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Oral history interview with Alice M. Kaplan,  
1978 February 21-March 8

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Alice Kaplan on 1978 Feb. 21-Mar. 8. The interview was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

## Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: Today is the 21st of February, 1978. And it's Paul Cummings talking to Alice Kaplan in her apartment in New York City. And you just said you were born November 27, 1903, in Budapest. And how long did you live there?

ALICE KAPLAN: I lived there—nine months old.

MR. CUMMINGS: Not very long?

MRS. KAPLAN: Not very long.

MR. CUMMINGS: Were your parents planning to come here? Or were you sent? Or how did—

MRS. KAPLAN: No. My parents just decided to leave. I don't remember what the specific things were. My father had been—studied and had been in Italy. I think they found the life a little bit restrictive there and decided to start out anew shortly after I was born.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And they just decided to come to America. They had always wanted to come.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did they come to, New York?

MRS. KAPLAN: To New York.

MR. CUMMINGS: To New York. So you've been in New York.

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm really—every time I have to fill out my birth—a statement with my birth, I'm always shocked to find out that I haven't been here all of my life.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, in fact, I have almost all my life.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's a long time ago, 1903.

MR. CUMMINGS: Marvelous. Well, now, are there brothers and sisters?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. I have two brothers and a younger sister.

MR. CUMMINGS: And are they involved with the arts?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, a little bit. My brother closest to me is Paul, another Paul. And he lives here in the city. He's very involved with Oriental art, has a marvelous collection of Asiatic art. He's a friend—I don't know if he's a trustee, or he's involved with the Metropolitan Museum. Anyway—

MR. CUMMINGS: His name is Manheim?

MRS. KAPLAN: Manheim.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Paul Manheim. And he had—you may remember two years ago—was it two, or was it three years

ago? His whole collection was stolen—two years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: There was a great deal about it in the paper. Fantastic collection of Asiatic, Eastern art and, I think, Chinese art—about three-quarters of the collection was stolen, never heard about it, never got it back.

MR. CUMMINGS: Still?

MRS. KAPLAN: Still a mystery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's incredible.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that is too bad because he was really very good, had a marvelous eye and had some wonderful Oriental things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Had he continued collecting?

MRS. KAPLAN: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Or that stopped?

MRS. KAPLAN: That ended it.

MR. CUMMINGS: What a terrible way to end it.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was a terrible way, really. It was depressing. It was heartbreaking.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And my—the third child, my other brother, lives in London. And he doesn't collect very much—or minor things. He used to collect—

MR. CUMMINGS: What? Paperweights.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I don't think he does it anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: He had a very beautiful collection of paperweights. And I think eventually, so when he left for London, I think he sold it. I'm not quite sure—and doesn't have very much of that left.

And my sister, the youngest of the four, she's more of a literary person, married to Willard Espy [Willard R. Espy, writer and editor].

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: With the interesting, witty books. She's very literary, too. But they don't collect.

MR. CUMMINGS: They don't?

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm the collector.

MR. CUMMINGS: You're the real collector.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I would say I'm the accumulator.

MR. CUMMINGS: You're the accumulator. Well, so you grew up in New York City, then?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, I grew up in New York.

MR. CUMMINGS: And went to school?

MRS. KAPLAN: I went to school. We lived up what was then way—it was near Dikeman Street—was then the country. It was very much what Bronxville is now, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there were—and I went to school up there. And we used to go out after school into the fields, and there were cows roaming around. And of course, when I go up there now, occasionally I go, and I can't believe it's just another world.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then I went to—the school I went to, public school at that time, was the beginning of what is now the George Washington High School.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: But that was a new school that was founded at that time. And I don't remember. We were the first graduating class. And the school was near Dikeman Street, and we used to walk—a group of us used to walk down the hills, through the fields to the little schoolhouse. And the schoolhouse was a small school that was built during the Civil War.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: I think it was 1861 or 1862, but I think '60.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh my gosh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we were the first class to graduate. My brother Paul went there. He was the second class. And then I left. And we moved down to West End Avenue and 90th Street. My parents bought a private house. In fact, that's one of the streets where the private houses are still—

MR. CUMMINGS: Still remain, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Still remain untouched. And there's sort of a little enclave of private homes. But when they bought a house there, and I went to Columbia University Teachers College.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Now what would you—was there art interest in the home, in high school or—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I was just going to say I was always interested. No, you ask—goes way back. As a young girl, I used to draw, I used to sew. I used to love to work with my hands. But I loved to draw and paint. And when I went to—the reason I went to Teachers College, at the time I was very eager to go to Smith. Smith was the Radcliffe of that time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And my mother, who was very, very conservative and rather old-fashioned in her ideas, thought—she didn't like the idea of her young daughter going off to college, you know, her young girls in those days—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: You know, a young girl in those days was to stay home, be educated, and then get married.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so I was very disappointed. And I had a choice of going to Barnard College or to Teachers College. And I chose Teachers College because the first two years were straight academic work, and the last two years were devoted to the fine arts. And I wanted to make it in the fine arts. And that's where it really began. There were drawing classes and the theater classes, but nothing compared to what's taught in the schools today.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, did you take drawing before in high school or anything?

