to that house, which is now owned by Jon Lappen, whom I know, too, very well. But she bought it from them. Jon had bought the house from the Mann family. And the Fosses used to live there with Michael Mann. Then they moved into a house that was Alma Mahler's. They later lived in a house up above the Sunset Strip, and I still remember a wonderful evening there in the early years of knowing them, when Cornelia invited Stravinsky and his wife and Darius Milhaud. He died a very early death, but he was teaching at Mills College at the time.

SE: A composer also? [referring to Milhaud-Ed.]

EW: It was just the six of us. Oh, one of the greats, yes. Anyhow, there were the six of us and Cornelia cooked this dinner and. . . . Later on, I discovered that Stravinsky. . . . His food was all tested by his wife, Vera, before he took a bite of anything because she said he was so delicate and so forth. Cornelia made potatoes that night that were like rocks. [laughter] I still remember that. And he ate them, but he was charmed by Cornelia. She could get away with just about anything. She always was very charming and delightful, and later on they moved to a place that they rented, which had originally been John Barrymore's aviary, attached to his house on Tower Road above the Beverly Hills Hotel. This aviary was a very peculiar construction, but it just suited them beautifully. You entered a downstairs hall and in that hall [Lukas] had his piano, which was separate from everything else. I guess in the back there was a little kitchen, and they ate their meals outside overlooking the valley, which was very nice, and they could do their eating out there. But upstairs it was one tremendous room, which was their bedroom, with a bathroom off of it. And that was it. And their parties were all, of course, upstairs in that bedroom.

SE: In the bedroom. [chuckles]

EW: Sometimes we had models there. We used to go and draw from the models there. I spent a great deal of time up there in that house. And at their parties they had [Aldous-Ed.] Huxley and [Gregor-Ed.] Piatagorsky. All those people used to come there. It was a very, very stimulating period. Piatagorsky was writing an autiobiography, and he insisted on reading chapters of it to us at these parties. I still remember Norman Panama and Marcia being there, and Norman sitting right in front of Piatagorsky and falling asleep in front of him, during the reading of this book. But it was so stimulating. It was fantastic. And Rico and Constance were invited to those, too, of course. Leo Smit, who became a big friend of mine, is a composer. He was brought out by Lukas. They all met at the American Academy in Rome, and then when Lukas became head of the Music Department at UCLA, he brought Leo out to head the piano department. And so they were all here again together, and then ultimately, when they went back to Buffalo, they again got the head of something in the Music Department for Leo again, so he went back to Buffalo, which is where he still is. Though retired from the university, he still gives concerts. Anyhow, even though I was brought up by musicians, being around composers in this particular period of my life gave a totally different dimension to my understanding of music-and art. It helped a great deal. In fact, Stravinsky wrote a book called Poetics, which I think he delivered. . . . I think they were lectures he delivered at Harvard at one time, in which he compares visual art to composing music, which was something that mattered a great deal to us at that period. And so it was a very wonderful period. It was terrific.

SE: So that was in the fifties.

EW: Yes. Oh, it was awful when that ended. I just loved it. When they moved away, they took a lot of that with them. When I go back east to visit, I again encounter a lot of interesting people at their homes, which is very nice, but nothing like the early days.

SE: Sounds like they bought their homes according to who lived in it before. [chuckles]

EW: Well, you know, the person who bought it afterwards-I happened to see it in a magazine-was. . . . What's her name? Bergen.

SE: Candace?

EW: Candace Bergen bought it. She made it look a little Hollywood, I thought. In fact, it was decorated by. . . . I think it was a guy that used to work at The Egg and The Eye. I can't remember his name, but he became a decorator and he became well known. There was a very funny story though. Katharine Hepburn used to rent the big house. The people who owned the big house at that time were the [Hugo-Ed.] Grimaldis.

SE: This is the Barrymore house.

EW: The Barrymore house. It was owned by the Grimaldis. Hugo was his name, Ugo. [pronounces it "Oo-go"-Trans.] And they claimed that the head of Monaco, the king, was a pretender. Actually, he was supposed to have been the king, the rightful heir, really. He used to rent the house out to Katharine Hepburn in the summer and one day Lukas was in his birthday suit walking around his bedroom upstairs. Cornelia was, I think, in the east, and suddenly a voice said, "Oh, pardon me, I was looking to see who was here, if anyone was here." And it was Katherine Hepburn who walked right in on him when. . . . [laughter] Anyhow, she was up there, I guess, for the summer, the next. . . . Part of the main house. Well, so now we get back to after Rico died.

SE: Yes.

EW: As I told you about Bill Brice coming and that being the last time I set foot in the studio, and it was a fluke. I guess I have to tell you how that happened.

SE: Yes.

EW: It really began. . . . First of all, since my painting was not in the mainstream at that time, which was going totally abstract and I wasn't at all. . . . Rico was a humanist and an expressionist I guess. And I followed in that tradition-as did Howard Warshaw and Bill Brice and a number of other people, but. . . .

SE: Did you know Robert Crimean?

EW: Yes, I've met him. I liked him, too. I liked his work, but I didn't really know him well, no. I was painting away in my studio, and Betty Chase. . . . I hesitate to put this on here, but she used to come and spend a lot of time in the studio, and I didn't like. . . . I had a hard time getting to work and she wanted to weave. She used to do that up at Rico's studio, too. Her husband was Rico's doctor.

SE: I see.

EW: Albert.

SE: Albert Chase.

EW: Yes, Albert Chase. I met them through the Lebruns. She was at my studio quite a bit. Then we got a ranch, and she felt that she'd like to have a ranch, and she said, "I think I'll get a job and be a Kelly Girl, a secretary or something, because Albert refuses to do anything about a ranch. He doesn't want one and I do." So I said, out of the top of my head, I think, I said, "Don't do something like that." I said, "I've been thinking a lot about folk art, which nobody realizes is an art, and contemporary crafts, which nobody realizes is an art at all, and you could, we could, you could start a gallery and you could sit at a loom and look beautiful and have this gallery." I began to think this thing through as I was talking. I had seen a place in New York where they specialized in omelets, and I thought, "Gee, we could combine the two things and have an omelet restaurant upstairs," and I said, "While they waited to get sseated, they would be forced to look at the gallery, and you could run a place like that and make the money and have a ranch and I'll help you get started." She said, "I wouldn't know how to do a thing like that." And I said, "Well, I wouldn't either, but let's go and look." So I went with her to look for a place to rent, and I said to her, "I think it would be smart, the L.A. County Museum just opened across the street, so let's see if we can find anything near it."

SE: So this is around '65?

EW: It opened in '65, November of '65, so it must have been '64 already, sixty. . . . Yes, late '64. Beginning of '65.

SE: Was this after Rico died?

EW: Yes, he died in '63.

SE: So you were working in the studio?

EW: Yes, I was still working.

SE: And that was before you had your conversation with. . . .

EW: That's right. I didn't call Bill for quite a while.

SE: Right. I see, okay.

EW: So I went with her, and we found the building that we [the Craft and Folk Art Museum-Ed.] now own. I knew nothing about business; I really had never been in business-and Frank said to me, "If you are going to have a place like that, you have to have it capitalized so that you can put a restaurant in. Where's the money going to come from for it?" I mean, I was really naive about the whole thing. I threw my back out at that point; consequently I was in bed for two weeks. During that two weeks I telephoned thirty people who knew me-they didn't know Betty-and got them to put the money up, which for us. . . . I received $75,000, which was a lot at that time, in order to build the restaurant and put the place in shape, which we were leasing. You know, we only leased one half of the building. It wasn't even half. The other half had the whole top floor, and we just had the mezzanine and the bottom floor. None of the investors planned to make a profit. They didn't dream they would, but they didn't want to take a loss either, and they had put their money on me, on my aesthetic judgment. They didn't know Betty, and therefore I was compelled to be the buyer at the outset. I began to enjoy this. I'd never worked with people ever in my life before, and so I selected the first show, and I just found a. . . . Somewhere I just was looking at the first catalogue, which we still have. I got Milt Zolotow to. . . . He came up with the logo for The Egg and The Eye, and that was really off the top of his head. We took him into this messy little place, and we told him that we thought The Egg and The Eye would be the name. Frank and I thought that up in bed one morning. It was taken from The Egg and I, which was a novel made by a Canadian lady [Betty MacDonald-Ed.] about raising chickens in the wild of Canada [actually it's on Vashon Island, near Seattle-Trans.]. I changed the personal pronoun "I" to "E-y-e" and put a "the" to give it equal billing, in front of it, and so that is how that happened. And when I said that to Milt, he said, "Well, how about this?" and he drew the logo on the wall, which was a such a potent, powerful logo that we're still not able to get rid of it. [laughter] But it was very good. In fact, that's the former front door over there, inside the bathroom of my home studio. That big photograph was in The Egg and The Eye entrance and I put it in here when we became a museum.

SE: Well, Milt Zolotow was a graphic designer.

EW: He was a graphic designer, and he had been a painter.

SE: He still is, I guess.

EW: Yes, he's. . . . Well, he's up there being an artist again-in San Francisco and Berkeley. You know that Milt once had a studio with Howard Warshaw in New York, years and years ago, before he got married.

SE: No!

EW: Yes. Anyhow, we had these thirty people, and the women began to volunteer their services. I did the buying, and we found a chef. She was a cateress. Her name was Rodessa Moore, who catered for many of the Hollywood stars and in Belair . . . all over the place. Catherine Marmor had used her quite a bit and recommended her. Then we had a summer in which a committee tested omelets to see if we could come up with a recipe that would be the exact way we would make every omelet. We choose the best omelet book, the best recipes. And after that summer we got it. We had Rodessa, who took over as the chef. I think we started with about thirty omelettes upstairs, with different things inside. We also had soups. My idea was to have equal billing for soup and omelettes, not just omelettes. Soups didn't take on as well as the omelettes did, but. . . . And then downstairs in the gallery we planned the first show. I enjoyed every piece of it. I liked working with the people a lot. That was just a whole new experience in my life.

SE: What was the first show?

EW: I had always been isolated in the studio before. This way I was, I had all these other people around, volunteering.

SE: What was the first show?

EW: First show was Eskimo sculpture, and that. . . . We had met a couple called Feheley [Bud and _____--Ed.], who lived in Toronto, Canada, and had a fantastic collection of Eskimo sculpture, which they had given to the Bank of Toronto, I believe. Through them, we met Dr. George Swinton who was the Eskimo art authority. He had written a book on Eskimo sculpture. And he was a professor in Canada, some college. He collected the first show for us, which were sculptures, now worth thousands and thousands of dollars. We had such a hard time getting it through customs, because they weren't signed pieces and they didn't want to let them through as art. And the piece that came from the most remote area they thought was fake, because it looked like asbestos and they destroyed one of them. Carving it to prove that it was asbestos, which it wasn't, of course. It came from Arctic Bay, which is as close to the North Pole as you can get.

SE: Soapstone?

EW: Well, it wasn't soapstone. I don't know what it was, but, anyhow, something not far removed. So that was. . . . And then at the same time we had showed a guy named. . . . Gee, I just had my hand on that. I wonder if it's in here? [Interruption in taping]

EW: Yes, the first show had J. B. Blunk, a dedicated craftsman. He did a beautiful chair. . . .

SE: Oh, yeah.

EW: . . . which is pictured in this brochure. This original brochure was designed by Milt Zolotow, and he taught me how he did this. And then I did all the brochures after that myself, using this format. Because he pointed out that if I stuck to this format it would be recognized, and that was very smart. So I did it, except that what was not smart was that it was an expensive shape for mailing to large groups. And Richard Phipps was a very fine weaver that I haven't heard from since, but he wove rugs that were hand dyed by him. And that was along with the Eskimo art. The sculpture, the etchings, and stone engravings. The Eskimo art was discovered in about '48 by James Houston, who had been up there for many years before. . . .

SE: His wife's name is. . . .

EW: Alma. That was the first wife. Second wife is Alice, but Alma was the one that went through all this with him in the beginning and birthed his sons, and he was up there. . . . After the war he went to the Canadian Consulate or Embassy, and said that he would like to establish an art cooperative. They needed an art director and they needed to start something up there to help the Eskimos-or Inuit, as they are really called. So they allowed him to go to Cape Dorset and become the first. . . . What's the word I'm trying to say? It isn't director. Well, he was the art director, but he was more or the less the. . . .

SE: Like an administrator?

EW: The administrator. Thank you very much. He was the first art administrator.

SE: Was he an anthropologist to begin with?

EW: No, he was an artist himself. After he was there for a number of years, he left and went to Steuben and became the director of Steuben Glass and then he designed a lot of the Steuben glass that comes out of there now. And Alma. . . . They were up there for eight years. She had her children, and they had wild experiences, which have been seen on film and in lots of books that Houston's written since then. Frank and I went up Baffin Island and saw all that about twenty years ago. That was one of the great. . . . I guess that was about the greatest trip of my life. It was a wonderful adventure.

SE: Was that before you decided to do The Egg and The Eye?

EW: No, this was after.

SE: After. After you'd had the Eskimo show and everything?

EW: We had the Eskimo show and Bud Feheley knew them very well.

SE: I see.

EW: And so we met. . . . So I. . . . Oh, I know. Two years after we started The Egg and The Eye, we had a big auction, a big benefit. We needed to raise money. I should go back and tell you that everything that I. . . . Betty was not happy with any, with almost anything. I mean I told her since they [the investors-Ed.] wanted me to be the buyer, that I would be the buyer and she would be the manager of the place. She didn't enjoy that. She did not wish to do inventory. So I said, "Okay, I'll do the inventory," which I loved doing. It was like Christmas every

day, opening those things up and recording them. And anyhow she did not last beyond, I think, two years or a year and a half and she was out. But I'm still involved. [laughter] I became more and more involved.

SE: It was obviously your project.

EW: I really loved it, yes. It was, and I really loved it.

SE: Can we go back even further? How did you get interested in folk art and contemporary craft in the first place? How did you know about it?

EW: Well, I didn't know a great deal about contemporary craft. I will admit that. There wasn't a lot around, but aesthetically I loved what I had seen of the few things. Wildenhein. Remember?

SE: Uh huh, Marguerite.

EW: I have a beautiful one of her pots, still, in my house that I've had for years.

SE: Did you know her?

EW: No, I never met her. But Beatrice Wood, I've known her for at least 47 years because my in-laws lived in Ojai, which is where she is. Frank photographed her work for her once, and she gave us a beautiful luster bowl, which I still have. And I have several other pieces besides. And I've stayed fairly close for years. Hers was the second exhibition we held at The Egg and The Eye. I had a great deal to learn. I was familiar with the work on Sam Maloof. At around that time we bought a ranch and we decided to build a ranch house. I made up my mind, having seen some of the work of Sam Maloof in some magazine. He was just beginning to be an up-and-coming woodworker at the time. I told Frank that I would like to get in touch with him to do the furniture for the ranch. And he said, "No way. I want a place where I can put my feet up and can knock around in there." And for once I was very shrewd. I saw in the paper that they were having craftsmen demonstrate at the Pomona Fair, Los Angeles County Fair. They have a big art building, and in that building one year they had contemporary craftsmen there demonstrating.

SE: Was Millard Sheets. . . .

EW: Rick Petterson did it.

SE: Oh, it was Rick. Millard Sheets started it, I guess, right?

EW: I don't know. Did he start that?

SE: I think so.

EW: I don't know, but Rick Patterson was in charge of it for many years.

SE: Right, he took over I think when Millard. . . .

EW: So I said to Frank one day, "How about going to the county fair? Wouldn't that be fun to see the animals and see all that stuff?" And we took the Schiresons (friends) with us and went out there. Then I let him find Sam, which he did, who was. . . . And then he came over with Sam, and he said, "I've just been talking to Sam Maloof, and I've been telling him about the ranch and I've been telling him he ought to come up and see it." [laughter] And that took care of that.

SE: You had planted the seed earlier and you really didn't have to go any further.

EW: Yes, I had, right. So we do have his furniture up there. Frank went on to get it in his office as well. But I just gradually began to see more and more of these things and become more and more interested in them. I liked. . . . Well, just as you like pottery, it's the tableware and so forth. I liked it, going way back to Chinese, and the Japanese aesthetic began to be very strong anyhow for me, as it still is. [Interruption in taping]

EW: Another thing that was very strong for me, even while Rico was alive, I became interested in weaving, textiles, and the history of them. And I took the History of Textiles, a class, from [Stephanie, Stephania] Holt, who was the curator of textiles at the LA County Museum of Art in Exposition Park when it was housed there. So that carried through very strongly. I took the class again from Mary Jane Leland, who was in that class when I took it from Stephanie Holt, I might add.

SE: Was that her first introduction to it?

EW: I don't know if it was hers. I don't think so, but Bernard Kester was in the class too.

SE: That couldn't have been his introduction to it? He was already weaving by then.

EW: I think so.

SE: Or rather surface designing by then.

EW: And I also, by the way, when I was at UCLA I took a class from Laura Andreson in pottery.

SE: No kidding!

EW: At which I was terrible. I thought I was going to be good and I was. . . .

SE: This is the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, interview with Edith R. Wyle on April 26, Tuesday . . . afternoon now. This is the fourth tape of the second, starting in the second session. You took a class with Laura at UCLA and that was probably your earliest experience with clay?

EW: With clay.

SE: . . . clay and crafts.

EW: That was really my. . . . Yes, maybe so, maybe so. Rico liked folk art a lot, too. That was another thing. He loved to collect little folk toy things around, but. . . . And the reason that I loved folk art, as it seemed to me at the time, was because it was. . . . It seemed something that was real that people could relate to their environment, but it came out of their own backgrounds, whereas the abstract art just left me very cold. I had a hard time with it. So. . . .

SE: Had you traveled a lot by then?

EW: Not a lot, but I had traveled and I had. . . . I never was a collector. Ever. I was enjoying buying for the museum. That was fun, and that's where it is, and I used to say that what I had in my house was visual food that I needed, but not anything because it was valuable, with the exception of the Haniwa sculptures, which are valuable. I have two now because I got one back when my in-laws died. But otherwise. . . . And I've got that big Indian painting [_____-Ed.], which I got at the auction that we had, and I was being a shill, and I ended up owning it, and I'm very glad, because it's beautiful. I showed it to Dr. Pal [Pratapaditya ("Pratap") Pal-Ed.]. He said it was wonderful, and then he told me I should get it conserved-I need to have it conserved-by somebody at LACMA who can do it.

SE: So you have some valuable pieces, but you didn't start out to make a collection.

EW: Never. Never. I absolutely didn't. I've managed to get some nice Eskimo pieces, nothing like I had in the show, though. Those were really wonderful. But very soon after starting The Egg and The Eye, which seemed to be quite a success. . . . I mean, in Los Angeles, Hollywood, things take on. We had seven hundred people at the opening. We had a big tented reception outside in the parking lot area, and it looked like it was really gung-ho. We had wonderful write-ups and tremendous publicity the first few years. I remember people who were used to lots of publicity coming in and shaking their heads, saying, "I don't know how you do it. You're constantly in the paper or on television or someplace," and we were. We were in there all the time. And Art Seidenbaum, who had a column in the LA Times, wrote a very nice column about us.

SE: What year did you open?

EW: '65. November, I believe. [Interruption in taping]

SE: We're going to digress a little bit, and Edith is going to talk about some exhibitions that she had when she was painting, and perhaps we'll move this in the transcript to a different spot.

EW: Good. Well, I forgot about that. To me it was a major thing to have an exhibition in New York, and because I was so influenced and under the arm of Rico, who was in Italy his second year away, I would never had dreamt of having an exhibition if he didn't think I was ready for one there. So first I wrote to him and asked him what he thought about this invitation I'd had to show there, and he wrote back giving me. . . . He sent me a wire giving me his blessing and telling me he wished he could be there and all that sort of thing, so then it was gung-ho and I was all set.

SE: This was Preston Gallery?

EW: Yes, at the Preston Gallery. I shared it with Jules Feiffer, who had the other half of the gallery that night. Anyhow, that was a big deal. Unfortunately, they had a newspaper strike the whole time I was there, so that I couldn't get any reviews from the New York papers about the show, which was cataclysmic.

SE: What year would this be? About '62?

EW: Does it say?

SE: [looking at papers] Yes, I think it says here. February 9th, but there's no date, no year.

EW: Oh. Well. . . .

SE: Prices one hundred to eight hundred dollars.

EW: Well, in '63. It has to be '63.

SE: Okay, 1963.

EW: He may not have died in '63. I may be. . . . No, this is. . . . Well, maybe that came later. Let's see. . . . Well, '63. It must have been in '63. Well, this was in January of '63. It was at the Preston Gallery. So I had to have done this in about November of '62, or December or something, around in there.

SE: When you painted it, you mean?

EW: No, when I had the show.

SE: Oh, you had the show in November.

EW: Yes, probably. '62 it must have been.

SE: Okay.

EW: My friend Eleanor Piel gave me a huge party afterwards. It was wonderful. I met the head of the Wall Street Journal whose name was Vermont Roister, and his brother's name was New Hampshire. [laughter] I never forgot that. I went to a party after my opening, at which. . . . It was at the home of Helen Frankenthaler, her apartment, and she was at that point not married yet to Motherwell, but living with him. And [Hans-Ed.] Hoffman was there. It was quite a collection of abstract artists. [chuckles] And some of them had been to see my show. One of the artists said to me, "Why did I use such earth colors. Why such somber colors?" The abstractionists were all using primary colors in those days. And I said, "Because we have a ranch, and though I painted them in my studio in Los Angeles I was inspired by the ranch." "You go to a ranch? You spend time there?" I said, "Sometimes I'm there for a month at a time," and when I was a painter I was. I spent a lot of time there. "You mean you could be up there all by yourself like that? How could you do that?" And "How could you do that subject?" Well, you know, they. . . . And my feeling at that time was all they did was copy each other. That's what it seemed to me that that was all their life was about and I was not. . . . I was very happy to come back to L.A. because it looked so. . . .

SE: You weren't tuned in to the urban stimulus.

EW: I was not at all tuned in to them, not a bit. And I knew it was heresy. Oh, what's-his-name was also there-the one I do like-deKooning was there that night. They were all there at that one party. I was taken by Benay Venuta, who used to be a Broadway actress. Some people called her "the poor man's Ethel Merman." She was in Babes on Broadway. And she was a painter. She had moved to New York, and so she took me to this party. She was once married to Armand Deutsch, who's here now. Forget that.

SE: Okay.

EW: Anyhow, I did get a couple of nice things. The Christian Science Monitor did a nice write-up, because that wasn't New York. They reproduced a picture of one of my best ink washes too, so, which is in there [in the studio-Ed.].

SE: Had you shown around in L.A.?

EW: I showed at two galleries in L.A., and do you know that I can't think of it. It didn't matter that much to me, but it began with "W." Well, I'd have to look it up. I had two gallery shows. One was with a guy named Robert Wood and the other was. . . . Oh, wait, it was owned by the Sylvan Simone Gallery. He owned it, that gallery.

SE: Sylvan Simone?

EW: Yeah, which is where Rico showed.

SE: I see.

EW: Then I was at the museum, LACMA, quite a few of those things. Other little things, but no other one-person shows at all. So that was it. Now we can go back.

SE: We were talking about the opening of The Egg and The Eye, let's see. . . . You were talking about going to a class with Mary Jane Leland, Bernard Kester on textiles.

EW: And Stephanie Holt.

SE: Right, and then you said that you'd had a class with Laura.

EW: Andreson. Well, you wanted to know about my connection with crafts, with folk art.

SE: Right, how you got interested in crafts and folk art, and I was asking you if you had traveled much before then, before you opened it, if that's how you got interested in folk art.

EW: Well, yes, I was. . . . Textiles primarily, I was interested in-on travels when I went to Africa, which I did right after Rico died. I was interested in the cloths that they had there, Kente cloths and. . . . Well, that was another trip. But I. . . . I mean, I've been learning along the way a tremendous amount about both folk art-or ethnic art-and contemporary crafts, at which at the moment I'm not very current

SE: Then in the early shows of folk art, did you have other people buying for them or collecting for them?

EW: Well, wonderful things happened. During the. . . . I think during the first show one day a woman came in with a huge suitcase, and she opened it up to show me, and in it were the most exquisite fabrics I had ever seen, textiles of an ethnic origin. They were Guatemalan, and it was Caroline West who'd brought them in.

SE: Oh. She's at the Cultural History Museum.

EW: Well, she's down. . . . The Fowler, yes.

SE: Fowler Museum, right.

EW: She went up into the mountains herself and picked up these things. She managed to get good and sick doing it, by the second show we gave her. We gave her two. But the first exhibit displayed things nobody had ever seen before, and at that time the Guatemalan Indians were looked on with scorn by the Europeans living there, who were really operating big fincas there, you know. They only brought European things over. They had no use for the wonderful things that were right underneath their eyes, that were there.

SE: What were the fincas? The farms?

EW: Yes, the big ranches. So that was. . . .

SE: Caroline got sick with, what, malaria or something?

EW: Well, she went back. . . . We had a second show years later that she did, and she couldn't function. She was in the hospital during the opening, but she came for the opening because she didn't want to miss it, and then went right back to her hospital bed, I remember. She had some kind of poisoning from some of the food, I guess. Anyhow, we've had. . . . With each person that has come along with collections that I used to take, I've had an education. I've learned a great deal. And that's certainly held true for contemporary crafts as well. And then I had people working in the place that knew a great deal. Dorothy Garwood was at The Egg and The Eye, and she was the contemporary craft buyer, and I learned a lot from her. She knew a great deal. She put on some terrific shows, really wonderful. Later when we turned into a museum, I had somebody that knew a great deal named Sharon Emannueli. [laughter]

SE: I learned there, too, actually.

EW: Yes, but you sure knew it. And I always was a little more interested in the folk art side, which I love. That is my great love, I must say, still. So during all these things, you know, it was a very creative period and a creative act because one thing led to another. You have to do to begin to get ideas, and so I never really missed not being in the studio. I really haven't. Although since I've retired I have. I've been wishing I could get back to it. But I don't think I ever can. Maybe someday, but I doubt it. Very soon after we opened the idea of having an association arose because people. . . . People came in. They would talk about how they felt they were touching home base when they came there and how much it meant to them. . . . And so I decided that since they would make suggestions and have ideas for what we ought to do next in this place that was just a retail gallery, really, I formed an association. Immediately we had a big organization going. It was terrific. Then I began to realize we needed to be a museum, because too many of these fine things that we were collecting. . . . I went to New Mexico on buying trips with Lee and Lucita Mullican, who were, by the way, good friends all through those years.

And I met them through Rico. But they really knew their Southwest very, very well. They have a house there now, of course; they live there half the year. And they knew some people who were invaluable in terms of what could be bought that nobody'd seen. I brought these objects to The Egg and The Eye, and they began slipping into the hands of lots of people, and it occurred to me that they were disappearing, and pretty soon that nobody would be able to see these things. There was no museum west of the Rockies that could take care of contemporary crafts and folk art or even the ethnic.

SE: The L.A. County wasn't collecting. . . .

EW: Not at all. In fact, I don't know if you remember, but we made a kind of deal that they'd stay out of our area and we'd stay out of theirs. But they haven't honored that, as you may have seen. They've got a big decorative arts department, and it's very good. And Martha [Drexler Lynn-Ed.] is a very good curator. She's excellent.

SE: Yes, she is. But what about the ethnic aspects of the County Art Museum? They have Asian art and so on. They weren't collecting folk art, though?

EW: No, they weren't. In fact Pratop Pal has. . . . Well, he told us once that when we got the museum really, the new one, he was going to give us his folk art collection from India.

SE: He's the head of the South Asian Art Department?

EW: He came with the [Heermanic] Collection-you remember?-to the L.A. County, which made it the biggest collection of east Indian art in America, and one of the biggest in the world.

SE: I do remember his wife [_____-Ed.] doing folk paintings on the floor of the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

EW: That's right. Well, that was one of the first museum exhibitions that we had, I believe. Way back there. It was at the very beginning.

SE: Well. . . .

EW: Wasn't it at the same time that we had Maria [Martinez-Ed.], the potter from [New Mexico-Ed.].

SE: No. Well, she may have done it them, but the one I remember was later. It was with the PET [Preserve Ethnic Traditions-Ed.] Project.

EW: Oh. Oh, maybe you're right. You might be right. I think it was. You're right. Correct.

SE: Because I did come to some early shows when it was The Egg and The Eye Gallery, but I wasn't really that conscious of it.

EW: Yes, okay.

SE: And I didn't know too much about when it opened as a museum and so on. I wasn't too aware.

EW: Well, when I became aware that we were losing a lot of these things. . . . We had an auction in which the most incredible things went for practically nothing. I'd give anything for us to have them now. So I began to think that we ought to see what we could do to become a museum. Unfortunately Watergate was at its height, and nobody was trusting anybody at that point. And they didn't trust my reasons for wanting to change it into a museum. It took me three years with the IRS-in L.A. In Washington it was a lot easier. I went back and forth to Washington all the time. They understood it, and they thought it was fine. The IRS here wondered "What was the difference between us and the May Company?" direct quote. I couldn't seem to make them understand that there was a big difference. Anyhow we finally got it after three years [1975-Ed.].

SE: You got your nonprofit status?

EW: Our nonprofit status, yes. Well, then we were finally a museum. We. . . . I wanted to get the building on the corner, and I had brought together. . . . I can't remember who the eight people were, but one of them was Helen Bing, one of them was Joan Palevsky, and one of them was Dee Sherwood, wife of Richard Sherwood.

SE: Was he on the L.A. County Museum's board then?

EW: Yes, he was. Somebody had had the suggestion, and I think it was. . . . I don't know whether it was Joan Palevsky or who it was. The building on the corner was available for $325,000. That was it. Somebody in that group suggested that if everybody put up, if eight of us put up $50,000 apiece, we could own the building, which would be a nice size for the museum, putting it together with the building we were in.

SE: Were these The Egg and The Eye associates or what group was this?

EW: Well, they may have been active. I don't remember whether they were or they weren't. It's just people that I knew, and brought in. . . .

SE: And had an interest.

EW: Yes. Well, Joan Palevsky put $50,000 up right away. She was already divorced from Max, by the way. Dick Sherwood told Peter Bing about it. Peter Bing. . . . Just at that time the Pasadena Museum of Art went down the tubes, and had been bought for practically nothing as we all know by Norton Simon, including the collection. Peter Bing, who said that he knew nothing about museums really, but was in charge of his foundation, was so worried about what happened to the Pasadena Museum of Art that he didn't think it was worth the risk to put up $50,000, and he talked Dick out of it as well. Dick, whose idea I think it was originally, changed his mind, turned around completely. The result was that only one person put up money, and that was Joan. We couldn't get the building, but I used the $50,000 with Joan's permission. I used it to fix up the building that we had, our original Egg and The Eye building, to make it museum-worthy as much as possible.

SE: Did you have the whole building at that point?

EW: Oh, I didn't. I forgot to tell you about the whole thing I went through before we got that building. The other half of the building. . . . It was occupied at the time by a Madame Oleska, a School of Theater Arts. She had the west side of the building, which included a mezzanine, and the entire top floor, which was much bigger than half the building. It was three-quarters of the building. And most of her students came from the GI Bill. Otherwise she couldn't have had a school, I'm sure. They were just awful up there. They were on drugs. I mean, all kinds of things were happening in there. At our place, which had become an in place at that point, we used to serve wine in the gallery, so that people could buy a glass of wine and drink it while they looked around to see what interested them. It was that kind of a feeling. Well, when we decided we would buy the building. . . . (Frank and I bought the building-originally.) When we made an offer for the building, Oleska tried to stop it. She also wanted the building, but couldn't raise enough money. We had a court case. . . . We had a license to serve alcohol, which I won in the lottery. Otherwise they cost a fortune. But in these lotteries you can go to the City, and if you got the lucky number you can buy a license for a minimal price. And we used it upstairs in The Egg and The Eye restaurant. So Oleska decided we shouldn't have any of this stuff; we should be taken out of the building because we were drinking with little children around and it was. . . . She made a whole big case, which went to court. That was. . . . I had stopped smoking about two weeks before that. I was a chain smoker until then. And I remember when I was in court thanking my lucky stars that I wasn't smoking because I was in court all day and I couldn't have smoked if I'd wanted to. [laughter] But we won the case. And soon they were out and we got the building. That was it. So we got the whole building-we bought it-and eventually turned it over to the museum.

SE: Who was on the early board?

EW: Well, a lot of the people that were on The Egg. . . . We had a board for The Egg and The Eye. Big board. Edgardo Contini was on it.

SE: What did they do as a board? Were they like a corporate board?

EW: Yes, well, as a matter of fact, to tell you the truth, way back in the beginning. . . . We had this board all along, and it was. . . . Yes, it was like that. They didn't get paid, though. They decided that both Betty [Chase-Ed.] and I could not run that place; only one of us could. And they decided that I should be the president and she should be a vice president. This was decided without my being there and without Betty being there. Then they came to me and they told me that they had made this decision, and that I had to tell her. And I thought that was rotten. It was Meyer Greenberg that did that. Ruth Greenberg's husband. Dan Greenberg's . . .

SE: Father?

EW: . . . father. He insisted that it would mature me; I would grow up if I. . . . But I was the one that had to tell her. As a result she didn't talk to me for three and a half years. We were like this [gestures, meaning at loggerheads-Ed.]. And that was unfortunate. I tried. But that was it. That's why she left, eventually. But on that board sat Phyllis Shapiro, and as a result she and Edgardo, having seen each other quite a bit, ended up divorcing their spouses and marrying each other. Edgardo has now died, you know.

SE: Yes. He was an architect?

EW: Oh, yes. He was with Victor Gruen. He was a senior member of the staff. Good one. Lovely guy. He designed our gallery 3. Along with Frank Gehry. They designed the Santa Monica Place, space we had, for us.

SE: Right. We had the Extension Gallery at Santa Monica Place _____.

EW: Right. And Ruth Levin was the bookkeeper of The Egg and The Eye and CAFAM. She was Ruth Schireson then. She kept the books. She kept them all rRight from the start. She did it all through The Egg and The Eye pretty much. But we got somebody else to do it by the time we came to this point, but she was on the board. And Ruth Greenberg was on it.

SE: Was Milton on the board then? Milt Zolotow?

EW: Milton was on it, yes, I think so.

SE: What about Mary Jane Leland, wouldn't she. . . .

EW: No. She came on the museum board. But she wasn't on the previous one.

SE: Or Bernard Kester either?

EW: No, I don't think either of them were. I think it was Selma Herringman. These were all the people who put money up.

SE: Selma Herringman?

EW: She moved east.

SE: Did they ever get their investment back?

EW: No. That was another thing. I mean, they didn't want, they didn't expect a profit but they didn't want a loss. And because the loss looked like it was imminent, since it was an educational thing. . . . We were at least ten years ahead of the public, all the time. So Meyer Greenberg and Frank created a Subchapter S Debenture kind of thing, in which we made sure that they didn't suffer any losses-the other people-but if there was a profit they'd still get their split. What saved the day was Meyer Greenberg and Frank Wyle.

SE: Did you. . . . So in other words covered the losses?

EW: Yes. They did.

SE: And didn't you at one point ask people to contribute their shares?

EW: [hesitating]

SE: No.

EW: No, I didn't. When we became a museum, I made them life members in the museum. [Interruption in taping]

EW: You know there's one sentence that I started to tell you about Art [Seidenbaum] writing about us, way back at the beginning of The Egg and The Eye, in which he said in this little article that he wrote, that it was a kind of remarkable place where you could sit down and have a delicious meal in an "art ambience," which he thought was simply marvelous. And if he hadn't written that column, I don't think we would have gotten anywhere. That really brought everybody in. It made the place, in my opinion. That's an important. . . .

SE: Did he write on restaurants, or did he write on. . . .

EW: He wrote on culture. Then later on, I. M. Pei almost made a museum for Long Beach, you know? He was supposed to come out and build them their new building, and whoever was the director then [of the Long Beach Museum-Ed.], whom I knew but I can't think of his name, met him at the airport and brought him to The Egg and The Eye for lunch on the way to Long Beach, because he wanted him to see this setup. And he said, "Now, I'd like this made in a larger way, but this is the ambience we would like. The idea of eating with the art around us at the same time." And it really was.... That was a first; that really was. It was a first all the way around. The idea of putting crafts on pedestals. . . . [Interruption in taping]

SE: So it was a first, you started to say, in many ways.

EW: Well, the original concept for The Egg and The Eye was to serve the omelettes upstairs and while people waited they would go in the gallery. When they were in the gallery, they would encounter maybe a pot on a pedestal.

EW: The fact that it was a pot on a pedestal would lead people to understand that this must be art, and I think they got the message. This was a first. People did not display crafts or folk art in an artistic manner in a display

setting. In New York, the American Craft Museum, which was then called the Museum of Contemporary Craft, had America House, which was across the street, and they had the contemporary crafts in there, which I had seen. But they had them piled on top of each other, not displayed. No artists' names were affixed whatsoever, and when I questioned that when I first went back there, I was told that they were afraid that if they gave the names of the artists the people would go to see the artists and would not buy the things from America House. That was not my theory at all. I made a deal with the artists. I said, "I will show your things, and you can go ahead and sell them to the people if you want to, but you'll have to make sure that we get the same cut that we will get if you show them in the gallery," and I've never had any problems with that at all. And I made sure that the names were very prominently put there-to build them up as the artists that I felt they were. So that was a big first. And then the folk art hadn't been around either, except Ralph Altman, at his gallery. Once a year he used to have a Christmas show and he would sell folk art. I'm just beginning to remember all this sort of thing now. I went to all those sales, and there was always a lineup practically in front of me. Sister Mary Magdalene from Immaculate Heart always snatched up every darn thing before you could get to it, and she built up what became a famous collection at Immaculate Heart as a result.

SE: [laughs]

EW: But I used to go to those before I started The Egg and The Eye, so you see I really did have an interest in these things before. It's just coming back to me now. Anyhow, I don't know where I left off with the. . . .

SE: Well, you were talking about what about it was unique-what was "first" about it-and you had talked about America House. [Interruption in taping]

EW: Lee Mullican put on an early show-or he did the decor. I remember he did sort of lightening, wooden lightening Indian things, that were all over the walls of the gallery, which was very handsome. But I can't remember what that exhibition was, at the moment. I'd have to have those things in front of me, I'm afraid. We had so many. We had hundreds of exhibitions, you realize, so. . . .

SE: Right. And when did Caroline West move to UCLA [Cultural History Museum-Ed.]? I mean was she. . . .

EW: Well, she was friendly with Pat Altman anyhow.

SE: And Pat was already on staff there.

EW: She didn't feel that we had a collection per se, which I guess we didn't compared to UCLA. They felt we had the exhibition space and they had the place to collect it. Now they've got both, and I wish we could hurry up and get there, too. [laughter] And of course her exhibition's up right now over there, you know. It's beautiful, just beautiful. She's gone on with Pat on many trips to Guatemala and they. . . .

SE: She's never been on staff at the Cultural History Museum then?

EW: Well, no, just sort of. . . . I don't know what her position is there, but she and Patricia did this whole thing together.

SE: All right. Were there other people who worked at the gallery, or that you would like to talk about? Dorothy Garwood, you mentioned her before.

EW: You know, we had so many people that worked at the gallery that people come up to me all the time and tell me that they used to work there, and I don't have any recollection of it. We really went through a great deal. Dorothy was in charge of contemporary crafts. After we started the association for The Egg and The Eye, we had a lot of things. Well, I joined the World Craft Council. That was a very important thing in my life, starting with, oh, way back in the beginning. I went to Peru for my first World Craft Council meeting. The first one was actually in New York City, but I missed that one. This was the second, I think. About twelve hundred people from all over the world come together-came together in those days-for the World Craft Council meetings. It was like the United Nations. We used to have earphones so that everything was simultaneously translated, depending upon who the people were, and the leaders in the craft movements from all the countries were there-plus the craftspeople.

SE: Did they tend to be mostly indigenous craftsmen, or were they contemporary craft?

EW: They were. . . . No, they were both. They were very much both. In India it was Camaladevi Chattopadyaya. She was a great woman, and we became great friends. She had been a handmaiden of [Mahatma-Ed.] Gandhi's, and she was instrumental in getting an irrigation system put into the Punjab area after the revolution-with Gandhi's consent. She started the cottage industries in India and was the head of the School of National Dance-which is more than just dance in India. It's a religion, you know, so she was thought of as a goddess there by most people. Camaladevi stayed with me when she came to L.A., and I. . . . She organized a trip for me when I

took a group from CAFAM to India. Things like that happened. Ruth Dayan, who was the head of Maskit, which is in Israel. . . . That was a national craft organization, and Ruth, when going out to all the refugee camps that grew up in Israel after the war, saw all these nationalities and began noticing all the different crafts in use that came from their countries.

SE: Was she born in Israel?

EW: Yes, she was a sabra, and so she brought. . . . And Moishe Dayan was her husband. He was the Minister of Defense. So she put together these wonderful crafts that were in all of the towns of Israel that had shops. I became friendly with her, and she came to Los Angeles. We had her speaking at The Egg and The Eye. We again built a big tent in the parking lot and had a big reception, and she gave a wonderful lecture. And we had. . . . Well, Olga Fisch was from Ecuador. She was actually a Hungarian refugee, who with her husband went to Ecuador and established a rug business there, and began bringing in the indigenous people and incorporating their designs. Then she became the representative to the World Craft Council from Ecuador. She lived there all her life, till she just died recently. So I got to know her quite well as well. In other words, it became a network that was very, very convenient and handy. There was a woman from Sweden, Bonnier, Mrs. [_____-Ed.] Bonnier. She was the representative from Sweden, and had a place that made me think of The Egg and The Eye in some ways. I liked her a lot. And there's the person from Spain. But all that has stopped. They don't have that kind of a network anymore, which is a shame. That helped build up my knowledge. It also helped my yen to travel, which I've always had from high school on. In my high school yearbook, when asked what I most wanted to do, I wrote "travel." Took me a long time to get around to it, but I eventually did. And I like traveling with a quest, not just being a tourist. Somehow doesn't have the same excitement for me. So then Japan. . . . Well, that became important to me during the bicentennial. No, not bicentennial. Yes, it was the bicentennial. The bicentennial in America. Japan sent, as a gift to our bicentennial, Eshiro Abe. He was the Intangible National Treasure Papermaker of Japan. They arranged to have three exhibitions of his work-one in New York at the Contemporary Craft Museum, one with us, and one in San Francisco-but with him came, I think, forty disciples. Something like that wasn't it?

SE: I don't know. I wasn't here for that.

EW: Oh, you're kidding.

SE: That was before my time.

EW: I thought you were.

SE: No.

EW: Oh, there were a retinue of about forty of them.

SE: California Women in Craft was the show that was up when I started working there.

EW: Oh, really? My goodness. I thought you were long before that. Well, anyhow he had this big retinue with him. He had one woman named Reiko Chuzo, who was his kimono lady. She wore his kimonos made out of his paper, which is very beautiful. His paper was used by the great artists of Japan. Munakata only used his paper. Serisawa used it. All of them were very good friends together.

SE: What is Serisawa's first name? I can't remember his first name. It doesn't matter. In Japan they seldom give the first name. Well, anyhow, he came here and we put on the best display. I really put on a beautiful show. I did that display. In fact, I got some of my art frustrations out by doing a lot of the displays, as you may recall.

SE: Yes, I do.

EW: And I enjoyed them a great deal. I hung this one [Abe-Ed.], and it was very festive looking and nice, and the delegation liked that. Frank took a lot of pictures-he took them with his Hasselblät, and they were very good-and gave them to Abe. But he was like a piece of ice when he was here. He couldn't speak a word of English anyhow. But I invited him to our home for dinner, and he came with ReikoChuzo. (The other people were sent back to Japan at this point.) And they sat stiffly at dinner. I invited George Kuwayama to come and translate. I needed somebody to translate because they couldn't speak English. And it was very cold until Frank began talking about my studio, which was a room upstairs in that house (since we were renting a house at that time). Frank said that I had all these Japanese fabrics up there, from which I was trying to make this patchwork quilt, which I'd been making for years.