MRS. KAPLAN: I was always drawing. I used to draw at home. I'm really quite a good artist, as a matter of fact.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But you never had classes before as a teenager?

MRS. KAPLAN: Never attended classes, no.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh, but on your own?

MRS. KAPLAN: On my own.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I did at Teachers College.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then my life, in my junior year, the end of my junior year, I was invited to go to Cuba just on a holiday.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. What happened?

MRS. KAPLAN: With friends. And I went to Havana, and there I met Jack Kaplan. And within a year, I was married, and I went back to Cuba. I never finished my senior year at college.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I lived in Havana for two years. And there I also painted with a Cuban teacher. By then I was very much involved.

As a matter of fact, let me go back. And I keep forgetting these things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, they keep—

MRS. KAPLAN: I had a choice over the Christmas holidays, I guess, or Thanksgiving holidays or something, to get a job, tentative job with *Women's Wear* as an illustrator.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I also was invited to go to Cuba. So then I said—I thought, "Well, I could always do that some other time. I may never get to Havana." So I decided to accept the invitation, go to Cuba.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: And of course, that changed my whole life. I never did get that job.

MR. CUMMINGS: What year was that?

MRS. KAPLAN: That was in 1924, '23—'23-24 it was, during the winter. And then in '25, we were married, in June of 1925.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's a long marriage here.

MRS. KAPLAN: A long marriage, 52 years almost.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: So at this moment, I can't believe the number.

But anyway, so then we lived there, by that time. Then we came back to New York when our first child was about to be born. That's Joan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay. Now, we're jumping a little bit here. Who did you study with at the university, at Columbia?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, gosh—

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you recall? Do you remember anybody?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, I don't. I'm sorry, but—there was one—isn't that awful? There was one teacher. They didn't—there weren't too many art classes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: There was a general art course. And there was a very good painting course that I took, and that's the man who was the most important person, the first major influence on my interest.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. Were they still teaching that Tao business then?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's right. Dynamic symmetry and—

MRS. KAPLAN: That's right. Well, I don't know. I haven't been there in—well, you can imagine. I haven't been back.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Although I've recently been involved with Columbia University again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But that comes later.

MR. CUMMINGS: Later, okay.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I'll tell you a very funny one. I think of it—the art courses, which was a two-year—after two years straight academic work, the last two years were devoted to the fine arts in their various manifestation, one of which was a class in jewelry making, learning how to make jewelry.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And you won't believe it. But a class in millinery, how to use materials.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MRS. KAPLAN: We wore hats then. You may not remember, but hats were a very important part—

MR. CUMMINGS: They're coming back this year.

MRS. KAPLAN: They're coming back. But we had to do it. We had to make frames. We had to put together—it was sort of a manual, learning how to use materials and how materials affect—all that sort of thing. Frankly, I don't remember it all. But it was Martin, I think his name—Professor Martin or something. I just can't think of a name. But he was a very distinguished man and probably the best person in the whole department. And that I did enjoy.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kind of painting were you doing?

MRS. KAPLAN: Let me tell you where I really learned to paint. Well, anyway, I'll just say this, that even while I was at Teachers College, I was studying at the—I took courses at the Art Students League.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then when I came back from Cuba, when we came back to New York, that was when Joan was about to be born, my daughter Joan Davis. We came back.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we had a—we lived here in New York, and I attended, after she was born, I went back to the Art Students League. Well, let me go back—

MR. CUMMINGS: The first time there.

MRS. KAPLAN: No. That was—I went back the second time. But I had gone to the Art Students League when I was still up at Teachers College before I was married.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I'll tell you two other surprising things, which you may not believe. It was during that period, those few years before—and then—yep, it was then. I'm trying to recollect.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I studied with Robert Henri [American painter and teacher], oh, about three months before he died. He had a studio on 27th Street, I think it was, way up high. You had to climb up there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Somewhere, right, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: In the 20s, you know. So I had been there only about three or four months when he died. But I also studied for about a year with Cecilia Beaux [American portrait painter], believe it or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: I didn't realize that.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: And you didn't become a portrait painter in the grand—

MRS. KAPLAN: No, but I am a very good portrait painter.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: I really am.

MR. CUMMINGS: What was she like as a teacher?

MRS. KAPLAN: She was remarkable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And she was very encouraging. She would be very critical about—she was very critical about the whole thing. I mean, but if there was one little area, for instance, she would pick on, she said, "Now, here"—pointing to, say, the forehead or the chin or whatever it was—I remember we had an old man with a beard. And I remember that particularly. And she said, "Well, criticize this. Ah," but she said, "here. This space between the eyes, that indication of nobility, that's excellent. You've done that—you've done that—that's excellent. You've done it well. That's good." I still remember that.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: But anyway, that didn't last very long because subsequently we moved to the country. In 1927, we moved up to Westchester, Croton on the Hudson.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you studied with her about a year or so, you said?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, then—it's before—I had gone to the Art Students League before I went to Cuba.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Now, was she teaching at the League?

MRS. KAPLAN: She died—no. No. She had a studio.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, she had a studio in Gramercy Park.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: She died in 1927.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I think. So those were short little episodes. But I did spend—I did study at the Art Students League for two years.

MR. CUMMINGS: What was Henri like for those short months?

MRS. KAPLAN: Frankly, I don't remember. It was just three months. I have a feeling of his presence, but I can't quite—

MR. CUMMINGS: Make it specific?

MRS. KAPLAN: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I remember her. I remember Beaux quite vividly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, she was a grand dame.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, handsome woman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. And then at the League, I studied with George Bridgman, drawing. I studied with Kuniyoshi [Yasuo Kuniyoshi, American painter, printmaker, photographer, teacher].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And let me see who were some of the other people there. I was there for about—oh, isn't that awful? My memory is dreadful. I can't think of the other man.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was it Sloan? Was Sloan there? [John Sloan, American painter, teacher, and president of Art Students League]

MRS. KAPLAN: Sloan was there. And—well, this was—you see, this was in—this was before. This was my senior—'24, and then another year—'23 and '24.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then I went away to Cuba. And then I came back, and I did it—stayed on a few months, and then we moved to the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like the League? What was it like to study there?

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't think it's changed. I went back years later. There were parties there, and occasionally I went back. I don't think it's changed terribly much, physically.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't think I've been in the building for the last 30 years. So I wouldn't know. But I mean, after that.

MR. CUMMINGS: The ambiance?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't think it's as exciting a place as it was then. Or maybe I was so young it was all exciting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Maybe it's always exciting for the young.

MRS. KAPLAN: Of course.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's new.

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly. Well, anyway, then—let's see. We stayed up in Croton until 1940.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: The children went to a local school up there. And we moved to a house on 80th Street, where we lived for 30 years. And then in 1970, we moved into this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Moved here. Heavens. So you really stayed once—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. After, I did go—I took—when we came back to New York, I did join a group. Oh, for the life of me, I cannot think of its name. It began with an S, and I can't think. Anyway, the important thing is, then I got involved—let's see—in '40. I was interested mainly in my children and schools and in volunteering. But I was always interested in the arts.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there were always classes I attended and did some drawing. And in the house on 80th Street, I had a studio up on the top floor. And I would do some drawings and work there on my own. But as I became more involved with art in New York City, I soon realized—I came to the decision that you can't paint Tuesday afternoons from 4:00 to 6:00 once a week or twice a week and be an artist.



MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Either you paint—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. You do it, or you don't.

MRS. KAPLAN: Or you don't do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it was then I decided, I had a family, four children growing up. I was very much involved—we were very much involved with the politics of Adlai Stevenson at that time, and in the schools. And I soon realized—and my home meant a great deal to me, my family. We traveled a great deal in those years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so I decided, well. I can be interested in art. I had—I used to—my friend who would laugh at me. "Do you have any paintings?" "Yes, I have lots of paintings. I have Kaplans all over the place."

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: But anyway, not because it was Kaplan. But anyway, that lasted until about— well, until the children began to grow up. And so, while I was interested, I didn't use my talents. I don't think I was a good—I don't think I would ever have been a spectacular painter. But I did have talent. And I think, if I had pursued it, I might have been effective.

Then 1950, I had a drawing, the Federation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: As a trustee.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, before we get to that, I want to ask you a couple of other things.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: What about Kuniyoshi? You've mentioned him.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. He was a—

MR. CUMMINGS: What was he like? What did you study with him?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, we had models. I mean, you know, I think the only class, Bridgman drawing class, we had a model there. We had models for everything.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But there was a particular emphasis on structure and form in drawing, the visual.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. With all the—

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: That whole feeling.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the others—well, I didn't go there every day. I think I attended classes twice a week. And I know I had—I studied with Bridgman at least a year. Gosh, there was another artist, whose name begins with an N, and I cannot think of it. But anyway—

MR. CUMMINGS: Nicolaidēs? [Kimon Nicolaidēs, American artist, teacher, author]

MRS. KAPLAN: Nicolaidēs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: He was there. Kuniyoshi, I know I had a class with him. I remember him vividly. He was a little man. Wasn't he?

MR. CUMMINGS: I think I met him, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I think Robert Henri was there, too. But I also went to his studio later on. I think maybe I first studied with—I don't remember. Don't ask me too many questions that go back too far.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: I'm just curious about generalizations about them.