SE: Aren't you still making it?

EW: Still making it. [laughter] I'd collected all these cotton traditional Japanese fabrics, which I adored. So to my

embarrassment Frank took them upstairs, and when they saw the fabrics the ice thawed. Both of them got so excited, and Abe began going around saying "Edo period," pointing out the periods of the cloths, naming what I had there. That made him my close friend right then and there. I mean we became very close; the feeling seemed close after that. So I decided. . . . A year or so later I led a group to Japan, from the museum, and when Abe heard that we were coming I was informed that he was putting on a banquet for us. So we arrived there with sixteen or eighteen of us. I don't how many of us were in the group.

SE: That was in the late seventies sometime, wasn't it? Seventy-seven?

EW: It was about a year or so after the bicentennial. It must have been '77 or '78, maybe. Maybe it was '78; I don't know. Gosh. . . .

SE: You were talking about the banquet.

EW: We arrived in. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: . . . Matsue, the town where Abe lives, and we were met with quite a delegation at the train, taken to our hotel, given an opening dinner at night in the hotel, in which Abe came around and gave gifts to everybody. And he'd also cut out some origami things, which everybody received as well. I received a whole bag full of gifts, mostly fabric samples that he had found for me. The next day was the banquet and he had invited two hundred and fifty people from Japan-artists and people from Japan. They all had to pay to come. They came from all over. And the governor and the mayor of the prefecture were there. There was a tremendous banner up in the banquet hall that said "Welcome to Mrs. Edith Wyle and Craft and Folk Art Museum," which was overwhelming. And when I met the governor-or the mayor, I forget which one it was-I thought that he said that he was a. . . . I had to make a speech in Japanese. [laughs] I wrote it and had it translated the night before. But then during the night I suffered all night long because the statements were wrong, and I went to the translator the next morning and said, "I don't like this. You've got to do this new one." And I gave it to her. She said, "You can't do this to me," because in Japan they have a language for women, a language for artists, a language for commercial people, and she didn't think she could find the right person to translate it then, but she did. I had to get up and phonetically read this thing. I had no idea what I was saying or whether I was emphasizing in the right spots, but I did it and it was okay. Irma Switzer was along, and she had brought some orchids with her from her garden, which I'm very happy to say I could present to Abe after my speech, and also a commendation from Mayor [Tom-Ed.] Bradley, which we had brought with us, so that was all very good. And then they had. . . . There were two huge kegs of sake and I had to go down, and Abe with one mallet and I with the other mallet cracked them open, and then everybody was given little square wooden boxes for sake, wooden things, and everybody had some sake from the kegs. And then there was food like I have never seen, but they had every kind of Japanese food there is: tempura and sushis and, you know, just tables and tables of it. But after we finished the ceremony, everybody lined up for me to sign their sake bowls, and I spent the entire time signing the bowls. I never got a bite of food. And my feet were killing me, and Abe was very, very sick, so. . . . I didn't know how sick he was, but the day after we left he went to the hospital for two months with peritonitis and gall bladder and everything else. But in spite of that he came to the train to see me off, right down to the station and right up to the window with his hand and it was very touching. Everybody cried. All our people on the train were crying. It was really something.

SE: Did you see him again after that?

EW: Yes, I went with Yoshiko Wada to Japan. Yoshiko, you know who she is.

SE: Yes.

EW: She's a textile artist. She did a fiber tour of Japan, and that was about four or five years later.

SE: She lives in Berkeley now.

EW: Yes, she lives in Berkeley. She has for years. And she was planning to go and. . . . I mean, he was a stop on the tour. Everybody went to see Abe in Matsue. So I had let him know that I was coming. June Schwarcz was on that trip. That's when we became good friends.

SE: June Schwarcz is an enamel artist.

EW: Enamel artist, yes. Fellow of the American Craft Museum at this point. She lives in Sausalito. Anyhow, I went with Yoshiko, and we were staying, I think, in [Hagi] or a beach town, and I think it was Hagi; I'm not sure. Much to my surprise, I was told that I had visitors, and Abe had come all the way to the beach town, which was the stop on the tour before Matsue, because he wanted to let me see how healthy he was. And he took me away from the group. I made June go with me because I needed someone that could speak English with me that day as he had another person along who couldn't speak English either. Abe took us up to visit a beautiful park in the

area, and then around to visit some prefecture intangible treasures. They weren't national, but they were top-weavers and so forth-which was very lovely of him. And to lunch.

SE: Did you have a translator with you?

EW: No, just June, and then somebody was able to tell me about that woman who was a "prefecture treasure. I bought one of her little weavings from her, which I have upstairs somewhere. Then we prevailed on him to stay and have dinner with us because it was too far for them to go back anyhow. He had Reiko Chuzo with him, who had felt very close to me, too, at that point. So we had a private room in which everybody had the same kimonos to wear, and it was like a big banquet. We all sat on the floor facing each other in the square with a microphone in one corner, and Abe. . . . Everybody was getting up and making little speeches in the microphone. I can't remember what started it, but he said he wanted to get up and sing a song, and he sang this wonderful song in Japanese, which Yoshiko translated, which is like a love song. Everybody thought I was having an affair with him. [laughter] Because they couldn't get over this, what was going on there. It was really so funny. And anyhow, it was charming though. It was just delightful and it was saying "I was sick when she came before, but now I'm fine and I wanted you to see it."

SE: He made it up?

EW: He spent the night and got on the bus the next morning and rode with me up to Matsue, where he showed everybody everything, and then after that he took me to the Shinto temple at Izumi, which is the second most famous one in Japan. It's a beautiful temple. I love it. And I went with him through the ceremony of clapping and throwing my wish, my money, into. . . . I can't remember what I did now, but that was the last time I ever saw Abe. I took my next group to Japan about, oh, ten years ago or twelve, and I wrote to Abe saying I was coming, but he died a month before I arrived. But he told his grandson, who has inherited his mantle (over his son apparently) to take good care of me when I came, which really broke me up when I heard that one. Anyhow, that was my Japanese connection. But when we went there on that early trip we visited [Shoji-Ed.] Hamada, and we visited Serisawa, both intangible treasures-one of pottery and one of textiles.

SE: Did Serisawa do the stenciling? Who did the stenciling on paper?

EW: He did. Paper and cloth primarily. Now Japan has built an Abe Museum in Matsue. It's all about Abe. We visited it with my group on the last trip.

SE: You were talking about people in other countries that you had close connections to.

EW: Yes, well I've gotten. . . . I got to Japan. I was able to go to China, but I didn't make any close connections there. But I was one of the first thirty people invited to go to China, and that was. . . . That was the second biggest trip of my life. It was just a fluke really. I was dying to go to China. I've always wanted to visit China. And then I bumped into a friend who said she was on a list through the graduate school of business management at UCLA, and there was room for one or two more people on the list of people signed up trying to go. This was before we had an embassy. There was a liaison office in Canada, and that was it. So I hurriedly signed up, because I was dying to go, and I signed Frank up, too. And then I had to write. . . . We had to write about ten different biographies and send them to ten different places all over China to be read. The upshot was that they took four people from that group of forty, and I was one of them. And another one was Harned Hoose, an attorney, who was born in China and who had advised Kissinger and Nixon before their first trip, which was just six weeks before I went to China. We were the first thirty Americans allowed in China since the revolution, this group that I ultimately went in, and that thirty included journalists. So Harned Hoose and Frank and I and Joyce Rosenberg-Joyce was a substitute, and how she ever managed it I'll never know-these were the ones from L.A. that were on that list. [Rosenberg] was a substitute for somebody else who was accepted, and I don't know how she ever got in. It was so strict. It was incredible. And anyhow that was a fantastic trip. At first they turned Frank down. They said, no, just I was invited. I wrote them back and said, "Please look his résumé over. He'll really do a lot of business, I'm sure, with China." I was invited to go to the trade fair, you see. I got a cable back, which everybody always thought was very funny, for a country to send a cable like that, which said, "Very well, Mr. Frank Wyle may accompany you." [laughter] All the feminists loved that.

SE: Yes.

EW: It just so happens that I did more work with the fair than he did. So maybe they were right about that.

SE: Was it because it was more handwork. . . .

EW: No, there were two buildings. There was the light industrial building and there was the heavy industrial building, and I guess I did more business for us than he did for Wyle Labs. We had the first show. This was still The Egg and The Eye. We had the first show of Chinese art-artifacts-in California, certainly.

SE: You mean of folk art? Chinese folk art?

EW: Yes. Well, it wasn't all folk art in the strictest sense of the word. You know, they wouldn't allow anything that was earlier than the Ching Dynasty to leave China. But they didn't realize that a couple of things were definitely Ming dynasty. Some real connoisseurs detected them and they bought them immediately out of the collection. Joyce, who had a lot of money, bought a ton of stuff and added her stuff to our show, so that it made a good exhibition all together, and the few articles that were not sold you'll find around my house, and I'm glad. I've tried so hard to get back there, and when I was there on that first trip I couldn't get out of Canton, as it was then called. It is now known as Guangzhon. Some of the other Americans were able to get to Beijing, which was still called Peking then.

SE: Why were you not able to go?

EW: Well, the Chinese authorities only allowed you to have a visa for one place at a time, and you had to apply to get to it, and you were scrutinized. I mean that was a. . . . The first night that we were in Canton in our hotel bed, it was unseasonably cool because it's always very hot in Canton. The Tenghuang Hotel is where we were. All the foreigners were put there, except the Japanese, who were herded into a dreadful place further away because they almost wrecked China, you know, so anyhow. . . . But all foreigners were together in this one hotel. I said to Frank that first night, "I'm freezing. God, I wish I had a blanket I'm so cold. I wish I had a blanket." The next day I had a blanket. No one else did, and that led us to realize that up there [on the ceiling-Ed.] there was some little microphone that was hearing everything we said. Because I checked up with the others, everybody. We all became very chummy, and everybody went out to dinner at a different restaurant every night. We had such a good time exploring. The food was great. There was a couple from Boston with whom we became good friends, and I'm still seeing Lee Sobin every once in a while and her husband Julius. They returned to China often. They managed to do a great deal of business there, and they established an office there. Right after I. . . . The day, I think, as I was leaving China, Stanley Marcus arrived, and I was thinking, "I finally got someplace in the world ahead of Stanley Marcus," who has always gotten there and bought everything up by the time I got anywhere.

SE: He's a collector?

EW: Well, of Neiman-Marcus.

SE: Oh, Neiman-Marcus! [laughs]

EW: But Stanley Marcus came with money, which I didn't have that much of, and he bought the most fantastic collection you ever saw of Chinese costumes, with which he put on a fashion show at L.A. County Museum not long after that, when he returned. Anyhow, it was a great trip, and it took me years to get back to China. I didn't have the slightest realization that I was in the middle of the cultural revolution, because they didn't let me see any of the awful side of things, but all that was going on. It was terrible, and that gave me a good lesson in not taking things at face value when I'm a traveler, in particular, because you can assume so much and it is so often untrue. We were in the middle of Watergate, and I was thinking "How wonderful all these people are. They're all going in the same direction. They're like a country of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts just doing what they're supposed to do." But what was happening was that they were being forced to do all that sort of thing, and half their parents were in prisons and the Red Guard was something to really be afraid of. So it was an interesting time, and it was interesting to go back in '78 when the revolution was over. Then the third time I returned it was completely over and it was like a different country each time that I've gone there. I was very lucky to have Bill Wu be my guide the third time. He's another person that's mattered a lot. Bill is an art historian, Chinese, born in Shanghai, and in '72 when I came back from that initial trip, everybody wanted me to. . . . It was like I'd been on Mars to people around here, and they all wanted me to come and give talks, and I had a good collection of slides. I don't know if you ever saw those?

SE: On China?

EW: You probably didn't, because that was before you, too. And I was then. . . . Bob Haas, from UCLA Extension, was putting on a series at the Bing Auditorium. He called up and invited me to lecture on folk art in China, on the same program with a "Dr. William Wu, Chinese, who had just come back from two and a half years living there and is an art historian besides." And Mac [Cesar-Ed.], who was my secretary at the time, decided in my absence that it was okay for her to accept for me, and she said, "Yes, I'd be happy to," and I almost died when I found out. [laughs] I mean. . . .

SE: This is the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution interview with Edith R. Wyle on May 11 at Mrs. Wyle's home in Brentwood in Los Angeles. The interviewer is Sharon Emanuelli. All right, well, I wanted to go back a little bit to The Egg and The Eye and ask you to talk about the film series that Doug Edwards did at the gallery.

EW: Oh, yes. Well, Doug Edwards had just gotten out of college. I believe he was at UCLA in cinematography. I'm not absolutely certain about that, but I think he had been. He came here from Tennessee to Los Angeles to study film. He was absolutely crazy about it. He took a job with me as a gallery salesperson, at which job he was totally inept. I mean, he absolutely couldn't do it. He used to just stand there in the middle of the gallery and not know what to do with himself. But we had a very large room, the Association Room that was for the association members, and he asked at one time if he could bring some films that would complement the exhibitions we had. I envisioned films on craft and thought it was a very good idea because the purpose of the museum was to involve all the senses of everybody.

SE: Was this at the museum then or was it. . . .

EW: At the museum, yes.

SE: Oh, it was a museum at that time.

EW: Oh, no, no, no. It was still The Egg and The Eye then. I'm sorry. No, this was during The Egg and The Eye days. We had this association then, but it was still The Egg and The Eye. And we had a large room. Anyhow, Doug started off with films related to clay and so forth. And then suddenly he began sneaking in art film features from other countries, as well. They were awfully good and the audience began to enlarge, and soon we had a series. We had Sayarit Ray films-all of them. We had Merchant-Ivory films, and whenever they were shown the place was jammed. And what was interesting was that people like [Carl-Ed.] Laemmle and all the art theater people used to come. They took a look at the audience. If there were a lot of people, they then had the courage to put them in their own theaters. Otherwise, they didn't.

SE: Do you think that they were already aware of the films; they just hadn't decided to program them yet?

EW: They wanted to see them and see if there was any audience reaction to them, I guess. But I loved that series, and it gave Douglas quite a name. He went on to go to the Vanguard Theater, afterwards, in which he did their films for them.

SE: Yes.

EW: And he became friendly with the person at LACMA [Ronald D. Haver-Ed.], who ran the film program. Anyhow, eventually he went to the Academy [of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences-Ed.].

SE: Didn't he also fill in for the LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art-Ed.] film curator for a while?

EW: I think he did.

SE: When he was on sabbatical or something.

EW: Yes. He did a fantastic job. We had the filmmakers in house whenever he could get them. They used to give talks before the screening. It was a wonderful thing and it brought lots of people to The Egg and The Eye. I hated to see it end. When he finally did leave and go with the Academy, we tried to connect with. . . . After it was a museum, we tried to get together with the fellow at UCLA who is in charge of the film archives [Bob Rosen-Ed.]. But anyhow for a while we did it, we continued with him, and it didn't work. It's like some of these things; they have their moment, and that was it.

SE: Well, so then there were other different kinds of outreach and education programs that were started at the museum that were really interesting, like the mask festival, The Festival of Masks.

EW: Well, that came quite a bit later. The philosophy behind the museum-my philosophy-was that I wanted to hit all the senses of people as they came into the place, so that their ears and their nose, and everything would be affected by what was going on. Therefore, I tried to have music. . . . If we did an exhibition on Polish wood carvings, which we did in The Egg and The Eye period, I had a class in Polish music with an ethnomusicologist. It was a workshop, in fact. I had an ethnomusicologist who taught a lot of workshops like that, way back there.

SE: Didn't you have an ocarina workshop or something at one point?

EW: I think we did, yes. I think we did. But I don't remember. [laughs]

SE: Yes, I think you did. I remember hearing about it.

EW: And we had embroidery workshops. We had a lot of those. When we had a Romanian exhibition and when it was a museum, we had a Romanian embroidery workshop. We had a lot of contemporary craftspeople who taught workshops-like Joanne Lopez taught her particular style of patchwork, which she made very popular throughout America subsequently. Let's see, whom else did we have? We had a dyeing workshop. Yoshiko Wada

came and taught us indigo dyeing, which was marvelous. And weaving. Ikat weaving, we had another one of those. It was kasuri, which is the Japanese word for ikat. Papermaking. We had a fellow. . . . Now his name escapes me, who could do both Japanese papermaking method and western. Another one did western. We had two of them. Tim somebody [B_____-Ed.] did the Japanese one. And who was the other one? Somebody that once worked for me, in fact, as a salesperson, and I can't think of his name. Oh dear. He wrote a book too. It begins with "S" [_____-Ed.].

EW: Jim. . . . Oh, well, forget it for the moment.

SE: Okay.

EW: Anyway, we've had all those different kinds of workshops there.

SE: And later in the exhibitions, you also included videos and slide shows and music actually in the exhibition.

EW: That's right. Exactly. Actually in it. And for the openings, we always had live music that related to what the exhibition was about as much as possible. The first education curator was Karen Copeland, who really did a fantastic job of bringing the audience, making them more than audience, making them participants, particularly with the children, and adults as well. Instead of going around and giving lectures, as docents very often do in museums, she always brought them into it with questions, and that was exactly what we were after. She arranged lectures of all different kinds, as well, that went along with the exhibits.

SE: And your exhibition design was often very innovative.

EW: Well, as an ex-artist, which I guess I already was by then, that was my creative outlet, and I loved being able to do it. So I didn't do them all, but I did most of them, I think. Didn't I?

SE: Yes, I think you did. Once you let me do one, at sort of the last minute.

EW: And it was extremely good.

SE: No, you had to take it over at the end.

EW: No, I did not. You did the Northwest. . . . I mean, the Southwest one all by yourself. I remember that.

SE: Oh, the. . . .

EW: The contemporary. . . .

SE: The contemporary part of New Mexico: Space and Images.

EW: You did the whole one.

SE: No, I did the poster [illustration] for that.

EW: And the poster and you also designed it.

SE: No, I think the curator, Arthur Adair, designed it. My first real design was for American Porcelain, and it was next after the New Mexico show and for part of it I used his structures.

EW: Yes, you definitely did that.

SE: Arthur Adair designed it and co-curated that exhibition when it was in New Mexico. I think it was called "New Mexico: Three Visions" in New Mexico. And then when it came here, we took only the contemporary section but they had an Indian and Hispanic section also.

EW: He owned The Hand and the Spirit.

SE: Right. But then he did a wonderful installation, and I adapted the downstairs part of it, I believe, to American Porcelain.

EW: Yes, right. You began to do a lot, quite a few more things.

SE: I did design more after that. I did the Afghan textile show too, that may have been earlier.

EW: Who did the puzzle show?

SE: I did. . . . Well, Jack Bottermans did most of the design.

EW: Oh, right. But you did it with him, pretty much.

SE: A little bit with him. I adapted what didn't work and so on, but we went back and forth quite a bit.

EW: I brought some design people in, and I brought Jack Carter in for the mask exhibition, Masks in Motion, which was the last big one. He did all that.

SE: Oh, that's right. And Dextra Frankel did one or two.

EW: And Dextra Frankel did. . . . Which one was it?

SE: She did the Nepalese one with Tom, her partner then. Tom. . . .

EW: Hartman.

SE: And she did one after that, I believe.

EW: She did one after you were gone.

SE: After I was gone and you were retired.

EW: And I wasn't happy with that. I can't remember what it was. Oh, I know; it was the Aman Folk [Ensemble] [dance costumes].

SE: Bernard Kester did a number of them. And then curated a number of exhibitions.

EW: Yes he did. Bernard did.

SE: Especially the contemporary shows.

EW: Bernard Kester was invaluable to me in the early days. I haven't mentioned Bernard. But I met him way, way back at the beginning of The Egg and The Eye, at the very beginning. The building was constructed so that there was a two-story room in the front, which made a gallery. And then in the back, then it went into something that had a seven-foot-high ceiling. And that was where more of the shop look was. But we were able to have exhibitions for the contemporary artists-and for the folk people-in the front part; we had openings, and everything, as in a gallery. I was trying to design the exhibitions, and one day I happened to visit Eudora Moore, who was doing her California Design shows. And I was in her office, and I said something about how I needed help, when suddenly a voice said, "You certainly do." [laughter] Bernard Kester emerged from behind the screen.

SE: Had he been planted there or what?

EW: He planted himself there. He was doing the display for her. So I talked to him and got him to come over and do some for me. Actually, I also had gotten Josine Ianco-Starrels, who was not Josine Ianco-Starrels then, but I can't remember what her name was then. Anyhow, she designed one exhibition for me, which was fantastic, at The Egg and The Eye, which I haven't mentioned.

SE: What was it called?

EW: That was the Yugoslavian one, which is very interesting. It was Yugoslavia then, of course. A young woman came in to see me whose husband was a professor at UCLA-can't think of her name [_____-Ed.]-but she told me one day that she had relatives in every part of Yugoslavia: Croatia, Serbia, Dalmatia. Except not in Macedonia-or "Mackadonia," they pronounce it there. She wanted to do an exhibition and sale in our place, and I thought that was great. I mean, people like that coming to see me were the wonderful things that happened at The Egg and The Eye.

SE: How could you tell they were going to do a good job? You always seem to know.

EW: I wouldn't have trusted her, but I had a book. I had a wonderful book with photographs of all the kinds of textiles-it was a textile show she was talking about-of textiles that I loved, and I Xeroxed the entire book and gave it to her, and told her to send these pictures that related to each area to her relatives, and, if they could buy those things, to do so. And she had their purchases sent in ten-dollar-and-under packages for two years so that we didn't have to pay duty on anything. And nobody has seen a collection like that since-anywhere.

SE: It's hard to imagine one piece would have been worth less than ten dollars.

EW: I'll tell you, they were simply marvelous. They were all hand-embroidered, beautiful, exquisite linens and

things. I still have a. . . . I kept one apron, which I have over in the studio. And I think I still have a little piece of embroidered strip of something. But the rest of it was sold out right away. And since she didn't have anybody in Macedonia, Frank and I went to Macedonia, and I had the most marvelous adventure there. That was also of the great trips of my life, really. We went to Lake Ochrid, which is way up in Macedonia. It's on the sea and on the side of this lake. On the other side of this enormous lake was Albania, which nobody could visit. Nobody could go it to because it was Communist, and it was closed even to the Russian Communists, they'd been so isolated for years. We went on a boat and we were having a picnic on a beautiful little island in Lake Ochrid. The hotel took us on this boat. Frank and I were sitting all by ourselves and over in the corner I saw a man with a black shock of hair sitting under a tree painting or something. I told Frank to take a picture of him, and when he raised his camera, this man, a big boisterous man, came over and started trying to talk to us, but he couldn't speak English. However, he could speak a little German and French, but he ran over and returned with his guest, who was a German, and who was able to speak English, who could translate, and who was with him because he was writing a Russian-German dictionary. He was writing a Yugoslavian-German dictionary, or something, for that area. And when I told him what I was there for, he said he could take me to a place which would give me all the most marvelous embroideries. And I had to meet him when I got back to the hotel. He was a fantastic, boisterous guy. I loved him. So we said fine. We went back to shore, and we met him at the prescribed time with our driver, who was from Dalmatia, and had absolutely no use for this man because the Macedonians were very Communistic, and this guy was dying to be capitalistic. But he had to drive us. We had the Yugoslavian man I'm telling you about. We had his house guest, the German. And we picked up a school teacher, and then we were taken to this place that looked like a trailer but it was a house. We had to take our shoes off. It was very oriental. And everything was in one room. There was a couch against the wall and a little table next to it. And a tailor, who was sewing these embroideries which were the bindings for jackets, and making them. And his wife and his daughter and her fiancé were all there, and they served us mint tea and brought out this enormous collection of stuff. And there was a television set that was the most surreal thing, and it was on and the Forsythe Saga was on. [laughs] And it was before it was shown in America. It had Yugoslavian subtitles, but it was in English, so I sat and watched the Forsythe Saga while they dickered and bargained. And I bought this huge collection of embroideries, which made up a large part of the exhibition. Got them shipped back, so it was a terrific trip. When we went to the market, a woman sold me her entire wedding costume, which was very unusual. We had to go back to her house, and she took it out of a trunk and apparently needed the money. So that went to Aman [Folk Ensemble-Ed.]. In fact, Aman bought a great deal of the things that we sold at that time, as I recall.

SE: Did they appear in the Aman costume exhibition that was done a few years ago?

EW: I looked around to see, but I couldn't tell. But this was so many years later I really couldn't tell.

SE: I think I even helped dress the mannequins for that.

EW: Right, I bet you did. Yes, that's right.

SE: When I was thinking about your installation designs, I was thinking of not only the kinds of color that you used, but the fact that you would often do dioramas or murals.

EW: Well, you know, we developed. . . . You and I developed the mannequin. And I thought that was such an innovative, wonderful thing, because we had a hard time getting a mannequin that had an ethnic look. If we used store mannequins, they looked like American models. But the experience that we had in mask-making led us to doing the surgical cloth masks so that we could make heads of anybody. We managed to get some ethnic faces. And then by taking plastic pipes with t-joints, we were able to move them around and make an armature, and put them in any position we wanted to get them into, and pad them, and we had our mannequins. And I tried to write an article that I sent to Museum News I was sure they'd want to print, but they didn't. I never have understood that, because I still think this was a fantastic way to get mannequins. We were able to get a great deal of movement into our exhibits. And the ones you're talking about are the Bolivian one, which was. . . . Really, we had two people sort of wrestling upstairs, male Bolivian people in costumes. We had a straw boat with a rower in it. We had people at looms sitting, which were attached to the wall. Remember that?

SE: Yeah.

EW: And that was a very good, that was a terrific display. And the next exhibit that I designed but I didn't use those mannequins. . . . Did I?

SE: Uhh. . . .

EW: For the Romanian one? I don't think so. I think we. . . . We had [commercial] mannequins.

SE: That may have been earlier. The Romanian was earlier. We did have mannequins, and we borrowed some from a store.

EW: Oh, I know. We used them for the Mexican one. Judith Bronowski did the film, did the exhibition, based on her eight. . . . Was it eight or four?

SE: Three, is what I recall. Three films.

EW: No, four. [Pedro-Ed.] Linares was the paper sculpture. This is from Mexico City. [Manuel-Ed.] Jiménez was from Oaxaca, the woodcarver. The embroiderer was. . . .

SE: Sabina Sanchez.

EW: Sabina Sanchez. Yeah. Now she's dead. And I guess that was it. Three.

SE: Three. That's what I recall. One downstairs and two up.

EW: That's right. Well, she did three films about them, documenting their lives, and then came to us wanting an exhibition, also gathering the objects together for it. And I did that display.

SE: Yes.

EW: And we also. . . . Actually, that was the first time that we used those armatures and the mask-type heads.

SE: And you had huge photo blowups, I recall.

EW: Right, Judith had that done.

SE: I mean huge. Mural-sized. [laughs] Did she make them?

EW: No, no, we did that. We did do that. Right. And we had the films showing all the time, too.

SE: Right. And we had a big tent in one show. I can't remember which Middle Eastern country it was. Tunisia, I suppose.

EW: That was Tunisia. Oh, yes. That was a good one.

SE: We had made a big sand box, with the tent pitched in it.

EW: That's right. Oh, and we also did the [Isamu-Ed.] Noguchi exhibition. That was the light sculpture, as he called it-the Akari lights that he designed. And we put in a big sand thing downstairs.

SE: Sand and rope.

EW: We had sand and rope, and he came and redid the whole thing.

SE: Did he?

EW: Pretty. . . . Well, not totally, but somewhat.

SE: I remember that he came and was very happy with it.

EW: Was he?

SE: Yes.

EW: Well, he did something over. I don't know. He was in bad temper because he had a cold and he was miserable. . . .

SE: He may have moved something around.

EW: . . . and was without a woman at the time.

SE: Well, somebody came with him.

EW: Because we honored him at our ball that night, too. Yes. I don't remember. We tried to arrange a date for him.

SE: Oh, I see, I see.

EW: And then we had. . . . Well, another exhibition. . . . I think I did do The Guardians of Happiness.

SE: Yes, you did.

EW: That was the Korean exhibition.

SE: The shipping crates with the objects arrived at the opening.

EW: Yes. [rueful sounding] Right.

SE: [laughs] And then we unpacked them over the next week.

EW: Now, that was an interesting exhibition, because it was the most difficult experience of my life. I don't think anything has ever been as tough as that. We did it because we were celebrating a hundred years of diplomatic relationships between Korea and the United States, throughout the country. In Los Angeles, I became chairman of a committee to see what we could do throughout L.A., but our exhibition was to be the focal point. And this all came about because of Mr. Hari Zozayong, who brought folk art to the attention of the Korean government. They were unaware of before. Zozayong had his own folk art museum. In fact, he had two of them, and they have subsequently been taken over by the government because they found out folk art was valuable. The government gave permission to him to arrange this whole thing and bring a marvelous exhibit to us, but because of all this. . . . I'm not going to go into all the awful things that happened. But we decided that part of the exhibition, part of the celebration, would be to bring shamans over from Korea, which he guaranteed that he could arrange for us from there. These are women who dance with their bare feet on swords, and that was going to be a great part of it. We were underwritten for the opening-and for [the shamans]-by an architectural firm. Oh, lord, what's the name of that place? Peter. . . . Oh, dear. Oh, I can't remember the company, but we have it documented somewhere, if anybody ever cares. Anyhow at the last minute, just before everything was scheduled to arrive, I received a phone call from the Minister of Culture in Korea saying that they had decided not to let us have the exhibition. The invitations were out and everything. And nothing was going to happen. It was over. And that was due to all kinds of problems, which I'm not going into on this tape.

SE: Political problems.

EW: Political.

SE: Yes.

EW: Yes. And I was very upset about it and furious, and I started calling everywhere to see if I could do something about getting this turned around. They told me not to bother Mr. Zozayong. He was retreating to his cave in the mountains, and that was the end of him. And I called the embassy. . . . I called the local people here. I called the National Endowment for the Arts. I called the USIA [United States Information Agency-Ed.]. And nobody knew what to do or could do anything. And finally I called the Korean Embassy in Washington, DC, and I got ahold of the PR people, I think. I told them the situation and I said, "There is going to be an international stink if something isn't done about this, and it's all going to rest on Korea, not America." And the next morning I got a call from the Minister of Culture saying, "We've decided to send it after all." And that's how the show got put back here. That's the most amazing thing that ever happened. However. . . .

SE: Didn't somebody have to go up to the cave to get Zozayong out?

EW: I don't know. I suppose so.

SE: I remember something about somebody going up into the. . . .

EW: They might have.

SE: . . . yes, in these remote mountains, the cave, and dragging him out.

EW: I think maybe that is what happened. Anyhow, the dancers did arrive, and we had a program with them. First we had them out in the park [Hancock Park-Ed.] across the way from us so that anybody could come and see this demonstration, which was pretty amazing.

SE: Did they walk on swords? I don't remember that.

EW: They definitely got up and danced on the swords. And they polished them in my office before they went over to the park. While they were polishing them, whoever spoke for them told me that I had to give them their check ahead of time because if they weren't paid, they might cut their feet. [laughter] Believe me they got that check in their hands very quickly. Well, I went over there and watched this incredible performance. It was amazing. Then we had a program in the museum for the associate-or whatever they were-yes, associate members and the people who had underwritten it brought their guests to the party. But the exhibition was not there for them to see. It was supposed to be the opening. Because the show arrived while we were watching this

whole thing. Everybody was there in their cocktail clothes and Bekins, I think, arrived carrying these huge crates.

SE: It was about nine o'clock at night.

EW: Some moving van at nine o'clock at night. And I said, "Bring them in the front door and put them right in the galleries amongst us so everybody can see what the situation's about." Because it was not our fault. It was Korea's. That exhibition was a nice one.

SE: It was a wonderful show.

EW: It was very nice. It was simple but nice.

SE: Let's see, what other interesting things?

EW: Well, we had a Chinese folk show that Bill Wu put on, and his brother who was an architect [_____-Ed.] did that display. And that was a beautiful one. I thought that was very nice. It was mostly Chinese posters.

SE: You did a wonderful exhibition of Japanese folk toys.

EW: Oh, that was my other good one. That was my really best one, I guess.

SE: That one or Masks in Motion?

EW: Well, I didn't do the display at that. I'm talking about the display. The Japanese toy one, I did that one completely. And I did the catalogue on that one, too, even the cover. [laughs] And that was good, because that had to be reprinted a few times. That was very nice, because we made a little teahouse upstairs. We had tea ceremonies going in it, and we made a temple step with darumas on it. We brought in lots of people's collections for this. And we had about a hundred darumas, I think, little roly-poly dolls.

SE: Yes, easily.

EW: Dolls going up those stairs. It was very nice. We had a little shop-simulated shop-in one corner, as it might have been in Japan. And then we had little window dioramas with toys, which was very successful. That was a good exhibition. And it traveled. Benihana un[derwrote the traveling part].

EW: Well, anyhow Benihana underwrote traveling this thing. We had wonderful cases that were designed by Marcia Page, who was the registrar, to house some of these little small dioramas for the toys, and it went to about forty restaurants throughout the country. At one point, I flew to Atlanta, I think it was, and to a Benihana restaurant there, and they did a television program about it. They brought a lot of children in-American children who didn't know how to use chopsticks and had to learn. That was all part of the TV program. I gave a little talk about the difference in concept between American toys and Japanese toys. I enjoyed that very much. So, let's see, another. . . . If I'm discussing exhibitions. . . .

SE: Talk about Masks in Motion.

EW: The Masks in Motion show was the last one that I did before, that I curated, really. I was the senior curator.

SE: You were the program director.

EW: Well, I was the program director, but I more or less curated that one with. . . .

SE: Oh, I see. With other people.

EW: With you doing America?

SE: No, I did video compilations. There were a number of us. Nancy. . . .

EW: Nancy Romero was the anthropologist on this one. (And that's my daughter.) Louise Jackson, who is now an anthropologist but wasn't then, took one continent. I divided the people that were doing the research into continents.

SE: Did Willow [Young-Ed.] take one of those at that time?

EW: No. She wasn't part of that.

SE: She was directing the Festival of Masks at that time.

EW: It was really Louise and you and Nancy and me. That was it. And, of course, my secretary was Brenda [Hurst-Ed.], who compiled a lot of stuff. The idea behind that show, which I still think is the best thing that I ever did there, was not to look at static masks from different countries but. . . . This was during the Olympics, so the idea was to celebrate that.

SE: That's right; it was our Olympics, the 1984 Olympics.

EW: Right. We got fifty countries to send masks. Some of them gave them to us and others lent them to us. But we divided the exhibition into functions of masks. We had Social Mores in one; we had the time sequences, like fertility, harvests, and that sort of thing. I can't remember the titles that we used.

SE: And there was sort of a healing one. `

EW: There was one that was cosmic, we called it. And there was another one that was called. . . . Oh dear, what were some of the different. . . . The profane, the secular.

SE: Secular,rtight, with the clown masks.

EW: Yes, and. . . .

SE: And then I did a compilation of videotapes.

EW: And then we had videos that went with each one of the areas. These were all in different areas so that the countries were mixed up.

SE: There were seven sections, I remember.

EW: Seven sections and seven videos.

SE: They were compilations.

EW: We managed to get seven video screens donated.

SE: Right. Goldstar? A Korean company.

EW: Goldstar, right.

SE: And the videos were compilations of other ethnographic films that were all ready made, showing the masks in use.

EW: And Shan did, you did the compilation of all of them, and we had to get them "glued" together. [laughter]

SE: Edited together. Well, just cuts from them anyway.

EW: Yes, right. And it was very exciting, and I must say we did have people that came from all over who were fascinated. Anthropologists loved it. It was a unique way of looking at it. My plan was to do a book on it afterwards, which I have not done because I need somebody to make me do just what you're doing right this minute.

SE: Sit you down.

EW: Sit me down, and if I could have talked it, I think I could have done it, because we certainly had all the research there, and it would have been a really good book. Maybe that'll come about yet.

SE: Also, the museum took a lot of exhibitions from other places that were significant that wouldn't have been shown here otherwise.

EW: Yes, right.

SE: Black Folk Art in America, you mentioned.

EW: Oh, that was. . . . Black Folk Art in America was called the best exhibition in Los Angeles in 1982. Could it have been that far back?

SE: Maybe, um hmm.

EW: That originated in Washington, DC at the Corcoran, curated by Jane Livingston and John Beardslee, I think.

SE: Yes.

EW: They wanted us to have it. And I think the L.A. County and a few other places were upset that we got it. But I think that they were very wise in choosing us, because we had a more folksy look and that was the look that they wanted. We got an architect from Victor Gruen. He's black, but I can't think of his name [Marion _____-Ed.]. It begins with "M," and he did the display. He did a very, very good display. At that time we had a larger area. We had an annex across the way from our building. . . .

SE: Across Curson Avenue

EW: . . . which gave us a very large gallery also, along with offices. We had classrooms. We had carpenter shops. We had publicity. You were over there.

SE: Yes, Willow and I and Ann Robbins and Karen Copeland [and then Janet Marcus-Ed.] were over there.

EW: Yes, there were lots and lots of people. It was a wonderful space and so we were able to really make good use of that. And then they took that building down, and we lost the space, but then I think we may be getting back to something like that now. Anyhow, we were over there as well as in our own building for that exhibition.

SE: Let's go through some of the other shows that were important. Maybe Dyer's Art.

EW: Oh, The Dyer's Art, which Jack Lenor Larson circulated from the American Craft Museum. . . . Well, it was called the Museum of Contemporary Crafts then. I don't think they had changed their name yet. Maybe.

SE: Yeah. I think you're right. And Shinjuku Station.

EW: Ah, that was another one. That came from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Peter. . . . Begins with a ["G", "J"] and he's an architect. He put that one together. The subject was about the largest train station in Asia, certainly, and I think something like three million people a day, at that time, went through that station. All walks of life. They had department stores in it. They had an underworld, I remember, that habituated it, and lots of shops, and all kinds of things.

SE: And the fascinating thing. . . .

EW: And I remember that they had built a contemporary building next door hoping to have some of those people move in there, but they had made their lives in Shinjuku station, and the building next door wasn't doing well. That was one of the interesting revelations about that.

SE: And the stores would close suddenly and another one open in its place overnight. Didn't it like transform itself all the time?

EW: I imagine so, but I don't remember that, but you might.

SE: I remember that being one of the fascinating things about it, was that it would transform itself all the time.

EW: And when we had that exhibition downstairs, we had an exhibition called Patterns in the upstairs gallery, which was Japanese fabric stencils. And we had. . . .

SE: That was organized by the museum.

EW: That was organized by us. And we had fashion shows and Japanese. . . .

SE: The patterns were Japanese textile stencils.

EW: That's right. That were hardened with persimmon juice. And that was a very interesting exhibition, too. It was nice. I guess I designed that one.

SE: Yes, you did. And the Tool as Object.

EW: Oh, Tool as Object. Thank you for reminding me of all this. That was done by a person who happens to be a trustee right now, Dr. Edward Tuttle, he's a professor of Linguistics-Italian and Romance Linguistics-at UCLA. But he has always had a tremendous interest in tools as objects. And he had the beginnings of a collection of that. And he and we were able to find other people who had beautiful tools. Sam Maloof, of course, had some wonderful tools. And Jerry Glazer, a friend of Sam's who's an engineer. My husband also knew him as an engineer, and he's a woodworker too. He had a wonderful collection. And Ed put that exhibition together. It was wonderful. He did the catalogue, and I did the display.

SE: And California Women in Crafts.

EW: California Women in Crafts. Bernard Kester did that display.

SE: And didn't he organize it with Rita Lawrence?

EW: Oh, yes, he did. Rita Lawrence was a trustee at the time. And Rita had started Architectural Pottery and knew a lot about. . . . That was a very good exhibition. Lee Mullican did an exhibition way, way back at the very beginning, called L.A. Collects. That was a terrific ex[hibit]. . . . And he did the display, of course. It was a wonderful exhibit. He spent a lot of time collecting folk art from people's homes. We had a very nice catalogue with that, too. That was a good one. And then we had. . . . One of the earliest exhibitions was called Devils, Demons, and Dragons. And that was very good. And I retained Dolf Gotelli to do the display. My mistake on that was that I could have made an entire exhibition out of either devils or demons or dragons, and I had all three of them in there together. I was very sorry about that because there was just so much material. Some day it would be good to go back and try to separate them. But for the dragons, I was able to get some wonderful tubular rugs from the Textile Museum in Washington sent out. I went back and told them that they had sent them-in later years-and they couldn't believe they allowed them out of the [museum].

SE: Tubular rugs?

EW: Yeah, they're round rugs that were Tibetan, I believe, with dragons on them. And, of course, the Chinese, the oriental dragons were simply marvelous on the whole thing. And then for the Mexican. . . . Yeah, the demons from that little village beginning with "O" [Okimicho-Ed.]. It became famous for those little demons that only they make, and I know the story behind it and everything but. . . . Anyhow, we had devil masks. It was a very good exhibition. It was the first mask festival, the same time.

SE: Oh, talk about the Mask Festival.

EW: Well, that happened because Ed Neese was the Director of Parks and Recreation for the County of Los Angeles, and we were doing at our museum many outreach exhibitions. I don't think I've mentioned it, but part of my philosophy was to take exhibitions out into the community because a lot of people were not museum-goers. They were afraid of going to museums, and didn't think they were for them. My idea was to take exhibitions into factories and into all kinds of places, which we did. And I haven't talked about that. We went into banks and we went into factories. Ed came and said, "What can we do together for outreach?" because we were successfully doing outreach, and he was supposed to be, I guess. And this really came from the top of my head. I don't know how I happened to come up with this, but I said, "Well, you have parks in all the different areas of the county." And I had just learned that we had more ethnic groups in Los Angeles County than any other place in the world. And I said, "Why don't you find out about the different ethnic groups in your different neighborhoods, get workshops going, and have them make masks reflecting their backgrounds." Because I imagined that masks was a universal object. "And we can then have a parade down Wilshire Boulevard, and everybody could show themselves to each other, and celebrate it. It would be fun." And he loved the idea, went back, got permission to do that, and we decided to collaborate on it. But, as I thought it through, I decided that this had to be a grassroot affair. But it really had to be grassroots. So I tried to get together as many community art people as I could, and we had a community meeting. Nobody understood what we meant by this multi-ethnic community that we had at that time. They thought we meant black, Latino, or white, period. But it was John Outterbridge who was the Director of the Watts Towers Art Center who got up and said, "No, no, this is not what she means. What she means is that there are Hungarians and there's. . . ." And he listed many, many different ethnic neighborhoods that we had. The group was excited and got with it. I tried to get contemporary craft artists to make masks as well, so that we could have a combination of these things, which they haven't been doing quite as much, but they're doing it. We had a big parade down Wilshire Boulevard and. . . .

SE: The Cal Arts Gamelan was in it, weren't they?

EW: That was a very, very funny thing that happened. I invited the Gamelan players to come and play, and after the parade was over, they stationed themselves in front of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and sat on the ground and continued to play. I was walking away, and suddenly I saw the police arresting them. And the man who was the director of the Gamelan had been brought over by Cal Arts.

SE: From Indonesia.

EW: He was the leading musician, I think, in all of Bali for Gamelan, and he was brought over to teach and he didn't have. . . . I don't even know if he had a green card yet. Whatever he had, he was in tears because he was certain that he was going to be shipped back to Bali in disgrace. The policeman was writing out tickets for all of them. I rushed over and said, "What do you think you are doing?" He said, "You're breaking the law." He thought they were selling pots and pans. They had all this shiny [metal]. . . . Don't you remember that?

SE: No, I wasn't there that year. I came the next year.