MRS. KAPLAN: It wasn't—I only—I didn't go there, you know, as a serious student.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: You know, dedicating myself to that. But I did enjoy it, and I went there regularly, twice a week, at classes, something like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. How did your family like your art interest? Were they—?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, they weren't particularly—I mean, it's always wonderful. What else? You know, there wasn't skiing. There was, but I didn't go skiing. I didn't do other things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. That was your activity.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, we used to ride a lot. That we did. As a matter of fact, up in Croton we did a great deal of riding, the whole family. You know, we all rode. We led a nice placid country life up there. So I—while I was always interested in aspects of art, supported it, was involved with it—my two oldest girls, our second daughter, as a matter of fact, is a very gifted artist. And she married an artist. And she had been studying. I think she's going to begin it again now. But I think she stopped painting because her husband was painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who is she married to?

MRS. KAPLAN: A South American artist, Fonseca, Gonzalo Fonseca [Uruguayan sculptor]. He's a student of Thomas Garcia.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: And she lived in South America. And he was there, and she became very much involved with the group around Thomas Garcia.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you start collecting things? Was that—

MRS. KAPLAN: I didn't really collect anything.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, how interesting.

MRS. KAPLAN: I borrowed things here and there, with no point of view, whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, I would think, not seriously acquiring things until the last 20 years.

MR. CUMMINGS: So sort of in the '50s?

MRS. KAPLAN: In the '50s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: It went back and it began—and even then not terribly seriously until about 15 years ago. And my collecting reflected what I happened to be studying, any particular area. I didn't—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you went and got an MA in art history.

MRS. KAPLAN: When I got back. Well, I did more than that. Yes. Well, I didn't do it immediately.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That happened only a few years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: In the '60s, yeah, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, now, what brought you to the AFA [American Federation of the Arts], which is sort of the beginning—

MRS. KAPLAN: The beginning of the different—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: —way of life, as it were.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, Harris Pryor at that time was the director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And AFA was not in the present building.

MR. CUMMINGS: They were uptown?

MRS. KAPLAN: They were uptown in the National Art Academy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Academy, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I don't remember—my husband met Harris somewhere. We had met, and in a nonartistic environment. They had met two or three times, had meetings about something else. I don't remember quite. But I think at one of their luncheons, he turned to Jack and said, "Oh, we'd like you to become a trustee of the American Federation of Arts." And he said, "Oh, no. You don't want me. My wife is the artistic member of our family. Why don't you ask her? I think she would love to become a trustee."

Well, anyway, we met. And I liked Harris, so then I became a trustee, and that's really when the last chapter of my life began. That was 1958.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but you hadn't been involved with any art activities before that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, goodness, no. No, not really. What had happened—well, that was just about—you see, the last 10 years I had been very much involved with the local politics, national politics. And we were involved with Adlai Stevenson.

MR. CUMMINGS: In the '50s?

MRS. KAPLAN: In the '50s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. How did that—how did the politics—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, my husband was involved. And I was involved. And all the different causes. And the school the children had attended up on Croton was very avant garde.

MR. CUMMINGS: Which one was that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it was a little private school, the Hessian Hills School.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I know that school now.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. Well, a lot of artists lived up at Croton at the time, too. Anyway, with that [inaudible], I would say those 20 years we were more—I was more involved with education and politics, really took an active part in that.

And then after Adlai's defeat, I remember this vividly. Of course, it was a turning point in my life, that I was terribly depressed about it because we had all just put our heart and soul into the campaign. And I took a walk one day with my youngest daughter. And she said—realizing I was sort of feeling down, she said, "You know, Mother, why don't you go back to school?"

MR. CUMMINGS: Interesting.

MRS. KAPLAN: "You've always been interested in the arts. Why don't you go back and get your degree and get involved?" And I said, "Oh, no. I don't think I could study. I mean, it's too late to go back to school."

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, we talked about it. And then I thought, well, I'm going to try. But I didn't know whether I could still take an exam.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So what I decided to do, I went to general studies up at Columbia University, decided to take separate courses, just courses in art because in the intervening 20 years, the requirements that were needed—

MR. CUMMINGS: They had changed.

MRS. KAPLAN: —had changed completely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I took a course. I took two courses, one every semester for two years. Once or twice, I took— one semester, I took two courses with Meyer Schapiro [American art historian], with Julius Herald, with—I can't think who—several other Columbia professors. And at the end of the second year, I said, this is what I want to do. So I went up to Columbia, and they got my record from Teachers College. And it wasn't too bad. It wasn't very brilliant. But then I had to make a bigger deal of work because at that time, they required—let me think. I don't know, something like 15 credits of art history, half of it, maybe more.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So at that time I thought, well, why go all the way up—we lived at—why go all the way up to Columbia University? I'll go to the Institute of Fine Art [New York University Institute of Fine Arts].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Just around the corner. And I did. And I earned 15 credits. I was in my second—the beginning of my second year there when I fell. I slipped on the ice one day, fell and broke my hip.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

MRS. KAPLAN: Just as I was about to take an exam. So I couldn't take the exam. I went to the hospital instead. So that cut out a year.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