EW: Oh, well, they had these shiny Gamelan instruments there, and it was an awful thing. And I said, "They aren't doing that. They're playing." He said, "But it's against the law to be on the ground, anyhow." I got into a big fight. I said, "Here we are trying to celebrate our diversity, having joy in the streets instead of misery in the streets, and why can't you help us?" Patrick saw me arguing with the police, and he was holding his head because he was sure we were all going to go to jail as a result of my blowing up. But they tore up the. . . . We managed to get the whole thing taken off the record, because Cal Arts then went to work also, and the police department forgave the whole thing. There was nothing on the record so it was okay. And I learned that once the parade was over, it was against the law to be doing anything on the street. That first parade was a very good one, interesting because we had a big canopy out in front of the Craft and Folk Art Museum at the time, and we covered that canopy with a huge dragon head, and the eyes were headlights from a truck. I think we had smoke coming out of it; I'm not sure.

SE: Who did that? Who made that?

EW: Frank really, my husband, engineered the headlight part, but we made the whole thing out of papier mache and then painted it and put it up there. Roman was our. . . .

SE: Oh, Janzcek.

EW: Janzcek was working for us at the time. Anyhow, after we had that first parade, which everybody adored, we had a wrap-up meeting afterwards with the participants to ask them what they thought of it. They all came talking about "next time" and just assuming that this was going to happen. And they suggested that we might go into. . . . We decided that we could go into the park and have a stage and present masked performances.

SE: There's a park across the street.

EW: At the park across the street, which is Hancock Park. So the next year we went over into the park, and the parade grew and we had performances which were fantastic. We had Balinese dancing and we had Indian dancing. We had everything. It was just wonderful. It was interesting to see the people who were living in Park LaBrea. They were older people, and I don't think most of them had ever seen any of these kinds of performances. It was all free. They could sit there and watch all that, and it was very nice. We had food booths. But it was so successful that we decided that we would have it for two days after that.

SE: Did the Korean. . . . Did Mr. Huh come that year?

EW: Oh, the Korean. . . . Yes, we had Mr. [Ho Young-Ed.] Huh, who came. That was a lovey . . . wonderful thing too. He had been designated the Intangible National Treasure of Korea for mask making and dancing. For some reason, I heard that it was rescinded in later years, but I don't know why. But he came over and taught dancing and mask making to the Koreans of the area. I think the Korean newspaper brought him over.

SE: That's right.

EW: And we heard of him and invited him to participate in the festival. And now was Willow [Young-Ed.] the director of it that first. . . .

SE: No, that was my first year. I did the first two. But Willow came as a volunteer.

EW: You did the second two, I did the first one.

SE: Well, right. The first festival ones.

EW: You did the one which was in the park, the first one of those.

SE: Right, the first ones that were in the park.

EW: All right. Shan Emanuelli coordinated the first festival and the second festival, and my actual idea was that she would have people helping her, and then I would take one of the helpers who would do it for a couple years and on and on and on. So you did it for two years and then Willow Young came along and did it for five years.

SE: She volunteered for the first two festivals. She came towards the end of the organizing for the. . . . Well, it was parade number two, festival number one. And she really helped put together the performances. Well, the staging and all of that. And she brought in a few people from UCLA who were important performers. She was a student at UCLA at the time. Judy Susilo and. . . .

EW: Judy Susilo and Wenton. . . .

SE: Yeah. I Wayan Lendra.

EW: That's right, Lendra.

SE: And then the next year she volunteered the whole year, and then she took over.

EW: That's right. And she kept that position for a number of years until after the Olympics.

EW: Until Maia [Friedman, her daughter-Ed.] was born, and Maia is. . . .

SE: 1986 was her last one.

EW: '86. Thank you very much. That was it. Anyhow, it grew and grew, and when we were asked to be co-producers of the Olympic Games for the Arts Festival, which was the first one, under Bob Fitzpatrick, we decided. . . . He decided that we needed to hold it for three days. We were moved to Plummer Park, which was longer and also catastrophic for us. It was the same time that I staged that mask exhibition in the museum, but outside it was catastrophic because everybody that was a co-producer from L.A. lost a fortune during the Olympics.

SE: Co-producers were the people working with the Olympic Arts Committee, like the museums and the. . . .

EW: Exactly. [Interruption in taping]

EW: We'd been told. . . . We were only given a hundred thousand dollars by the Olympic Arts Committee, which was really very, very little. It was a pittance compared to what other co-producers received. And we had to have three days and we. . . .

SE: Had to fence the park, too.

EW: We had to fence it, and had to. . . . We charged admission, but that absolutely gave us nothing. We got practically nothing in revenue because nobody came. People were not coming. The whole Iron Curtain thing was closed off. In fact, that was. . . .

SE: What do you mean the Iron Curtain?

EW: Russia wouldn't send any athletes-and Hungary. Anything behind the Iron Curtain did not come to the games in L.A. that time. They expected mobs and mobs of people. Nobody was around. We had practically nobody in that park for three days. That's why we lost our shirt there. But they did flock into the exhibition, and that was very successful. Bob Fitzpatrick was on our board, and I didn't mention that before. I was on the board of Cal Arts for twelve years. I was on the board of Cal Arts before he came to Cal Arts, in fact. And I got him to be on our board, and we had the understanding that we couldn't go after each other's people for money. That meant I had to leave all Disney's people alone, which was too bad. But he was a very useful person on our board. He really was. He was terrific in terms of teaching us how to run things, and I learned a lot about what it's like to be on a board from being on the Cal Arts board, which was very smoothly run. I got off [the board-Ed.] on my own because I couldn't. . . . I knew at one point. . . . Bob had gotten off of ours and I got off of that one because I knew I couldn't contribute vast sums of money, and that is really what a trustee has to either be able to get or give from their own purse. And anything I had was going to go to our museum. So I decided to leave it. But I was sorry to because I loved being on the Cal Arts board. It was great. It was stimulating. The school is stimulating. Anyhow, we went back to Hancock Park with the Mask Festival, after that. We decided that we wouldn't be able to have a festival every year, as it had been until that point, which caused a lot of trouble. I mean, a lot of people were very upset. The phones never stopped ringing saying, "When is the festival?" "Why aren't we having it?" We found out how important it was. We received fifteen calls a day, I was told, asking where and when it was. So we skipped one year, and then we decided that we would do it once every two years. Now we're back to every year, because there was just too much of a fuss. And since we don't charge admission, the only pocket that is out is our own. [laughter] However, we've been getting some nice grants and donations, and last year the city gave us. . . . I think we had a sixty-five-thousand-dollar grant from the city, which is the biggest they've ever given. They really are for us. One of the things that I used to say is that it's the only occasion where the county and the city work hand-in-hand on something. Usually they're trying to push you off on one or the other. But here they both really worked together. We used to get in-kind things from the park.

SE: From the county?

EW: From the county, yes. Anyhow, it's grown and grown. We had something like eighty-five languages that were spoken in the parade last time. We've had up to a hundred thousand people at the parade and the park and so forth. I think we're going into our seventeenth mask festival, and we've never had a bad incident in terms of violence or crime of any sort-knock on wood, if there were something . . . there it is. [knocks] As almost all other festivals have had, we never have had. It's a family day. People love coming to that thing. And as I said, if

we don't have it, we get phone calls asking what about it and where is it? So it's good. We have kept it a community-based event. We have large community meetings every year-about three of them or four. And we've begun having things along with the festival in the park. We began having lectures-anthropological lectures and symposiums-and mask workshops. We've had mask workshops in the schools.

SE: From the very beginning, we did.

EW: From the very beginning, we had that. We included galleries. You got lots of galleries to put on mask exhibitions. Wasn't that you who did that?

SE: I'm trying to remember.

EW: At the same time that we had the festival, you put on a mask show in the museum yourself.

SE: I did that.

EW: Yes. In contemporary.

SE: What was that called? The Mask As Metaphor.

EW: Mask As Metaphor. That was excellent and that was your show.

SE: That was in the Santa Monica space, Santa Monica Place. We did two mask exhibitions where we invited artists to make masks.

EW: That's the one I'm. . . .

SE: And I didn't do those really. I mean, I coordinated them but we had this huge list of artists, and we invited them to do that, to make masks. But Mask As Metaphor I did for the Santa Monica Place Gallery. It was the opening show there.

EW: Oh, yes, that's right, that's right. Well, we have to tell about that, don't we?

SE: Yeah.

EW: That we were offered a space in Santa Monica Place, which is a mall.

SE: Frank Gehry-designed.

EW: Frank Gehry designed the mall, and Frank Gehry and Edgardo Contini sort of designed the interior space for us, on a very minor scale. The whole thing was. . . . It was not a very large space. We had just about a postage-stamp front part, where we could sell a few things, and then an exhibition gallery in the rear. And it was just too difficult. We couldn't keep it going.

SE: We needed extra staff that we weren't going to get.

EW: That's right. We didn't have enough staff to run it.

SE: It wasn't very financially successful.

EW: Nobody bought anything in the shop because if we had a beautiful piece of pottery, people who were on their way to the Broadway [a department store-Ed.] would look at it and say, "I could buy a pot that big for one-tenth the price." I mean, they had no idea of what went into that kind of pot, and we didn't have the wherewithal to teach them.

SE: Right, and we didn't attract the crowd that. . . .

EW: Anyhow, we closed it. Wisely. That was the end of that. But I remember that we did have some very good exhibitions in there.

SE: And Mask As Metaphor included artists who were already using mask imagery from all different media.

EW: That's right.

SE: And we had two performance pieces.

EW: Yes.

SE: John White and. . . . A woman. I can't think of her name right now. She's still around doing lots of performance work [Cheri Gaulke-Ed.].

EW: Oh, with the fish?

SE: No. Oh, Buster Simpson did the fish exhibition.

EW: No, that was. . . . Oh yes, we had that fish exhibit. You did that. That was there.

SE: Buster Simpson and Richard. . . .

EW: Richard Posner.

SE: Two Schools of Fish, that was called.

EW: That's right. You did that show.

EW: PET project was an acronym that was for the Project for the Preservation and Study of Ethnic Traditions in Southern California. That was a name that was given. . . . It was called the PET project by Lloyd Cotsen, who is a trustee and who knew that this was, in fact, my pet project, and that's why he gave it that name. I thought the idea was fantastic. We had all these ethnic communities, and certainly there must have been the crafts and things brought over from the countries from which they came, and so I thought it would be great to organize a group of people to go into those areas.

SE: It was Lloyd's idea, you just said?

EW: Oh no, it was my idea. He just contributed the title. The idea was to go into the areas and seek out the master artists of whatever object reflected that area and find out. . . . Culturally, do a story about them, an oral history, with cassettes and that sort of thing.

SE: Um hmm, like this.

EW: Like this. Yes, same sort of thing. But it was really sort of an anthropological study, except they started with the object and built the culture around it. I went out of town, and when I came back they had gotten a lot of folklorists, not. . . . I wanted anthropologists. And I felt that there was a difference between the two, but they had some good ones. Beverly Robinson. I didn't realize how good until I began working with Beverly. She really is terrific, and I didn't realize that then. She did help to train a lot of Junior League people who unfortunately could come only in the evening because they worked during the day. That was a mistake, because they couldn't go into the communities during the day then and do their research. So the thing took a long time getting off the ground. But we did get very uneven histories from about twenty, maybe even thirty people. Then we decided that we needed to do something for these people for taking up their time with these interviews, so we put on weekend exhibitions of some of their work. I think we had. . . . We must have had more than thirty. We must have had about fifty by the time we got through, because we had a couple of those [exhibitions], didn't we? Two or three of them. . . .

SE: Yes.

EW: . . . weekends in which we just did a display and hung the work, and they came.

SE: And demonstrated, didn't they?

EW: And demonstrated, and talked about what they did, for the public. That was terrific. And then we began doing videos of them. The whole thing was rather uneven as far as professional quality is concerned. I felt that all along, and it was confirmed by a few people. But now we have something called the Center for the Study of Art and Culture which Joan Benedetti, who is our art librarian, has started. And I pointed out that what we're doing there, and also what they're doing with an exhibition which will be the first major exhibition in the new gallery, is like an extension of the PET project because in the. . . . What's the name; what's it called? The new show Marcie [Page-Ed.] is working on with Dierdre Evans Pritchard?

SE: Oh, I don't know the name of it. Something about an object.

EW: Which has been fun. . . . Art Is Object is. . . . No. I think that's what it is called. [Language of Objects-Ed.] What they're doing is really pretty much the same idea, at least that part of it they're doing, then they may be doing a lot more that I'm not aware of, which the Getty has funded for $128,000. They're doing a big. . . .

SE: They're doing a computer database project.

EW: That's right, a big computer storage project. . . .

SE: Can you describe it?

EW: . . . out of which an exhibition is supposed to come. It's going into the communities and finding out, starting with the object, like [the icon-Ed.] the Virgin of Guadalupe. Right now they've been doing a lot with that. And one of the things that they're finding out is what happens to a tradition like that. When it comes from Mexico and lands in L.A., what does L.A. do to it? Which is exactly something I always wanted to do. I was very excited when I found that out, because when we have our mask festival and we put on all these traditional things there, I always say, "It can't be really traditional. It can't really be what they do, because it's not there, it's here. And anything coming here has to have an overlay that says L.A. to it." And I thought it would be interesting to do a comparative kind of exhibit sometime. So they're working along the same wonderful lines, and God willing, it'll all come to pass. Well, the CSAC [Center for the Study of Art in Culture-Ed.] is. . . . Joan's idea of getting people from all over the country-nationally well-known people, folklorists for the most part, which is. . . . I'd like to have seen a few anthropologists in there.

SE: What's your differentiation between the two?

EW: I always felt that, at least it seemed to me, that anthropologists took a much broader view of everything culturally, and they also had a much keener awareness of art as a component. And it seemed that that was the part that folklorists did not.

SE: They weren't discriminating.

EW: They would tell folk tales, but they don't tell. . . . They didn't understand what was really folk art. I remember talking to Wayland Hand, who used to be the head of the Folklore Department at UCLA. Wrote lots of books. Left a large part of his library to us, which was nice, when he died. And I once said that to him, about folklorists not understanding folk art, and he shook his head and said, "You're absolutely right. That's a gray area with folklorists." Well, I think they've gotten better. I'm sure they have. But anyhow, we have quite a few of them that are on this national team that Joan put together. We have some designers. Eudora Moore is on it. And there are some others of those I would like to have seen on it, too, but they aren't. She's got people like Pratap Pal from LACMA, who is the curator of Indian art there.

SE: Yesh, East Asian or something.

EW: Yes, East whatever. And Josine is on it, [Ianco-]Starrels. Gene Metcalf is a well-known folklorist. I know all the names, but I can't think of any of them right now.

SE: The man who is the folklorist for the city.

EW: A guy from the Bowers is on it. Oh, Willie Collins is no longer the folklorist for the city, but he's still on the board. Yes. Anyhow, we meet once a year. We skipped a year, so we've had two meetings since she started. She received a grant from the Irvine [Foundation-Ed.] for this. She then put together a workshop group-and they have an advisory board of their own, which is an offshoot of that-to start some seminars to teach people in museums how to deal with multi-ethnic communities that come into the museum, and that comprise the staffs of museums, and how to work with them, effectively. And they decided they'd put together a series of three seminars for this purpose and sent out a notice about it, expecting about forty replies and got eighty-two.

SE: All from L.A.?

EW: Well, they go. . . . I think there's somebody from San Diego? Santa Barbara? I don't know. It's between. . . .

SE: Southern California then.

EW: Somewhere in there, yes.

SE: Were the people who come mostly. . . .

EW: Curators, a lot of them.

SE: Are they a mixed-ethnic group?

EW: Yes, very. Very much so. And they've come from the Getty Museum and they're from LACMA and they're from MOCA [Museum of Contemporary Art-Ed.] and from the Museum of the Holocaust, which is just a very small little one, apparently, on Wilshire Boulevard. And I met her so that's how I know that. They're from the Barnsdall Park place [Municipal Art Gallery-Ed.]. They're from the zoo. They come to this thing. . . . We've had two full days of the seminar so far, and I think they've been excellent. I particularly liked the first day, before we got into how

are we going to make changes in the museum. And then I began to worry. . . . It's the same thing that I worried about when you had that panel that time-ArtTable-about how to make a mixed ethnic board and how. . . . In fact, there was a quotation given to us, handed out to us by Joan, by what's her name from Cal State, Dominguez Hills?

SE: Oh, Dolo Brooking.

EW: That one, yes. I objected to her because she didn't want me to be on that panel. Remember that?

SE: Yeah.

EW: She said I was white and upper middle class, and I had no right to be on the panel.

SE: Well, I don't think she said you had no right to be on it. I don't remember what. . . .

EW: She didn't want me to be on it. You said so.

SE: Right. And I can't remember exactly why.

EW: Well, my objection to. . . .

SE: It probably was that you were white and upper middle class.

EW: Terrible. Anyhow, nobody on that panel came from a real museum board. There wasn't one of them. They were from college boards.

SE: Well, there was a college dean. A college dean, and. . . .

EW: And Willow was head of the mask festival, but she wasn't even really head of the board. She was not even really on it.

SE: No. She was there to speak about advisory committees, advisory boards, not. . . .

EW: I thought we were talking about regular boards.

SE: Regular and advisory. We covered both.

EW: Well, that was okay.

SE: She had worked closely with a multi-ethnic advisory board for the Mask Festival, and it was a good way to represent the museum.

EW: Anyhow, I felt targeted, because here we are with one of the cornerstones of our museum being to celebrate the ethnic diversity of the community and not a great ethnic diversity on the board.

SE: Or on the staff for that matter.

EW: Or on the staff. Then. We have a bigger one now than we had then. But it's not easy to find. It's extremely difficult, and I wanted it pointed out that the purpose of a board is "give, get, or get off" and I'm tired of saying it, but that is what it boils down to; that's what it's for. If they don't do it, who's going to? You know. And if you try to get people in the ethnic communities, they also have to be able to give, get, or get off, or know people that will help them. And that's not easy to find, and everybody's after the same people. [telephone rings] [Interruption in taping]

EW: We've got this wonderful thing going in the Center for the Study of Art in Culture, and I think that's awfully good. There's a third workshop to come. We're now discussing [in the third workshop] how to make changes in the museum, and my comment was. . . . There's only one director attending all three of these, and that happens to be Patrick [Ela-Ed.], our director. And if you don't have your director present. . . . And I said there aren't very many trustees there either. If you haven't got those components present, I think that it's unrealistic to think you're going to make any changes in the museum, frankly. [laughing] I really don't see how anybody's going to. It'll be interesting to see. They may be forceful enough to do something about it; I don't know. But I'll wait and see. Anyhow, I've enjoyed it. I love it very much. So there's that.

SE: Do you want to talk about the Today programs?

EW: Oh, the Today programs. Yes. Well, going way back in time, again, the museum was going full sway, and I had met the man who was the head of Japan Society in New York, David McEcheron. Then it came to pass that the government began putting on these what they called "Today" shows. They started with Mexico, I think. They

had "Mexico Today," and they would bring cultural things and people from Mexico over to this country. Our country selected four or five cities to saturate with the culture of Mexico, but they [each city-Ed.] were supposed to find local material and group to go along with it to make kind of a city-wide festival of Mexico.

SE: This was NEA/NEH-sponsored?

EW: Yes. And the Smithsonian was in there somehow. I don't know quite how they were. So then I read they were going to do "Japan Today" and they had selected six cities, or four, I don't remember how many. And we [Los Angeles-Ed.] were not included.

SE: Were we [Los Angeles-Ed.] in the "Mexico Today?"

EW: No, that was the first one.

SE: That was an equal travesty.

EW: Yes, but I heard about that after the fact. So when I heard about the "Japan Today" coming, and we were not included in that, I went to David McEcheron when I was in New York, and I said, "This is outrageous. It's ridiculous. We've got the largest Japanese community in America-outside of Japan actually-and why are you leaving us out?" And he said, "That's why. Because you've already got it, and everybody there knows about Japan." And I said, "Wrong. We've got everybody in pockets, and people do not know about Japan. Even though we have Japanese Americans living there, we really need to know. It would be very helpful for us to do so and it would be helpful for trade." You know, all that stuff. He said, "Well, okay. Let's see." He then got a hold of Mayor Bradley, and somehow or other they set up a meeting in city hall of leaders from the different museums and theaters and colleges, and of course I went. And because I'm the one that brought it to everyone's attention, they asked me if I would be the coordinator for the city. So I started by being coordinator for "Japan Today." And, of course, by the time we came into the picture, which was after the other cities already had their monetary allotment, we received a very small allotment. And we were able to bring a lot of our local resources to fruition, and some very interesting things happened. And I can't remember any of it.

SE: Well, the toy show, the Japanese toy show.

EW: Was that part of it?

SE: I believe it was, because that was also when we had the. . . . Wasn't that when we also had the tea house?

EW: We had the tea ceremony. Oh, yes, right, right, right. That's right. That was one thing that happened. . . . We were give the modular tea house. It was like a trailer on the outside.

SE: The size of a container, of a shipping container.

EW: It came out of a huge shipping container, right. And they made a tea house on the inside. It was beautiful. A very famous Japanese architect whose name begins with "K" [_____-Ed.]. Now I can't remember that offhand. But we've got it written down somewhere.

SE: It's in the museum records.

EW: Yes, it has to be. Anyhow, this beautiful container was donated to us for the event. That's right. We kept it in our parking lot, and I covered it with giant bamboo in pots, which are now growing in my garden here. Up there. [gestures] So "Japan Today" in Los Angeles was very successful and because of that, they [the Washington people] came back to us and said that they were going to do "Egypt Today" and wouldn't we like to coordinate that. Well, I said no. I was worn out from "Japan Today," but Patrick looked very crestfallen, and he was my codirector at that time. . . .

SE: Patrick Ela.

EW: Patrick Ela. And I could see he wanted to, so I said, "Let's let Patrick be the coordinator/director for this and I'll assist if I have to." Patrick took that on, and he really did it with gusto. He went to Egypt on a pre-trip to help organize that.

SE: Hadn't his brother lived in Egypt. . . .

EW: No.

SE: . . . or in the Mid-East somewhere?

EW: His brother lived in Jordan for a while, and he visited him there, I think, on that trip, but he went over with a

couple of ambassadors. John Jova you know, who died just a very short time ago, who had been an ambassador in Mexico, and Dean Brown who was the ambassador in Egypt, and Janet Solinger went along.