MRS. KAPLAN: And by the end of the year in the spring, I thought to myself, "What in heaven's name?" No, before that happened, since I had missed a lot, I was called in by Dr. Janson [Horst W. Janson]—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: —who very nicely and very politely suggested that perhaps I shouldn't continue because the limitation of students—I mean, the number of students was limited at the Institute after all, these were young people going on to a career. And he intimated perhaps, you know, I ought not to go.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, he was very nice about it; I got the point.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So at that time, I fell. Goodness. For heaven's sake? What am I doing? Why am I pushing myself this way? And so I forgot it that semester. But come—when summer came around, and the coming fall—this was '60—no, this was '59, 1959, '58 maybe. '58 it was. And I said, "No. I've put too much of myself into it. I'm going back." So I went back to Columbia. This was the critical thing. I went back to Columbia. And Dr.—oh, gosh—Rudolph Wittkower [art historian]—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: He was the dean of the school. He looked at my credits, my record from Teachers College. He looked at the 15 points I had earned at the Institute. He looked at what I had done as a General Studies student. And fortunately, it was a pretty good average. It was generally an A-minus, A average throughout. So he said, yes, he would accept me as a graduate student, but he couldn't give me credit that I had earned at the Institute. You could not exchange for a masters degree, which I wanted.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: I would finish my undergraduate work—that was all done—and for a masters—they would give me credit for the work I had taken at General Studies, but that no exchange credits for a masters.

MR. CUMMINGS: How amazing. So competitive.

MRS. KAPLAN: What?

MR. CUMMINGS: So competitive.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I thought, "Oh, my god." You know, this is silly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I said all right. So I had to begin in a sense all over again. Well, anyway, to make a long and boring story short, in 1963, I got my masters degree. And I got an honorary degree in 1964 from a little small college, art college, down in Pennsylvania, Cedar Crest College. And also my essay was published in the Art Bulletin.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was on a—I must say, it was an important observation. I reassigned a— turn it off.

[Audio Break]

MRS. KAPLAN: I reassigned a Rafael drawing to its original place in art history.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was critical. Not too much has been made of it, but it was published. If you'd like to see it, I'll show it to you.

MR. CUMMINGS: How marvelous. Oh, terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah, it was published in 1974. So that was—that really changed the course of my life. And then I got more and more involved in various other art organizations. And that's how—down to your original question—how did I get involved with Columbia University? And that's why I am now. And if you remember two years ago, we had a big auction.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because when Dr. Wittkower died, I was then chairman of the advisory council to the department.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I still am chairman of it. And at that time, everyone wanted to do something to honor. And they decided to establish a Rudolph Wittkower fellowship fund. And I suggested we have an auction to raise money because they wanted to raise about \$500,000. And I said, well, we couldn't do it all in one year, but perhaps we could raise half of it. And of course, everybody is scared to death. "We'll do it if you'll take charge." And I said, not knowing what I was getting into—

MR. CUMMINGS: What you were getting into.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was impossible. But we had a fantastic success at the Park Monet [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I went to every dealer and every [inaudible] that I knew.

MR. CUMMINGS: Everybody, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: To make a contribution of a work of art. And we did. And raised from alumni, from the auction, and from contributions—he total amount raised was close to \$250,000. Not quite, but almost.

MR. CUMMINGS: Excellent.

MRS. KAPLAN: Subsequently, they have given—now, that's three years ago, four years ago now. It's going on four years. They have given—each year, they've been able to give two, and the last two years they've given three graduate fellowships of \$7500 each.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's great.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that's been a great—that's one of my major accomplishments.

MR. CUMMINGS: Somebody is doing a good job with the money, too.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, yes, they have. They're doing a very good job of investing because now, last year, they get \$7500. That gives your Ph.D. candidate a chance to go to Europe for a year and study.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so that's how I'm involved with Columbia.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Now somebody can do it for American art history.

MRS. KAPLAN: Right, for American art history.

MR. CUMMINGS: For American art history.

MRS. KAPLAN: Somebody can. Somebody should.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, I know, I know. It's incredible. When did you start accumulating or collecting art?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. Coming back to the conundrum, that's the important question here, I gather.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I can hardly tell you when I began because I always had things. But when I went back to school I began to see art—different manifestations of it. For example, one of the first classes I took in working towards my degree was a course on American painting with Barbara Novak [American art historian].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The first time I'd ever heard of Luminism [style of 19th century American landscape painting] or all sorts of things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so whatever I studied, I then began looking around at some of the nineteenth century American artists that I had never known, went to the galleries.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Had you gone always to the galleries?

MRS. KAPLAN: Not as much.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: You see, I was torn in my life between other aspects. My family was very important.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you were in the country, too. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: We were in the country. We traveled quite a bit. I was involved at that time, politically involved. And yet one part of me was always involved with the visual arts. But I never took it—I never got involved seriously. It was a peripheral thing for me. So it was only then later on, as I've told you, that I began suddenly concentrating on it.

And I never thought in terms of collecting. I was rather naïve in that respect. If I saw something I liked, I got it, but I never—it wasn't a serious thing. When I think back now at the possibilities of what I could have had and what I didn't get—

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because I observed it and never—I don't understand now, looking back, how I was—I was rather naïve in that sense.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you never made a plan.