SE: From the Smithsonian.

EW: From the Smithsonian. She's the director of the associates program.

SE: Smithsonian Associates. But she's been moved into something else now.

EW: Yes, she's gotten something else as well and I can't remember what that. . . . It's a big job. "Egypt Today." We had a terrific exhibition-I mean, series of exhibitions. We planned a trip to Egypt, which we took under "Egypt Today's" flag more or less-and our museum's-and we brought Madame Sadat here. This was before her husband was assassinated. We had a series of dinners and events with her. There was a big sit-down dinner at the Getty Museum, which was awesome. I couldn't get over the beauty of this woman. Her skin was the most beautiful skin I ever have seen-transparent. She was peaches and cream. She just is a very beautiful woman. Intelligent and lovely and warm, and we liked her very much. And the president of our board's [Mort O. Winston] company-Tosco-paid the bill for a very large dinner party that we held at the Beverly Hilton, at which we had Governor Jerry Brown, Mayor Bradley, and other luminaries present. We brought in many of the schools [to the museum]. We found out that there were several hundred thousand Egyptians living in L.A., something that nobody knew. But they were not in little bunches; they were largely around universities and most of them were doctors and professional people when they arrived here, due to some quota systems of some kind, I don't know. But I remember talking to the mayor about a sister city. We felt that we ought to have one, and he didn't want to hear about any more sister cities from me when I mentioned it. Then I told him how big the population was, and he became a little more interested. We since have gotten one. It think Giza is ours; I'm not sure. Anyhow, that's not due to me, but I know it's happened. [both chuckle] I've been on the Sister City Mayor's Council for a number of years now. I forgot about that, too. Anyhow, it doesn't amount to anything.

SE: Did we do any other "Today" programs after Egypt?

EW: Yes. Then they came back to us and said they wanted us to do "Scandinavia Today." That was five countries, and I was horrified but Patrick loved it. So we co-chaired that. We co-coordinated it, let's put it that way. That included Finland and Sweden and Norway and Denmark and Iceland. We really did a job on that. We had a board that was formed of prominent Scandinavians-Robert Anderson from ARCO, and Rod Punt. The guy from Bank of America. He's retired now. He was the overall chairman of this advisory board. We had a big advisory board. We had somebody that was taking care of the visual arts, somebody taking care of the theater arts, and we really saturated this city. And music. I remember going to see Ernest Fleischman with fear in my heart, because I was worried about his reaction to our request. He said there are no good Scandinavian musicians or composers. . . .

SE: Oh-oh! [laughs]

EW: . . . and now he's got [Music Director/conductor/composer] Esa-Pekka Salonen [from Finland]. [laughter] I would hate to remind him of that. I was trying to get him to do music-I mean, composers, is what we were talking about-of Imgolf Dahl. He said nobody outside of L.A. ever has heard of him, but he's really a famous contemporary composer.

SE: Right.

EW: He had been S.C. They did finally do something, somebody did. I don't know what it was. We brought over the princess of Denmark and princess of Sweden and. . . . I don't know, there were a lot of princesses and the prime ministers, and presidents and their wives and husbands from all of them. They all came, and we had a week of celebrations and festivities that were absolutely unbelievable.

SE: There was something at the Natural History. . . . No, Science and Industry.

EW: Science and Industry museum, we had a big. . . .

SE: Reception.

EW: They put on some exhibit there. We went to the Newport Harbor Art Museum. There was a huge dinner there. Gorgeous thing. That was wonderful. And we had to be in the back room to eat with the princes and princesses. I moved in with them in the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, and stayed there and then went in the limos in cavalcade. It was very interesting doing that in your own city.

SE: What was that like?

EW: I was looking out the window like a visitor and seeing things through their eyes. It was fascinating. Although

they were in another car. We just had one limo behind them to go along with them. I became pretty friendly with them, as did Patrick. They were lovely, charming people. What else is there to tell about that?

SE: Were there more "Today" programs after that?

EW: No, that was. . . . Believe me, that was it for us, anyhow. I don't know if there were anymore. I don't think there were.

SE: No. I think they stopped it.

EW: Right. We had one exhibition in our gallery, a textile one that was very good.

SE: That was a contemporary [Scandinavian] textile exhibition wasn't it?

EW: Yes, it was. And I forgot to say that the Consul General from Finland was a very good friend of ours-Asko Kartunen. We had put on exhibitions from Finland in the museum, and Asko became a really great friend. In fact he endorsed our sauna [at home] for us. Did you ever see that? That was a joke, of course.

SE: Yes.

EW: Yes. And Asko took me all around Finland. I went there to try to put an exhibition together-to bring one there. We brought one from Finland, but we didn't take one from here to there, because our country wouldn't put up the money and their country did. That was a very good exhibition that we had, if you recall.

SE: Yes. Bernard Kester did the installation.

EW: That's right. Bernard did that installation. He was in Finland with me also, on that occasion, when we gathered the people together and got the ideas for the things.

SE: Bernard did many of the major contemporary craft exhibitions at the museum, didn't he?

EW: Yes, he did. That's right.

SE: He organized them, curated.

EW: Either he did it or you did it, right.

SE: Let's see. What about how you feel about the museum's place in the local and national art communities?

EW: Well, when we started, I think I can safely say that there was nothing like us and I'm not even sure there is yet. There might be something getting closer now. I don't know.

SE: You mean the San Francisco one?

EW: The San Francisco one, I guess, does both, and maybe they're even doing it better in terms of doing both. Right now we need to do a lot of contemporary craft upgrading, and we know that. So as soon as finances permit, which is the major thing, we will get going on that. I know that I myself have always leaned towards the folk art side of things-the ethnic side-but I never intended to let the other one go. I've counted on people like yourself for the contemporary craft and Dorothy Garwood in The Egg and The Eye days, because I knew I didn't know that much about it. But we really need that. That's something that needs to be built up right now. It is difficult raising money if you are even middle-sized-much less a small museum-in a town where there are large ones. If you are in a small town and you're a small one, you can build up because you're it. But you can't do that in a major city like Los Angeles. Not easily.

SE: At least not in this economic climate.

EW: Not in this climate. That's very difficult. But we've done remarkably well, considering. We managed to stay afloat, and I think we're even looking up a little bit right now. And when we get our new design in, for which we have terrific architects selected: Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung. And I think that what they are designing will reflect what we're about better than most architects might have done it. I'm very happy that the committee selected them. I'm on that committee, but I'm only one of about ten so I'm just one voice. But I had my fingers crossed, because I really wanted them. So, we're on our way.

SE: You should say that the museum moved out of the old building because of changes in the city earthquake [code].

EW: Oh, yes, the museum. . . . First of all, we thought the building was going to come down. We had the idea of

building a highrise, multi-purpose building, such as they're doing in New York. We were going to be the first multi-purpose building. We wanted the building on the corner of Curson and Wilshire. I've wanted that since 1973, when I could have had it for three hundred thousand dollars. Now it's two and a half million, and we have to raise it because, after we decided to do the high rise with Wayne Ratkovich, we got the man who bought the corner building about a half an hour ahead of us to agree to include his building for an equal amount of space in the new highrise. And now that we're not doing the highrise due to the economic constraints and the big recession, we've decided to go back to using our own former building, which needed to be renovated for earthquake livability. We've already done that part, by the way. We've gutted it, and we've got all the earthquake stuff in place. And in gutting it, we have uncovered the shell of the room upstairs. Have you seen that?

SE: No.

EW: You haven't seen it. You must see it. It's almost twenty feet high, and it's a barrel-vaulted room. It is beautiful, and there's nothing obstructing it in the middle. I mean, it's just one huge room right now. It's just perfect for an exhibition space. And that's what it will be, of course. And then there can be others downstairs. And the corner building, where we now have everybody in offices, we have to raise money to buy that but we have a five-year lease to buy it-and the option, of course. We're going to build [ramps across the parking lot between the two buildings], because there's an elevator in the corner building. We also own the duplex which is behind us.

SE: On Curson.

EW: On Curson, we'll probably have to fix that up to house the permanent collection plus the other stuff that we have to store. And then we own the cottage next to that, but whether we'll keep that or sell it, we don't know. We may have to sell it. But we have plenty of space, and we'll be able to do some very exciting things there. We'll have 150-foot frontage on Wilshire Boulevard, which is great. Anyhow, that's where we're at. In between, we had the good graces of the May Company; they took us in for about three years. We didn't expect to be there that long, but we were waiting for the developer and that's what happened.

SE: That was the May Company on the corner of Fairfax and Wilshire, a landmark.

EW: We'd been told. . . . We were only given a hundred thousand dollars by the Olympic Arts Committee, which was really very, very little. It was a pittance compared to what other co-producers received. And we had to have three days and we. . . .

SE: Had to fence the park, too.

EW: We had to fence it, and had to. . . . We charged admission, but that absolutely gave us nothing. We got practically nothing in revenue because nobody came. People were not coming. The whole Iron Curtain thing was closed off. In fact, that was. . . .

SE: What do you mean the Iron Curtain?

EW: Russia wouldn't send any athletes-and Hungary. Anything behind the Iron Curtain did not come to the games in L.A. that time. They expected mobs and mobs of people. Nobody was around. We had practically nobody in that park for three days. That's why we lost our shirt there. But they did flock into the exhibition, and that was very successful. Bob Fitzpatrick was on our board, and I didn't mention that before. I was on the board of Cal Arts for twelve years. I was on the board of Cal Arts before he came to Cal Arts, in fact. And I got him to be on our board, and we had the understanding that we couldn't go after each other's people for money. That meant I had to leave all Disney's people alone, which was too bad. But he was a very useful person on our board. He really was. He was terrific in terms of teaching us how to run things, and I learned a lot about what it's like to be on a board from being on the Cal Arts board, which was very smoothly run. I got off [the board-Ed.] on my own because I couldn't. . . . I knew at one point. . . . Bob had gotten off of ours and I got off of that one because I knew I couldn't contribute vast sums of money, and that is really what a trustee has to either be able to get or give from their own purse. And anything I had was going to go to our museum. So I decided to leave it. But I was sorry to because I loved being on the Cal Arts board. It was great. It was stimulating. The school is stimulating. Anyhow, we went back to Hancock Park with the Mask Festival, after that. We decided that we wouldn't be able to have a festival every year, as it had been until that point, which caused a lot of trouble. I mean, a lot of people were very upset. The phones never stopped ringing saying, "When is the festival?" "Why aren't we having it?" We found out how important it was. We received fifteen calls a day, I was told, asking where and when it was. So we skipped one year, and then we decided that we would do it once every two years. Now we're back to every year, because there was just too much of a fuss. And since we don't charge admission, the only pocket that is out is our own. [laughter] However, we've been getting some nice grants and donations, and last year the city gave us. . . . I think we had a sixty-five-thousand-dollar grant from the city, which is the biggest they've ever given. They really are for us. One of the things that I used to say is that it's the only

occasion where the county and the city work hand-in-hand on something. Usually they're trying to push you off on one or the other. But here they both really worked together. We used to get in-kind things from the park.

SE: From the county?

EW: From the county, yes. Anyhow, it's grown and grown. We had something like eighty-five languages that were spoken in the parade last time. We've had up to a hundred thousand people at the parade and the park and so forth. I think we're going into our seventeenth mask festival, and we've never had a bad incident in terms of violence or crime of any sort-knock on wood, if there were something . . . there it is. [knocks] As almost all other festivals have had, we never have had. It's a family day. People love coming to that thing. And as I said, if we don't have it, we get phone calls asking what about it and where is it? So it's good. We have kept it a community-based event. We have large community meetings every year-about three of them or four. And we've begun having things along with the festival in the park. We began having lectures-anthropological lectures and symposiums-and mask workshops. We've had mask workshops in the schools.

SE: From the very beginning, we did.

EW: From the very beginning, we had that. We included galleries. You got lots of galleries to put on mask exhibitions. Wasn't that you who did that?

SE: I'm trying to remember.

EW: At the same time that we had the festival, you put on a mask show in the museum yourself.

SE: I did that.

EW: Yes. In contemporary.

SE: What was that called? The Mask As Metaphor.

EW: Mask As Metaphor. That was excellent and that was your show.

SE: That was in the Santa Monica space, Santa Monica Place. We did two mask exhibitions where we invited artists to make masks.

EW: That's the one I'm. . . .

SE: And I didn't do those really. I mean, I coordinated them but we had this huge list of artists, and we invited them to do that, to make masks. But Mask As Metaphor I did for the Santa Monica Place Gallery. It was the opening show there.

EW: Oh, yes, that's right, that's right. Well, we have to tell about that, don't we?

SE: Yeah.

EW: That we were offered a space in Santa Monica Place, which is a mall.

SE: Frank Gehry-designed.

EW: Frank Gehry designed the mall, and Frank Gehry and Edgardo Contini sort of designed the interior space for us, on a very minor scale. The whole thing was. . . . It was not a very large space. We had just about a postage-stamp front part, where we could sell a few things, and then an exhibition gallery in the rear. And it was just too difficult. We couldn't keep it going.

SE: We needed extra staff that we weren't going to get.

EW: That's right. We didn't have enough staff to run it.

SE: It wasn't very financially successful.

EW: Nobody bought anything in the shop because if we had a beautiful piece of pottery, people who were on their way to the Broadway [a department store-Ed.] would look at it and say, "I could buy a pot that big for one-tenth the price." I mean, they had no idea of what went into that kind of pot, and we didn't have the wherewithal to teach them.

SE: Right, and we didn't attract the crowd that. . . .

EW: Anyhow, we closed it. Wisely. That was the end of that. But I remember that we did have some very good

exhibitions in there.

SE: And Mask As Metaphor included artists who were already using mask imagery from all different media.

EW: That's right.

SE: And we had two performance pieces.

EW: Yes.

SE: John White and. . . . A woman. I can't think of her name right now. She's still around doing lots of performance work [Cheri Gaulke-Ed.].

EW: Oh, with the fish?

SE: No. Oh, Buster Simpson did the fish exhibition.

EW: No, that was. . . . Oh yes, we had that fish exhibit. You did that. That was there.

SE: Buster Simpson and Richard. . . .

EW: Richard Posner.

SE: Two Schools of Fish, that was called.

EW: That's right. You did that show.

EW: PET project was an acronym that was for the Project for the Preservation and Study of Ethnic Traditions in Southern California. That was a name that was given. . . . It was called the PET project by Lloyd Cotsen, who is a trustee and who knew that this was, in fact, my pet project, and that's why he gave it that name. I thought the idea was fantastic. We had all these ethnic communities, and certainly there must have been the crafts and things brought over from the countries from which they came, and so I thought it would be great to organize a group of people to go into those areas.

SE: It was Lloyd's idea, you just said?

EW: Oh no, it was my idea. He just contributed the title. The idea was to go into the areas and seek out the master artists of whatever object reflected that area and find out. . . . Culturally, do a story about them, an oral history, with cassettes and that sort of thing.

SE: Um hmm, like this.

EW: Like this. Yes, same sort of thing. But it was really sort of an anthropological study, except they started with the object and built the culture around it. I went out of town, and when I came back they had gotten a lot of folklorists, not. . . . I wanted anthropologists. And I felt that there was a difference between the two, but they had some good ones. Beverly Robinson. I didn't realize how good until I began working with Beverly. She really is terrific, and I didn't realize that then. She did help to train a lot of Junior League people who unfortunately could come only in the evening because they worked during the day. That was a mistake, because they couldn't go into the communities during the day then and do their research. So the thing took a long time getting off the ground. But we did get very uneven histories from about twenty, maybe even thirty people. Then we decided that we needed to do something for these people for taking up their time with these interviews, so we put on weekend exhibitions of some of their work. I think we had. . . . We must have had more than thirty. We must have had about fifty by the time we got through, because we had a couple of those [exhibitions], didn't we? Two or three of them. . . .

SE: Yes.

EW: . . . weekends in which we just did a display and hung the work, and they came.

SE: And demonstrated, didn't they?

EW: And demonstrated, and talked about what they did, for the public. That was terrific. And then we began doing videos of them. The whole thing was rather uneven as far as professional quality is concerned. I felt that all along, and it was confirmed by a few people. But now we have something called the Center for the Study of Art and Culture which Joan Benedetti, who is our art librarian, has started. And I pointed out that what we're doing there, and also what they're doing with an exhibition which will be the first major exhibition in the new gallery, is like an extension of the PET project because in the. . . . What's the name; what's it called? The new

show Marcie [Page-Ed.] is working on with Dierdre Evans Pritchard?

SE: Oh, I don't know the name of it. Something about an object.

EW: Which has been fun. . . . Art Is Object is. . . . No. I think that's what it is called. [Language of Objects-Ed.] What they're doing is really pretty much the same idea, at least that part of it they're doing, then they may be doing a lot more that I'm not aware of, which the Getty has funded for $128,000. They're doing a big. . . .

SE: They're doing a computer database project.

EW: That's right, a big computer storage project. . . .

SE: Can you describe it?

EW: . . . out of which an exhibition is supposed to come. It's going into the communities and finding out, starting with the object, like [the icon-Ed.] the Virgin of Guadalupe. Right now they've been doing a lot with that. And one of the things that they're finding out is what happens to a tradition like that. When it comes from Mexico and lands in L.A., what does L.A. do to it? Which is exactly something I always wanted to do. I was very excited when I found that out, because when we have our mask festival and we put on all these traditional things there, I always say, "It can't be really traditional. It can't really be what they do, because it's not there, it's here. And anything coming here has to have an overlay that says L.A. to it." And I thought it would be interesting to do a comparative kind of exhibit sometime. So they're working along the same wonderful lines, and God willing, it'll all come to pass. Well, the CSAC [Center for the Study of Art in Culture-Ed.] is. . . . Joan's idea of getting people from all over the country-nationally well-known people, folklorists for the most part, which is. . . . I'd like to have seen a few anthropologists in there.

SE: What's your differentiation between the two?

EW: I always felt that, at least it seemed to me, that anthropologists took a much broader view of everything culturally, and they also had a much keener awareness of art as a component. And it seemed that that was the part that folklorists did not.

SE: They weren't discriminating.

EW: They would tell folk tales, but they don't tell. . . . They didn't understand what was really folk art. I remember talking to Wayland Hand, who used to be the head of the Folklore Department at UCLA. Wrote lots of books. Left a large part of his library to us, which was nice, when he died. And I once said that to him, about folklorists not understanding folk art, and he shook his head and said, "You're absolutely right. That's a gray area with folklorists." Well, I think they've gotten better. I'm sure they have. But anyhow, we have quite a few of them that are on this national team that Joan put together. We have some designers. Eudora Moore is on it. And there are some others of those I would like to have seen on it, too, but they aren't. She's got people like Pratap Pal from LACMA, who is the curator of Indian art there.

SE: Yesh, East Asian or something.

EW: Yes, East whatever. And Josine is on it, [Ianco-]Starrels. Gene Metcalf is a well-known folklorist. I know all the names, but I can't think of any of them right now.

SE: The man who is the folklorist for the city.

EW: A guy from the Bowers is on it. Oh, Willie Collins is no longer the folklorist for the city, but he's still on the board. Yes. Anyhow, we meet once a year. We skipped a year, so we've had two meetings since she started. She received a grant from the Irvine [Foundation-Ed.] for this. She then put together a workshop group-and they have an advisory board of their own, which is an offshoot of that-to start some seminars to teach people in museums how to deal with multi-ethnic communities that come into the museum, and that comprise the staffs of museums, and how to work with them, effectively. And they decided they'd put together a series of three seminars for this purpose and sent out a notice about it, expecting about forty replies and got eighty-two.

SE: All from L.A.?

EW: Well, they go. . . . I think there's somebody from San Diego? Santa Barbara? I don't know. It's between. . . .

SE: Southern California then.

EW: Somewhere in there, yes.

SE: Were the people who come mostly. . . .

EW: Curators, a lot of them.

SE: Are they a mixed-ethnic group?

EW: Yes, very. Very much so. And they've come from the Getty Museum and they're from LACMA and they're from MOCA [Museum of Contemporary Art-Ed.] and from the Museum of the Holocaust, which is just a very small little one, apparently, on Wilshire Boulevard. And I met her so that's how I know that. They're from the Barnsdall Park place [Municipal Art Gallery-Ed.]. They're from the zoo. They come to this thing. . . . We've had two full days of the seminar so far, and I think they've been excellent. I particularly liked the first day, before we got into how are we going to make changes in the museum. And then I began to worry. . . . It's the same thing that I worried about when you had that panel that time-ArtTable-about how to make a mixed ethnic board and how. . . . In fact, there was a quotation given to us, handed out to us by Joan, by what's her name from Cal State, Dominguez Hills?

SE: Oh, Dolo Brooking.

EW: That one, yes. I objected to her because she didn't want me to be on that panel. Remember that?

SE: Yeah.

EW: She said I was white and upper middle class, and I had no right to be on the panel.

SE: Well, I don't think she said you had no right to be on it. I don't remember what. . . .

EW: She didn't want me to be on it. You said so.

SE: Right. And I can't remember exactly why.

EW: Well, my objection to. . . .

SE: It probably was that you were white and upper middle class.

EW: Terrible. Anyhow, nobody on that panel came from a real museum board. There wasn't one of them. They were from college boards.

SE: Well, there was a college dean. A college dean, and. . . .

EW: And Willow was head of the mask festival, but she wasn't even really head of the board. She was not even really on it.

SE: No. She was there to speak about advisory committees, advisory boards, not. . . .

EW: I thought we were talking about regular boards.

SE: Regular and advisory. We covered both.

EW: Well, that was okay.

SE: She had worked closely with a multi-ethnic advisory board for the Mask Festival, and it was a good way to represent the museum.

EW: Anyhow, I felt targeted, because here we are with one of the cornerstones of our museum being to celebrate the ethnic diversity of the community and not a great ethnic diversity on the board.

SE: Or on the staff for that matter.