MRS. KAPLAN: I never—I did not plan. And very often I would look at things, but not connect having them or

wanting them. It was something I didn't think of.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's hard to understand that now.

MR. CUMMINGS: No. I understand the—

MRS. KAPLAN: I wasn't nearly as possessive as I am now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm much more possessive now than I ever was, despite the fact that I had such opportunities. But—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, sometimes—

MRS. KAPLAN: Anyway, I just was not ready for it in those terms.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I was interested in other things, more in people, in activities that involved people.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with the Stevenson?

MRS. KAPLAN: Adlai Stevenson?

MR. CUMMINGS: Adlai Stevenson.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, all of us—were all of us—the family—I don't know. We were all very politically oriented in those days, my children, the younger children, Joan and my daughter Betty. And we were all devoted to—and we met Adlai and we knew him well. So through those campaigns, we were hard workers. And my second daughter Betty, Elizabeth Fonseca, she's a fine artist. And she went out to—where is it, Bloomington. And Adlai invited her to come out there to do his portrait.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: And she did. She's a very good portraitist. She's now—her children are grown up. And she is going back to school. She's a great portraitist and a great cartoonist. I think she's back studying again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: She had [inaudible]. Yeah, she lived in—but she too felt that she didn't want to paint while her husband was working as an artist, a painter and a sculptor. They are separated now, so in a way she's beginning to bloom in her own confidence and in her own way.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, you know, I found it fascinating the fact that you became involved with the American Federation of Arts, when you really had no involvement beforehand.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I was. '58, you see, it was only men who joined. It was an art organization.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I was a trustee. And, you know, it developed. Then in—that was 1958. Now here we are almost 20 years. So the first I became, let's see, vice president, was in the early '60s. I don't remember exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: And then president?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah, must have been—yeah. Then in '68, I became the president—'67, which is almost 10 years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, then, when I'm in it, then I get involved. Whatever I'm doing, I take a part in it.

MR. CUMMINGS: What interested you in—

MRS. KAPLAN: In the Federation?

MR. CUMMINGS: —the AFA in those days? Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Just that I was interested in circulating and exhibition. I thought that it was a marvelous idea, wonderful.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: You know, I didn't really think it through. Friends of mine invited me to join, and I joined.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah. Who were they? Do you remember?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, Eloise [Eloise Spaeth, American art collector and philanthropist] was there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Eloise? Good old Eloise [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Lloyd Goodrich [American art historian, director of Whitney Museum of American Art] was there. Half the board that is on was still with it. And Harris Pryor, of course, was there, in an active part, and Roy Moyer [American art historian, artist, director of American Federation of Arts].

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And after Harris left, then we had one or two other presidents. Then Roy became president. I mean, director. I don't mean—at that time, and then shortly after that I became president.

Wouldn't you like a drink? Wouldn't you like something?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] accumulate?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, I accumulated things.

MR. CUMMINGS: And pretty soon, people see it and say, "Well, must be a collector."

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I tell you what, there was a big change [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, maybe, ask me another question.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Because there was a change when we moved into the apartment.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah. Okay. Well, we—

MRS. KAPLAN: But before we come to that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, we'll get to that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Before we plunge into all the AFA activities and the exhibitions and projects and all the committees, how did your children like the fact that you had art around? Were they interested? Did they respond? Did they like it?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, they loved it. Mm-hmm. They responded.

MR. CUMMINGS: So they got interested?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, they were all very much interested. They're not—my son is an architect, as I told you. My second daughter, she's really a painter, but hasn't—Joan is also. Joan used to paint. One of the things we used to do when the children were young, we had a rule in the family, you never bought Christmas presents or birthday presents. You always made them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so I have a whole collection of early works.



MR. CUMMINGS: By?

MRS. KAPLAN: By members of the family.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we did that. And we kept—so we either had cartoons or birthday cards. Everything was always handmade, or objects. Until finally, for our 25th wedding anniversary, they made—the four children did a very large panel. Each one worked on a section of it—depicting our life on 80th Street there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that was the painting to end all paintings.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] the whole idea.

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] and their celebration of that. I mean, then to end all celebrations. And what we get now, I get either some flowers or just a kiss or a very nice note.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my gosh.

MRS. KAPLAN: No more painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's kind of fun, though.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was a lot of fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: Is your husband interested in art, or is that really your—

MRS. KAPLAN: No. He always said he was, but he wasn't really. I mean, he always said, "Well, that's Alice's thing," you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And in recent years he's become more interested, but he doesn't allow himself, in a way, because he thinks that's not his area, so he closes his mind to it.

MR. CUMMINGS: And lets you have it.

MRS. KAPLAN: And lets me have it. But I regret in a way that he hasn't shared. And he does, too. And he keeps saying, "Oh, it's too late. It's too late." And of course, it's never too late.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so he's become more interested and goes to galleries with me. But he isn't really as interested in it as I am. This is sort of—it's sort of been, as it were, my thing. He has always encouraged me. I mean, AFA, and he has supported and given me, that is, AFA, very strong support financially and in every other way. So he was very much behind me and my activities.