EW: Or on the staff. Then. We have a bigger one now than we had then. But it's not easy to find. It's extremely difficult, and I wanted it pointed out that the purpose of a board is "give, get, or get off" and I'm tired of saying it, but that is what it boils down to; that's what it's for. If they don't do it, who's going to? You know. And if you try to get people in the ethnic communities, they also have to be able to give, get, or get off, or know people that will help them. And that's not easy to find, and everybody's after the same people. [telephone rings] [Interruption in taping]

EW: We've got this wonderful thing going in the Center for the Study of Art in Culture, and I think that's awfully good. There's a third workshop to come. We're now discussing [in the third workshop] how to make changes in the museum, and my comment was. . . . There's only one director attending all three of these, and that happens to be Patrick [Ela-Ed.], our director. And if you don't have your director present. . . . And I said there aren't very many trustees there either. If you haven't got those components present, I think that it's unrealistic to think

you're going to make any changes in the museum, frankly. [laughing] I really don't see how anybody's going to. It'll be interesting to see. They may be forceful enough to do something about it; I don't know. But I'll wait and see. Anyhow, I've enjoyed it. I love it very much. So there's that.

SE: Do you want to talk about the Today programs?

EW: Oh, the Today programs. Yes. Well, going way back in time, again, the museum was going full sway, and I had met the man who was the head of Japan Society in New York, David McEcheron. Then it came to pass that the government began putting on these what they called "Today" shows. They started with Mexico, I think. They had "Mexico Today," and they would bring cultural things and people from Mexico over to this country. Our country selected four or five cities to saturate with the culture of Mexico, but they [each city-Ed.] were supposed to find local material and group to go along with it to make kind of a city-wide festival of Mexico.

SE: This was NEA/NEH-sponsored?

EW: Yes. And the Smithsonian was in there somehow. I don't know quite how they were. So then I read they were going to do "Japan Today" and they had selected six cities, or four, I don't remember how many. And we [Los Angeles-Ed.] were not included.

SE: Were we [Los Angeles-Ed.] in the "Mexico Today?"

EW: No, that was the first one.

SE: That was an equal travesty.

EW: Yes, but I heard about that after the fact. So when I heard about the "Japan Today" coming, and we were not included in that, I went to David McEcheron when I was in New York, and I said, "This is outrageous. It's ridiculous. We've got the largest Japanese community in America-outside of Japan actually-and why are you leaving us out?" And he said, "That's why. Because you've already got it, and everybody there knows about Japan." And I said, "Wrong. We've got everybody in pockets, and people do not know about Japan. Even though we have Japanese Americans living there, we really need to know. It would be very helpful for us to do so and it would be helpful for trade." You know, all that stuff. He said, "Well, okay. Let's see." He then got a hold of Mayor Bradley, and somehow or other they set up a meeting in city hall of leaders from the different museums and theaters and colleges, and of course I went. And because I'm the one that brought it to everyone's attention, they asked me if I would be the coordinator for the city. So I started by being coordinator for "Japan Today." And, of course, by the time we came into the picture, which was after the other cities already had their monetary allotment, we received a very small allotment. And we were able to bring a lot of our local resources to fruition, and some very interesting things happened. And I can't remember any of it.

SE: Well, the toy show, the Japanese toy show.

EW: Was that part of it?

SE: I believe it was, because that was also when we had the. . . . Wasn't that when we also had the tea house?

EW: We had the tea ceremony. Oh, yes, right, right, right. That's right. That was one thing that happened. . . . We were give the modular tea house. It was like a trailer on the outside.

SE: The size of a container, of a shipping container.

EW: It came out of a huge shipping container, right. And they made a tea house on the inside. It was beautiful. A very famous Japanese architect whose name begins with "K" [_____-Ed.]. Now I can't remember that offhand. But we've got it written down somewhere.

SE: It's in the museum records.

EW: Yes, it has to be. Anyhow, this beautiful container was donated to us for the event. That's right. We kept it in our parking lot, and I covered it with giant bamboo in pots, which are now growing in my garden here. Up there. [gestures] So "Japan Today" in Los Angeles was very successful and because of that, they [the Washington people] came back to us and said that they were going to do "Egypt Today" and wouldn't we like to coordinate that. Well, I said no. I was worn out from "Japan Today," but Patrick looked very crestfallen, and he was my codirector at that time. . . .

SE: Patrick Ela.

EW: Patrick Ela. And I could see he wanted to, so I said, "Let's let Patrick be the coordinator/director for this and I'll assist if I have to." Patrick took that on, and he really did it with gusto. He went to Egypt on a pre-trip to help

organize that.

SE: Hadn't his brother lived in Egypt. . . .

EW: No.

SE: . . . or in the Mid-East somewhere?

EW: His brother lived in Jordan for a while, and he visited him there, I think, on that trip, but he went over with a couple of ambassadors. John Jova you know, who died just a very short time ago, who had been an ambassador in Mexico, and Dean Brown who was the ambassador in Egypt, and Janet Solinger went along.

SE: From the Smithsonian.

EW: From the Smithsonian. She's the director of the associates program.

SE: Smithsonian Associates. But she's been moved into something else now.

EW: Yes, she's gotten something else as well and I can't remember what that. . . . It's a big job. "Egypt Today." We had a terrific exhibition-I mean, series of exhibitions. We planned a trip to Egypt, which we took under "Egypt Today's" flag more or less-and our museum's-and we brought Madame Sadat here. This was before her husband was assassinated. We had a series of dinners and events with her. There was a big sit-down dinner at the Getty Museum, which was awesome. I couldn't get over the beauty of this woman. Her skin was the most beautiful skin I ever have seen-transparent. She was peaches and cream. She just is a very beautiful woman. Intelligent and lovely and warm, and we liked her very much. And the president of our board's [Mort O. Winston] company-Tosco-paid the bill for a very large dinner party that we held at the Beverly Hilton, at which we had Governor Jerry Brown, Mayor Bradley, and other luminaries present. We brought in many of the schools [to the museum]. We found out that there were several hundred thousand Egyptians living in L.A., something that nobody knew. But they were not in little bunches; they were largely around universities and most of them were doctors and professional people when they arrived here, due to some quota systems of some kind, I don't know. But I remember talking to the mayor about a sister city. We felt that we ought to have one, and he didn't want to hear about any more sister cities from me when I mentioned it. Then I told him how big the population was, and he became a little more interested. We since have gotten one. It think Giza is ours; I'm not sure. Anyhow, that's not due to me, but I know it's happened. [both chuckle] I've been on the Sister City Mayor's Council for a number of years now. I forgot about that, too. Anyhow, it doesn't amount to anything.

SE: Did we do any other "Today" programs after Egypt?

EW: Yes. Then they came back to us and said they wanted us to do "Scandinavia Today." That was five countries, and I was horrified but Patrick loved it. So we co-chaired that. We co-coordinated it, let's put it that way. That included Finland and Sweden and Norway and Denmark and Iceland. We really did a job on that. We had a board that was formed of prominent Scandinavians-Robert Anderson from ARCO, and Rod Punt. The guy from Bank of America. He's retired now. He was the overall chairman of this advisory board. We had a big advisory board. We had somebody that was taking care of the visual arts, somebody taking care of the theater arts, and we really saturated this city. And music. I remember going to see Ernest Fleischman with fear in my heart, because I was worried about his reaction to our request. He said there are no good Scandinavian musicians or composers. . . .

SE: Oh-oh! [laughs]

EW: . . . and now he's got [Music Director/conductor/composer] Esa-Pekka Salonen [from Finland]. [laughter] I would hate to remind him of that. I was trying to get him to do music-I mean, composers, is what we were talking about-of Imgolf Dahl. He said nobody outside of L.A. ever has heard of him, but he's really a famous contemporary composer.

SE: Right.

EW: He had been S.C. They did finally do something, somebody did. I don't know what it was. We brought over the princess of Denmark and princess of Sweden and. . . . I don't know, there were a lot of princesses and the prime ministers, and presidents and their wives and husbands from all of them. They all came, and we had a week of celebrations and festivities that were absolutely unbelievable.

SE: There was something at the Natural History. . . . No, Science and Industry.

EW: Science and Industry museum, we had a big. . . .

SE: Reception.

EW: They put on some exhibit there. We went to the Newport Harbor Art Museum. There was a huge dinner there. Gorgeous thing. That was wonderful. And we had to be in the back room to eat with the princes and princesses. I moved in with them in the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, and stayed there and then went in the limos in cavalcade. It was very interesting doing that in your own city.

SE: What was that like?

EW: I was looking out the window like a visitor and seeing things through their eyes. It was fascinating. Although they were in another car. We just had one limo behind them to go along with them. I became pretty friendly with them, as did Patrick. They were lovely, charming people. What else is there to tell about that?

SE: Were there more "Today" programs after that?

EW: No, that was. . . . Believe me, that was it for us, anyhow. I don't know if there were anymore. I don't think there were.

SE: No. I think they stopped it.

EW: Right. We had one exhibition in our gallery, a textile one that was very good.

SE: That was a contemporary [Scandinavian] textile exhibition wasn't it?

EW: Yes, it was. And I forgot to say that the Consul General from Finland was a very good friend of ours-Asko Kartunen. We had put on exhibitions from Finland in the museum, and Asko became a really great friend. In fact he endorsed our sauna [at home] for us. Did you ever see that? That was a joke, of course.

SE: Yes.

EW: Yes. And Asko took me all around Finland. I went there to try to put an exhibition together-to bring one there. We brought one from Finland, but we didn't take one from here to there, because our country wouldn't put up the money and their country did. That was a very good exhibition that we had, if you recall.

SE: Yes. Bernard Kester did the installation.

EW: That's right. Bernard did that installation. He was in Finland with me also, on that occasion, when we gathered the people together and got the ideas for the things.

SE: Bernard did many of the major contemporary craft exhibitions at the museum, didn't he?

EW: Yes, he did. That's right.

SE: He organized them, curated.

EW: Either he did it or you did it, right.

SE: Let's see. What about how you feel about the museum's place in the local and national art communities?

EW: Well, when we started, I think I can safely say that there was nothing like us and I'm not even sure there is yet. There might be something getting closer now. I don't know.

SE: You mean the San Francisco one?

EW: The San Francisco one, I guess, does both, and maybe they're even doing it better in terms of doing both. Right now we need to do a lot of contemporary craft upgrading, and we know that. So as soon as finances permit, which is the major thing, we will get going on that. I know that I myself have always leaned towards the folk art side of things-the ethnic side-but I never intended to let the other one go. I've counted on people like yourself for the contemporary craft and Dorothy Garwood in The Egg and The Eye days, because I knew I didn't know that much about it. But we really need that. That's something that needs to be built up right now. It is difficult raising money if you are even middle-sized-much less a small museum-in a town where there are large ones. If you are in a small town and you're a small one, you can build up because you're it. But you can't do that in a major city like Los Angeles. Not easily.

SE: At least not in this economic climate.

EW: Not in this climate. That's very difficult. But we've done remarkably well, considering. We managed to stay afloat, and I think we're even looking up a little bit right now. And when we get our new design in, for which we have terrific architects selected: Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung. And I think that what they are designing will

reflect what we're about better than most architects might have done it. I'm very happy that the committee selected them. I'm on that committee, but I'm only one of about ten so I'm just one voice. But I had my fingers crossed, because I really wanted them. So, we're on our way.

SE: You should say that the museum moved out of the old building because of changes in the city earthquake [code].

EW: Oh, yes, the museum. . . . First of all, we thought the building was going to come down. We had the idea of building a highrise, multi-purpose building, such as they're doing in New York. We were going to be the first multi-purpose building. We wanted the building on the corner of Curson and Wilshire. I've wanted that since 1973, when I could have had it for three hundred thousand dollars. Now it's two and a half million, and we have to raise it because, after we decided to do the high rise with Wayne Ratkovich, we got the man who bought the corner building about a half an hour ahead of us to agree to include his building for an equal amount of space in the new highrise. And now that we're not doing the highrise due to the economic constraints and the big recession, we've decided to go back to using our own former building, which needed to be renovated for earthquake livability. We've already done that part, by the way. We've gutted it, and we've got all the earthquake stuff in place. And in gutting it, we have uncovered the shell of the room upstairs. Have you seen that?

SE: No.

EW: You haven't seen it. You must see it. It's almost twenty feet high, and it's a barrel-vaulted room. It is beautiful, and there's nothing obstructing it in the middle. I mean, it's just one huge room right now. It's just perfect for an exhibition space. And that's what it will be, of course. And then there can be others downstairs. And the corner building, where we now have everybody in offices, we have to raise money to buy that but we have a five-year lease to buy it-and the option, of course. We're going to build [ramps across the parking lot between the two buildings], because there's an elevator in the corner building. We also own the duplex which is behind us.

SE: On Curson.

EW: On Curson, we'll probably have to fix that up to house the permanent collection plus the other stuff that we have to store. And then we own the cottage next to that, but whether we'll keep that or sell it, we don't know. We may have to sell it. But we have plenty of space, and we'll be able to do some very exciting things there. We'll have 150-foot frontage on Wilshire Boulevard, which is great. Anyhow, that's where we're at. In between, we had the good graces of the May Company; they took us in for about three years. We didn't expect to be there that long, but we were waiting for the developer and that's what happened.

SE: That was the May Company on the corner of Fairfax and Wilshire, a landmark.

EW: Right. Thank you very much.

SE: What about some of the museum's relationships with other organizations in the country, like the American Craft Council or other folk-art museums?

EW: Well, when I started the museum, my biggest help was Sam Maloof and Alfreda [Maloof-Ed.]. Did I ever tell you, did I mention that? When I started The Egg and The Eye, I should say, I went back east with them. And they introduced me to everybody in the American Craft Council. That was in the sixties.

SE: Yes, I think we talked about that earlier.

EW: Oh, we already did that. Okay. I met everybody then. And I felt that it was very important for me to become a part of the American Craft Council, and I joined it, of course, right away. I tried to make our place in L.A. an umbrella organization for craft groups, where they could hold their meetings and so forth. And for a little while some of the regional meetings were held with us. But it became such a cliquish group. It really was.

EW: Well, it was made up of a tight little group of easterners who had very little use for the West Coast, and for anybody that was certainly going to be on their [regional association] board. So I somehow found myself off of that. I know that there were others who thought that that was grossly unfair, such as Sam Maloof, and I remember Jack Larson also-Jack Lenor Larson, who has always been extremely supportive of the museum and of me and helpful in as many ways as he possibly can be.

SE: He's been president of the board of the American Craft Council.

EW: Yes, and I think he still is. Which has gone through lots of changes and so forth. And then they separated that board back there from the museum, and they've got a separate council for the museum now. They have a

new director. I've always had a good relationship with Paul Smith in the past-a very good relationship with him. But he quit and they've got a new director.

SE: He was there for about twenty-five years.

EW: Yes, he was, and he really ran everything rather single-handedly. Not the way Patrick and I did it. I will say when I was co-director, we really divided up the responsibilities, and a lot of people envied the fact, they envied us because the staff had a chance in our museum, I think, whereas I don't think they had that much with Paul. But he was very good. What he did was extremely well done. Anyhow, I was on the World Craft Council at the time. I was more interested in that anyhow.

SE: On the board?

EW: On the board, briefly. I would go back every year for those board meetings. But the WCC has sort of fallen in disarray also. There were huge meetings every other year in different parts of the world. That is no longer happening quite like that. In fact, I've lost touch with what's happening. Rose Slivka was the editor-for twenty-six years, I think-of Craft Horizon magazine, and put it on the map as a magazine all over the world. . . . I mean, if you went anywhere in the world and mentioned Craft Horizon, people seemed to know about it, if they were in the craft world anywhere. And then she was sort of removed. And because she was out of there-because they felt she lost them too much money-I have no way of knowing whether they were right or not-she decided to start something called Craft International, which was done on newsprint. This I though unfortunate in terms of people wanting to save the issues. But the difference between the newly renovated American Craft Magazine and Craft International was that hers was filled with all kinds of pithy philosophic articles, whereas the other was more like a market sheet in which craftsmen, if included, could become well known.

SE: Well, I think one of the conflicts was with a large group of membership. . . . The membership is primarily craftspeople. . . .

EW: That's right.

SE: . . . and they saw the council as a means of marketing their work.

EW: That's right. No question about it. Yes, you're right. So I found myself on Rose's editorial board, which didn't mean anything except she likes me and I like her. [laughs] And so we've become good friends. She had a hard time making a go of that. We sponsored it for a while as a museum. And we gave it as a bonus to our members when they joined.

SE: Did we support it financially?

EW: I can't remember what the. . . . No.

SE: Oh, we gave it the non-profit overlay.

EW: That's right. We gave it the institutional non-profit. Right. [Interruption in taping]

EW: We gave up sponsoring it because we couldn't afford anymore to have it.

SE: Didn't we pay for the issues or something?

EW: We did something like that. I don't remember the financial part of that. I hated to give it up, I really did, because I liked it so much, and I was wishing that it were on a different kind of paper so that it could be preserved better. And you and Willow Young did a very good interview of me in that, which I liked very much.

SE: That's right.

EW: Anyhow, it's now. . . . She had somebody running that for her, and you know me with names, I can't think of his name. He's also a craftsperson in glass-very good [Richard Yelle-Ed.]. Anyhow, she is teaching at NYU graduate school, poetry, and she writes a column in Northampton or someplace out there-in one of the Hamptons-which is a weekly column. So she's doing well, and she's freelancing a lot. That's Rose.

SE: And Craft. . . .

EW: And Craft International was taken over by Australia, and they're publishing it from Melbourne-from the University there, I think-and disseminating it throughout the world, so it's still alive and that's fine.

SE: Is the same person editing it that was?

EW: No. I guess they have a whole new bunch. I don't know; I've lost touch with it. We ought to find out actually. So, let's see, what else?

SE: Any other organizations you want to talk about?

EW: Well, I was asked, I was prevailed on to join something called the American Women for International Understanding. It's a very big mouthful. That's a group of women that began, I believe, in San Francisco, with the idea of trying to gain the understanding of other peoples in other parts of the world and bringing America to them, all the good sides of it. So I found it quite interesting. They particularly went to places like Russia and China and so forth. They took wonderful trips, but when these women went on the trips, they had to be heavily briefed before they went and give a report when they came back. And the idea behind inviting people into that organization was that they had to be sponsored by at least three people and recommended before they could get in it and they had to be professional in some way. It seems to have gotten a lot looser in its makeup since then. Caroline Ahmanson was the person that sponsored me. She was also practically running the organization.

SE: Was it based in L.A.?

EW: Largely in L.A. and San Francisco, but it's national. And we had some fascinating people as guests. I mean, Mrs. Papandreou, who was the wife of the president of Greece, was a guest. And Madame Sadat-again-came there. And Deng Xiaoping came and spoke. His wife spoke at a tea at Caroline's, and then he spoke before the World Affairs Council, and I was at both affairs. But his daughter, Deng Xiaoping's daughter, came here to this house. I gave a tea for her. She's a painter, you know. She's having an exhibition, which is going to be at the Pacific Asia Museum, I just found out. I just sent my RSVP today. She's a very good traditional painter. I've seen some of her stuff. I remember the day that she came here for the tea, which AWIU asked me to give. Chiu, my Chinese cook, was so excited because she couldn't believe that Xiaoping's daughter was going to come to this house, but she never did get a chance to really see her, which was too bad. She just saw her in passing. But anyhow.

SE: Did she cook? Did she cook for them?

EW: Yes, well we had a tea, a Chinese kind of tea, as I recall. I don't remember but it was good, I'm sure. Sometimes countries invite you [AWIU-Ed.] to visit. That's different from a regular delegation, in which you pay to go. With an invitation, you pay for your own airfare, but when you're in the host country, you're their guest. There was an invitation for artists-three artists-to try to set up a conference or a symposium of artists-women Russian artists and women American artists-and they asked me to lead that delegation. So I selected Janet Solinger from the Smithsonian, who I figured could deal with the art world, and Paula Haller, who is a filmmaker. She is a documentary person who has done a lot for Disney and National Geographic, and had just finished one a year before in what is now St. Petersburg but was then Leningrad, on children and education in Leningrad. So the three of us went. We had a fantastic trip. It was simply great. Unfortunately, the Russian Women's Council is pretty weak in the areas of art, and I don't think that the people that they led me to were necessarily-or in fact by far-the great ones. But it was a wonderful trip. And then when I came back, I had to put together something, so I got the idea. . . . I had been to Washington, D.C., in between, and at the Russian Embassy I met the ambassador and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Dobrinyn, who were very close friends of Gorbachev-his best friends, I found out. I also discovered that Mrs. Dobrinyn was a glass blower, and then had the idea for a symposium in which we would invite three. . . . If three people are invited to Russia, then you have to invite the same amount back. So we would invite three Russian women artists here, and we would have three American ones. Mrs. Dobrinyn could be the keynote speaker and I would be the moderator. Were you there?

SE: Yes.

EW: Well, so that's what happened. And getting her here was a pretty funny situation. We were still in the middle of the Cold War during that. . . . Not in the middle, but close to the end. And my son. . . . Oh, I was told that she couldn't fly with the other Russian people who were coming on the regular airplane. Security said she couldn't land in L.A. So my son said, "That's okay." He'll fly our plane to San Francisco where she was able to land with the aides that were with her and fly them back. Then I learned at the last minute that she couldn't fly over L.A. and land in L.A.

SE: [laughs] What was the reason for this?

EW: Because we were still having the Cold War.

SE: But how's San Francisco different than L.A.?

EW: We had more defense stuff here, I guess, or something. Anyhow, I found out after a lot of negotiating back and forth. . . .

SE: Oh, it was American, not Russian.

EW: What?

SE: It was American-instigated not Russian [that she couldn't land in L.A.].

EW: Yes, this was American rule. When I said my son will fly to get her, Frank heard me, and hit his head and said, "Oh, my God that's ridiculous. They'll never allow your son to go in his little plane to pick up the wife of the Ambassador." But they did allow it. And he did go. And he did pick her up and he flew her to Sierra Madre or someplace. Or San Marino. There was an airport there that was okay. We got the mayor's car and a driver to meet the plane and pick them up and bring them into the hotel. Then we had her with us for a few days. Frank and I took her to the Getty one day, and I took her to CalArts. I don't know. We went all over-with all of them-and it was a very good week. It was interesting. I gave a dinner for all of them, but not for her. She left.

SE: Who were the other people that came?

EW: Oh, I knew you'd ask that. One was a sculptor [_____-Ed.].

SE: And the other was an art historian, wasn't she [_____-Ed.]?

EW: They weren't. . . . Yes. I don't know.

SE: A collector [kind] of?

EW: They weren't very knowledgeable. I had a pretty good group myself, though. I had Bettye Saar, whom I love. And I had Lyn Keinholz, who took exhibitions behind the Iron Curtain. And I had Faye Kanin, who was the president of the Academy of Motion Pictures and also a filmwriter, screenwriter. So that was very good. It was an interesting day, I thought. Didn't you?

SE: Yes, it was. Very. [Interruption in taping]

EW: In talking about organizations I've joined: I was on the board of the Institute for International Education. I have to mention that, IIE, that's Senator Fulbright's organization. I loved being on that, because that brought all the foreign graduate students to the USA every year-this organization helped to raise the money for that-and sponsored them while they were in American universities and colleges. That was a stimulating group, and it fitted in with the international flavor of our museum. So that's why it was important. Then I was asked to be on the board of Aman [Folk Ensemble-Ed.] briefly. I only did it with the purpose of trying to help a marriage between the two institutions-Aman and Craft and Folk Art Museum-because we had always talked about doing an exhibition together in which we could exhibit their costume collection. (A lot of the materials they got for costumes for some of those dances were purchased from us; in fact, way back in The Egg and The Eye days-the Yugoslavian show, for instance.) But our exhibition tried to present the costumes in such a way that it wouldn't be static, that the costumes would have a quality of movement to them, somewhat as we did the mask exhibition, showing them in motion. So we had some videos that went along with it. Dextra Frankel did the display when we finally got around to this. I had retired, but stayed on during that exhibit. And I found Aman an interesting group to be with, but if you are the founder of a museum, even if you've retired, it's difficult not to think of it as your baby and wanting. . . . If you're going to give a great deal of yourself, one wishes to give it in that direction. At least I do. So the major part of my time I still give, even though I have retired, to CAFAM.

SE: What year did you retire? Eighty-four.

EW: Eighty-four?

SE: Eighty-four; I left in '84.

EW: You left the same time I did?

SE: Yes. You retired in the summer and then we left [for New York] in the fall.

EW: Oh, okay. So then it was '84.

SE: I think so.

EW: My God! It's almost ten years. Really. Well, I have remained on the board and the board's executive committee, and I. . . . You know, when I was there, Patrick was the administrative director, ultimately, and I was the program director. And he said he didn't want anybody to take my place. He was going to run the whole thing after I left, which is what he has pretty much done. And I've gone in on Wednesdays and had lunch with him ever since, except for a few days when something gets in the way. We don't have to make this as rigid as we

once did. But he keeps me abreast of things, and I like that very much. But he is, largely, running it. But I'm on the board, and I'm chairing the acquisitions committee, and I'm on the space and planning committee for the new building. That's enough to keep me busy.

SE: And Frank [Wyle-Ed.] is now the chairman of the board.

EW: And Frank is chairman of the board. That happened. That was only because he felt that he was the person that could raise the capital for the highrise. But he didn't count on the recession coming along. And that wasn't his doing, which was too bad. There were a couple of people who said that they would only work with us if Frank were the chairman, and that's why he took that on. And there he is being the chairman. I think he'd like very much to stop, but he can't right now. He wants to try to see this thing through if he can. So that's where we're at. And I'm a member of Joan Benedetti's Center for the Study of Art and Culture advisory committee, and going to this seminar that she's holding. I've been to two sessions. And they're very interesting. I'm in the unique position of being able to see a museum from two perspectives-from the trustee and from the staff. And I consider my position on the board of trustees being one of keeping the trustees in check and making them realize that they are there for policy but not for running the organization, which is strictly the province of the director and staff. I hope that I can carry out that-continue to carry out that-with a certain amount of success. So, let's see, what else is there for us to talk about? [Interruption in taping]

SE: Do you want to talk about your children?

EW: Meanwhile, in my retirement, I can reflect on the fact that I have three children: Stephen, Nancy and Diana. They are not children at all; they're very much-I guess, middle-aged-adults. And they have children, and I've got eight grandchildren. And the oldest is twenty-four. And that's Alexandra Wyle. She's on her way to becoming a vet. She's just finishing her masters in animal science, I guess it's called. And the one under her is Noah Wyle. He's twenty-one and he's a movie star. He's been in four films and looking around for the next.

SE: A normal person would say he's an actor, but you're obviously a proud grandma.

EW: He's an actor.

SE: [laughs]

EW: What did I say?

SE: A movie star.

EW: Oh, that's right. He's not a star yet. You're right. I don't suppose he's achieved what they call "star quality." Anyhow, he is an actor.

SE: [laughing] I'm only teasing you.

EW: He is an actor; he's a movie actor. And then under him is Aaron, and he's about to go to college and become an agricultural engineer, he thinks. And then I've got a few artists scattered around. As Shan said, I guess I've had some influence. Nancy's an artist, my daughter. She's become an artist-from an anthropologist, which is what she was, and she's married to an artist and they have a. . . . She has a daughter Rosie from her first marriage, who majored in art in college, as well as dance and painting.

SE: Nancy is married to?

EW: Frank Romero, who's an artist.

SE: And her first husband?

EW: Her first husband was in business or is a carpenter or something. He has a building company. But Rosie is his daughter and she's very. . . . Art is her life, dance and art. And then Diana's daughter, Jordana, is an art major at Brandeis University-and very talented. Sonia, who is the daughter of Frank Romero and Nancy, is obviously an artist. There's no question about it; you can see it in everything she does.

SE: She's what, twelve now?

EW: She's twelve. [laughing] And as somebody said, "It's good that there are a few people in the family who are doing something else." Because it looks like there's an awful lot of artists in there.

SE: Nancy's been. . . .

EW: Nancy's doing very well. That came as a big surprise to me. And Diana, my other daughter, the mother of

Jordana, suddenly began-who is a dancer, she's a dance therapist, and has been very successful with that-began doing pottery, and she's making the most exquisite porcelains. They really are beautiful. So I'm very proud of her and I hope she'll stick with it.

SE: And she's doing public relations.

EW: Well, she just ended that job at the zoo in Philadelphia. But she was, yes. She was in charge of it there. But they're going with the zoo to Botswana in a few weeks. So I'm glad that she's ended that and can spend all her time in the studio now, because she should. And I am a critical person, so if I say that, it must be so.

SE: Okay. [laughs]

EW: I'm particularly hard on them. And I guess that's it. What else is. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: A very major part of our life is our ranch, which is in the foothills of the Sierras about halfway between Yosemite and Fresno. We now have four thousand acres. When we first went up there, we didn't know a soul and the population was largely Mono Indian and now we've got it so populated with our friends and family. . . . First of all, all our kids each have their own homes on the ranch that they own. Diana's house, which is on the ranch, is five miles away. Nancy and Stephen are each about a mile from us, I would say. Then our friends have bought land. We had a sort of a long peninsula of land, of forty-acre sites that we sold jointly with our friends the Schiresons-Ruth and Sylvan Schireson-who bought right after they visited us. Then Sylvan died and she's now Ruth Levin. She has something like 360 acres, and her son Peter just finished a house a year ago on part of that land. Ruth's daughter [Amy] and her husband are staying in some other house. And then we sold forty acres to Betty Chase and Albert, and they live there all the time. And the next forty acres is Patrick Ela and Lisi. And the next. . . . Well, I guess the next one really is the Friedmans, Willow and Tom Friedman, and then Patrick. And after that, the Leos, who are nephews of Ruth's. And then eighty acres, now a hundred and twenty, to Ed and Luisa Tuttle-Luisa Del Giudice and Ed Tuttle, husband and wife. So, they're all up there, and they all have young kids mostly, and it is a whole new generation that's springing up, which is very exciting and really lots of fun. Along with our herdsmen and all that-our manager, who's got a little girl. Then there was a house that was the previous herdsman's house up at the top by the show barns, and when he died and the wife remarried, ultimately, and moved out, I decided to fix that house up. I remodeled it and made it look pretty and simple and birthed the idea of an artist-in-residence there. Frank won't let me have a foundation, a legal foundation, because it's too costly. I simply can have an artist-in-residence, and the artist-in-residence can come from six to eight weeks. My committee is Frank Romero and myself, so far. We decide who is eligible. They're supposed to be known artists already. And we've had two artists so far. I've had Lee Mullican, who loved it because he had the use of. . . . My husband's built a factory up there. He's got all the machinery for power tools for metal and for wood and he has a jewelry shop for himself. He's making jewelry. All the tools for that, and he's been making and doing very nice little things. And then, of course, there's all the wonderful acreage for inspiration. Nancy and Frank have a large studio next to their house with a kiln in it for pottery. And so all these things are available. The house itself that was redone for the artist-in-residence has three bedrooms; one of them is a library. I moved my mother's library there, and it's a good library. And also all her kitchen equipment so that it's a complete kitchen. The artists can really be totally independent. They have to provide their own meals, and they must leave a piece of art when they go. Is that the end of this? That's the requirement. One piece stays with us, with the ranch.

SE: And where do you keep it? In the house?

EW: Well, I've got some pieces in the house from Lee. And I'm getting a loveseat from the second group who were the Tiffanys [Barbara and Robert-Ed.]. They're designers of furniture. That was a little bit further removed from what we had in mind. But they came from Philadelphia, and they were terribly excited about the whole thing and she did a great deal of pottery while she was there. They designed the futon couch, the original one, which has been copied over and over again out of Styrofoam. That was theirs. That's how they've made their fortune, actually. Now they've been going on to do other things. They made a loveseat that's excellent, and we need a loveseat. So I already told them that's what they could give us, is one of their loveseats, which they haven't sent me yet, but they will. They were there for the whole month of March.

SE: Do you know their first names?

EW: Yes, Barbara and Tiff. . . .Robert, I guess, Tiffany. They're from Philadelphia. Everybody calls him Tiff, and so I had to stop and think. And now we have a couple of others. Let's see, we went last weekend. . . . We had an ethnic bus day. The folk-art council of our museum put this on, and the associates combined, and there were thirty-some odd people who signed up. We met at the museum early in the morning, and Frank Romero came along. I had nothing to do with inviting him, but the Associates of the Museum did. They invited him to be our leader. We went to Self-Help Graphics and all through Boyle Heights. Frank showed us murals and explained the neighborhood to us. I loved it. It was really a great morning. Everybody loved it. He's extremely good at this sort

of thing.

SE: Yes.

EW: And then we went to a Korean restaurant and had a banquet-nine-course banquet-in a private room, which was fantastic. Phyllis Chang, who is our education curator, took care of that. She met us there. Frank stayed for the lunch and left, and then Phyllis took over on the bus and we went to Korean things. We went to a Korean temple and so on. It was great. But that didn't have anything to do with the ranch; that's just a museum event that's recent. No, that's this. Oh, yes, I met a guy at Self-Help Graphics. Michael. . . . He's a metal. . . .

SE: Amescua?

EW: Yeah, that's the one. Michael Amescua. I quickly had a meeting with Frank Romero and said, "He'd be great." And Frank agreed with me that he'd be marvelous, and he really wants to come. And I've invited. . . . [Interruption in taping]

EW: I've invited Fred Reichman to come to the ranch. He's a San Francisco-based artist but he is strongly influenced by Japan in his work. He's contemporary. . . . He's a beautiful artist. I love what he does. And I've known them all my life; I've known his wife all my life. And I asked them if they would come. I think they may come in either August or July, I don't know. But they're looking forward to it. Of course, my real dream that I had had a long time ago, which you may recall, was to have a foundation. We have a separate piece of land-it's called Castle Peak-and I envisioned having master artists up there with apprentices in all the different crafts-and including theater arts even-and putting on at the end of the year-end of the summer, I mean-a production sort of Glyndebourn-like or something, you know. But, you know, at the same time that I had that dream and wanted to do it, Pilchuck [Glass School-Ed.] was happening up north, and I used to see Anne Hauberg who with her husband [John-Ed.] started that place. Look what's going for Pilchuck and look where we are. . . . [At the beginning of this tape side, SE appears to be having some difficulty adjusting the tape recorder, perhaps explaining why the quality of the recording is significantly worse than for the other six tapes-Trans.

SE: This is for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is an interview with Edith R. Wyle on September 7, 1993, in Mrs. Wyle's home in Los Angeles. The interviewer is Sharon Emanuelli. This is tape number 7. Okay. I want to say that I had asked you to talk a little bit more about Rico Lebrun's philosophy and how that was in such dichotomy with that of Lorser Feitelson, and they became the two teachers who set the parameters at the time for students in Los Angeles.

EW: In California, let's say. Specifics, I don't remember except that one was, as you said, hard-edged-pretty much so-and getting to be minimalist and flat-planed and all that kind of thing, and Rico Lebrun was a humanistic expressionist who depended a great deal on his vision of what he was looking at in the outside world, not sitting and exploring everything from within. And here's a quotation from Peter Selz, who curated a retrospective exhibition of Rico's which was at the L.A. County Museum of Art, and it said: It has been suggested that Lebrun is not in the mainstream of the art of our time, but the history of art certainly reveals that only the future-the work yet to be done-can ever tell what the mainstream has been. In fact, an exhibition like the Lebrun retrospective may have the most unexpected relevance to the younger and more committed generation. A few years ago, Leonard Baskin wrote, "A generation of artists are Rico's children, and ancestors hence will be fixed in the field of his ordering."

SE: So in other words he's talking about the strong influence that he's had on artists.

EW: . . . Selz who was the Director of, at one time, the Berkeley Museum and lots of other things. Then, in here is the article by Henry [Hopkins-Ed.], which I'm not going to read. But the human image was always central to Rico's work.

SE: He and Feitelson were somewhat on the same side politically, were they not? I mean, they were both fairly liberal, freedom-of-speech types.

EW: Oh, very much. I don't know about Feitelson that much, but Rico definitely was. You heard about how he got up at Barnsdall Park when they were trying to ban an exhibition as being Communistic because there was a hammer and sickle or something that somebody thought they had identified on the sail of a boat.

SE: Rex Brandt's painting, yes.

EW: Rex Brandt. Yes, that was it. And Rico got up and he was written up as looking like Savanarola on a pulpit giving a lecture about what art is and how stupid that criticism was. I didn't know that. . . .

SE: I think that Feitelson may have spoken at the same hearing.

EW: All right, probably. That I don't remember. Well, give me another question.

SE: As far as you know, they didn't argue personally. . . .

EW: Oh, no.

SE: . . . or have public hearings where they espoused one thing or another.

EW: That would be out of my knowledge. I doubt if they did.

SE: Right. But in terms of students who were looking for a teacher, it seems to me it must have been very. . . . That they each had their own sphere of influence.

EW: At that time, to my perspective, I didn't know who Feitelson was or [Helen-Ed.] Lundeberg. They were nothing. Rico was monumental, and everybody I knew felt the same way. I mean, if people knew that I knew him intimately, they were awe-stricken by the fact that I got to know him. He was really up there. Really, I thought, the father of art in those years, I mean, that decade.

SE: Right, about the 1950s.

EW: The 1950s in California. And not only that but in Mexico and all over, so many of the murals that sprang up afterwards and artists were really Lebrun followers, and they said so.

SE: Can you name some?

EW: [_____-Ed.] Cuevas, for instance, collapsed with joy when he got to meet him when he (Cuevas) came here. And when Rico was there in Mexico, he found out that there were loads of Mexican painters who were his followers. And then you come down to, even now, Frank Romero. . . . It turns out that he had books of Rico's, and when he went to New York to live with Carlos Almaraz, he sold Rico's books of Dante in order to get there and he was very unhappy about it.

SE: That was a book that. . . .

EW: A book of drawings of Rico's that he did, that were in the show illustrating Dante's Inferno. And he did collaborate with Leonard Baskin on wood-block prints that went with it also.

SE: He did others like that too, didn't he?

EW: Yeah, he did the Encantatas with Baskin.

SE: We were talking earlier about Howard Warshaw.

EW: Well, Howard was at Jepson [Art Institute-Ed.] at the same time that Rico was teaching there. And Howard was teaching there in a more-or-less junior role. Of the group of people that were around Rico who were his students. . . . Billy Brice, for instance, was a student. Howard Warshaw was not his student-he was teaching-but he had the same, he had total worship and completely believed in the same philosophy that Rico had in terms of painting. And I wish I could find the article, but I can't, that describes that so beautifully. It's a shame; I just found it the other day. It was in. . . . It may have been in Art in America, too. And Warshaw then went to teach at University of California in Santa Barbara, right. Oh, that was much, much later.

SE: Were there exhibitions that. . . .

EW: Vincent Price was a very close friend. Bill Brice and Howard and Vincent, they all lived together. They all lived in Vincent Price's house for a while-until there was a falling out between Howard and Billy. Billy was angry with him, but as angry as he was from a personal standpoint, he always admired what Howard did-a great deal. He never stopped in that. He was younger. And as I said I think the person who's really actively carried on a philosophy that could be stemming from Rico, is Bill Brice-today-that I know of. I'm sure there are others, but he's the one that I. . . .

SE: He's the one that seems most prominent, yes.

EW: To me. That doesn't mean [that is a fact].

SE: At the time were there. . . .

EW: There are lots of others.

SE: Were there galleries that seemed to line up one way or the other? Do you remember?

EW: Yes. . . . My memory is just awful. The Kantor Gallery was very abstract. They went into the abstract side of things, I remember. Rico was with. . . . Oh, you know. There's one in New York, too. His brother. Perls. The Frank Perls Gallery. But then he got so fed up with things there that he decided he was going to be his own dealer, and he had this huge ballroom, this old thing on San Vincente where my studio was, and he had a room in which he had an office. His wife Constance really took care of the business end of things while he painted. He sold directly. And one of the reasons that he said he was doing this was to cut out the middle-man fee and be able to sell his work for a much lower price to people who really wanted it-like bartenders and people who were dying to buy art that couldn't afford it. And he did a lot better. Actually, I think Frank Wyle was in there advising him at this point. [laughter]

SE: Interesting. [Interruption in taping]

SE: Okay, we're going to switch subjects here, back to the Craft and Folk Art Museum. We had neglected to talk about the Gerard Collection and it having been offered to the Craft and Folk Art Museum at one point.

EW: No, it wasn't offered to the Craft and Folk Art Museum. When we were still The Egg and The Eye, I wanted us to turn into a museum, and Mary Freiberg (who was a friend and who was interested in folk art, as I am), Lee Mullican (who also is interested in folk art and has been collecting it for a long time), and I decided that we would really like to have a folk art museum. Mary was a friend of Alexander Gerard's, and he had this huge collection which he had been showing in San Antonio, Texas. And it was there to be given to somebody. He turned down San Francisco, and I believe he turned down San Antonio, but he wanted us to have it. However, the stipulation was that we would have to give him two million dollars to design the building, and he would design the building that would house the collection. And since we couldn't do that, I'm happy to say, we didn't get it because I would not have wanted it since it's now where it belongs really, which is in Sante Fe. And the philosophy behind his collection, as stipulated by him, is not the same one as ours is in our museum.

SE: Would you talk about that?

EW: Yes, because there he's done a good display job. It's charming. It's in a series of dioramas. You look around at all these little scenes, which are charming, and when you come out you wonder what you've looked at except charming little scenes. In my view, you have no knowledge of why any of those objects were made and for what. And we have always had as our really basic philosophy establishing the cultural surroundings and background and raison d'etre for the objects. They have to be aesthetically good-either to the people or to the viewer, which is two different things. But there must be. . . .

SE: You mean to the people for whom it was made as opposed to outside viewers.

EW: Well, first of all, it should be that, and then secondly selected as something that isn't just strictly anthropological, but aesthetic enough to appeal to the outsider. If we would have had that stipulation that Gerard put in, it would have been unfortunate. So, I'm glad we didn't get it.

SE: What was his specific stipulation?

EW: Well, he. . . . I don't know that it was his specific one, but I must say that the Gerard wing at the Santa Fe Museum is different from the rest of the museum, where they are doing it the way in which I would, in which we tried to do it.

SE: In other words, he seems to choose the object for how it appeals to him, rather than anything to do with the culture?

EW: Right. Well, when I was collecting folk art for the museum, way, way back-when it was The Egg and The Eye, in fact-I used to try to get something, and I would find out that Gerard had bought it all up. He'd gotten fifty of them. I went downstairs into their stacks just before they opened the Gerard wing of the museum.

SE: I was with you, actually.

EW: They've got fifty of everything all lined up. I mean, there's replacements for all these little folk toys and things. And as I said, it's charming to look at.

SE: He influenced a little bit your design of The Egg and The Eye restaurant, didn't he?

EW: No! [emphatic]

SE: No?

EW: He did not. We influenced him. Because [Guy] Moore designed that restaurant, and he tried to make it have a Southwest character. I think we used his [Gerard's] material. That's what we did. When we upholstered the

seats, which we used to have along the wall.

SE: I see.

EW: And that was Gerard's material. But he came to see our place, and then after that he built The Compound, which was a restaurant he put up in Santa Fe, and he did many of the same things that we did. Well, there's one thing that may have been his influence. He was well-known for the niches in the wall, and we did get that from him. That came much later, too. We didn't even have that in the beginning. Yes, I think he influenced everybody with that. That was all over the place. Gerard's a wonderful designer, was.

SE: He designed textiles and interiors?

EW: Yes, he did. The house is _____. The one I visited him in once, he designed.

SE: Is there anything more you want to say about Mary Freiberg and Lee Mullican and. . . .

EW: Mary Freiberg died and that sort of was the end of trying to put the thing together at that time. That was way back, as I say, and the actual museum didn't jell for a couple years after that.

SE: Was Lee continuously involved in that?

EW: Yes, he was on the program advisory board, and he's now on it again. But he hasn't been consulted-or come to a meeting-because Lee is living six months of the year in Taos-or more. So it's hard to get a hold of him-unless I go there, which I do.

SE: Okay. Well, I think that's it. Is there anything else you can think of?

EW: No, I [think that's all].

[END OF INTERVIEW]