MR. CUMMINGS: To the foundation, he has been very generous over the years.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, right.

MR. CUMMINGS: To AFA and dozens of—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And he was very encouraging. Well, that was the critical time, you know, three years ago, four years ago, when we really faced a very critical moment. We had a campaign. And I think it made a difference at that time, my being president, and we were able to help [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

MRS. KAPLAN: And he was very much behind me and very supportive of my desire to help the AFA. So that was his share in the arts, which was very considerable, even though he wasn't particularly involved with the works of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, it takes all of the varieties of interest and support.

MRS. KAPLAN: And of course, he was a crucial and important and vital element for the development of the New School.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's one thing I wanted to ask you about because that's been a big—

MRS. KAPLAN: That was his thing, his [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's where he put all of his energy, his creative genius, as it were.

MR. CUMMINGS: What interested him in the school?

MRS. KAPLAN: Again, we, through friends—Dr. Hans Seaman, who was the president years ago—he and his wife have both died in the meantime. But he was—oh, don't ask me to remember years. Oh, 20–25 years ago, he would have been president of the New School. It was struggling to stay alive.

[Audio Break]

MR. CUMMINGS: The New School, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah, don't.

MR. CUMMINGS: I can't think of who it is either. Anyway, he was the man who was responsible for bringing over the intellectual refugees?

MRS. KAPLAN: I have to know it. I have to call up the office and get his name.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] No, you don't have to do that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, if you need it I'll get it.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, we're fine. That's all right. That will clue us in.

MRS. KAPLAN: Anyway, where were we?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, we were just talking about his interest in the New School.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes. And then he got involved there. And slowly [inaudible]. He was really critical. In fact, one of the buildings are named for him.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The Kaplan Building, because he saved it, really critically. Without him, there wouldn't have been a school. Now, of course, since then, now he's not as active in it anymore, and neither am I. But now it's flourishing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, it's become incredible.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Taking over lower Fifth Avenue.

MRS. KAPLAN: I know it. Exactly. At that time, people would say, "Jack, why do you bother with that little school? Why do you—what are you so interested in it?" It was. That was in the first major effort here to education—you know, adult education, one of the major schools. And now adult education—

MR. CUMMINGS: Is everywhere.

MRS. KAPLAN: —is everywhere.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: More adult than not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Absolutely. That's true.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so therefore, we both had our interests. We were always—I was interested in the New School. I was on the board, and I still am. Now, he was on the board, and I was on the art committee. And still

am—it doesn't meet very often. It's not very important anymore. Now the art school down there is excellent. But at that time—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, now they have the New Museum.

MRS. KAPLAN: There, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Marcia Tucker.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. So things have changed a great deal in the last years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And our interests were woven together, but Jack had concentrated in one area, and I in the other.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's sort of fun.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was.

MR. CUMMINGS: You're sharing something, some personal things.

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: It sort of should be that way. But, you know, one of the things that's very interesting in terms of your association with the American Federation of Arts is that the organization has changed enormously in the 20 years that you've served.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, theoretically it has not changed.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, no.

MRS. KAPLAN: In purpose and—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But in terms of size and projects—

MRS. KAPLAN: In terms of size and projects and—

MR. CUMMINGS: It's become much more international in the last few years.

MRS. KAPLAN: It has. Well, even in—let me think back—in 1924, there was an exhibition organized by the Federation that went to Europe. I've forgotten now just what it is.

MR. CUMMINGS: A painting exhibition.

MRS. KAPLAN: A painting exhibition, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there were one or two other international involvements. But now, of course, the whole thing has grown, even as the whole art world. The involvement of more and more and more people involved in the visual arts.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: And AFA did, you know—well, I don't have to tell you about the history of it. You know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But I'm interested in things that you did or that you proposed and projects that were of special interest to you.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I did do one thing. Excuse me. I can't talk and eat at one time. I haven't learned to do that.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] It's hard.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's hard. One can do it, but it's a little messy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But in—this is an awful interview because I cannot remember dates.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's all right. I mean, we can check the dates [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: All right. I think it was when Roy was there. Roy was then director, Roy Moyer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I had an idea. After my experience at Columbia University, I thought that the slide lectures you had to attend. They were almost the art class, except for the actual painting classes. But the lecture courses were mainly, you sat there and you looked at slides. They still do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so all you'd know is, see a picture, and you'd get the artist's name, when he was born, when he died, and the title of the painting or the sculpture, and that was that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: You had no idea of understanding, if you didn't know about it—you were trying to learn about works of art, you didn't—

[Simultaneous conversation]

MRS. KAPLAN: —or the meaning of it and what the material was. So it occurred to me that the way art was being taught, both in the lower schools, as we discovered, is that they just weren't being taught anything. And in order to learn about art, in order to really understand what the artist is trying to—you have to really begin at an early age.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we got a grant. Now, I had an idea for a program of visual education. And we got a half-a-million dollars, \$500,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to make a series of movies, of film, a series, each about a half-an-hour long, each to discuss one element in learning how to see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was called The Art of Seeing. Subsequently, another—I think a program at the Metropolitan was also called The Art of Seeing. But we originated it. And this was to be—you see, they taught art in high school. And adults at college took art courses.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But the teaching of art, which is learning how to see and to understand what the art is doing, should begin with a visual experience. And that can begin at a very early age.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So these films, these films were designed to begin with the lower school classes and then to—we had a plan for about—oh, I've forgotten—12 films.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my.

MRS. KAPLAN: And they're still being shown.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: And we did publish them. And subsequently—I mean, this is 15 years ago, 12 years ago. No, it must be longer than that. The years go by very fast. And they're still being shown in the public schools.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: And Films Incorporated, Charles Benton, is the president of that company. And he was on our committee at the time. And he still circulates those films, the educational department. And we produced those at AFA, and they're still an AFA project. It has since become a rather minor activity because the world has caught up with us, as it were.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But that was an original idea of mine, and we did get a half-a-million-dollar Ford grant to do it. So

I think that was a definite contribution, over and above my activities as president.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did you like being—you know—

MRS. KAPLAN: President?

MR. CUMMINGS: —the years of presidency? Because there were meetings, committees. I mean, that's not a—just a title [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I'll tell you, there again, what I really do like—and I think I have the—I'm able to do it—is to organize ideas.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I have a strong visual sense. I realize now, which I didn't years ago, that this is so. And I realize that an awful lot of people, even in the art world, haven't got a true visual sense at all. If I wanted to be nasty, I could talk all about them.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: But I don't want to be nasty.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I could mention several of the same names, maybe.

MRS. KAPLAN: What I mean to say—this is a parenthesis—

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: What I mean to say is that an awful lot of people in the art world—and they run the gamut from dealers to private collectors—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: —don't understand. They see the object, or they see a thing, but they don't relate it visually to other things. And they become involved in the idea of the painting and not—or the object or the sculpture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And not always—

MR. CUMMINGS: In the experience of it, the emotional thing.

MRS. KAPLAN: —the emotional effect it has. They don't relate. They see what it is and where it—it's hard for me to explain it. There's a difference—

MR. CUMMINGS: They know all the statistics.

MRS. KAPLAN: They know the statistics, but they don't understand the heart of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah. Absolutely.

MRS. KAPLAN: But anyway, that's beside—where were we? Oh, yes. You asked me the question—

MR. CUMMINGS: About the presidency of the AFA.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, you know what a president has to do. A president has—the director worries about the objects, about the work.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the poor president has to worry about how the organization is going to survive.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: So one of the questions is always—there's always money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's always a problem in any institution, whatever it is, wherever it is.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's true.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that, of course, was my responsibility and the trustees' responsibility.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so we did have meetings. We have them today. And this, it seems to me, I've been hearing this for 20 years, the same problem. And the only difference is that they increase as the years go by.

MR. CUMMINGS: The numbers get larger?

MRS. KAPLAN: The numbers get larger.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But then the director has a great deal to do with it. And finally, the thing that's most important is the program.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, over the years, like every institution, we did grow. We got—new trustees were added. The directorship was developed. We have an excellent director now, and I think all these things are very important, both to excellent trustees. And we have government help. That helps.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean government support.

MR. CUMMINGS: From the endowment [National Endowment for the Arts]?

MRS. KAPLAN: From the endowment.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But it's a struggle. It's a struggle today, and while they're doing a splendid job and the trustees are all—we have a fine new president now.

MR. CUMMINGS: I haven't met him yet.

MRS. KAPLAN: Very nice, very able, and very effective, too. But in the final analysis, it's the trustees that have to support the institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the institution itself has to be, and is, unique, and has to produce, which it does. I think if there was no AFA, it would be a great loss to the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because the circulating exhibitions have transferred, has transfer—form, excuse me—has transformed the interest. Or let me say it another way—has widened and created a demand for participation in artistic involvement.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, the home programs and the books, the catalogs, the whole—

MRS. KAPLAN: The programs, exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the AFA answers a real need throughout the country, although institutions and museums and libraries and schools are supplying a great deal of—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's become very hard for museums to make traveling shows anymore.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, it's almost impossible.

MR. CUMMINGS: You see it even at AFA.

MRS. KAPLAN: They wouldn't travel, but even to support their own exhibitions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean, it's hard for—one of the reasons we are important is that we can supply excellent exhibitions for less money than the institution could create or organize it themselves.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we can also gather material from all over for the exhibition, which a particular institute might not be able to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, no.

MRS. KAPLAN: So in a very important and real sense, we're absolutely essential.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you know, AFA sort of made you kind of a national art world persona, a personage, rather than just a New York—

MRS. KAPLAN: But we're not a New York. We are a national organization.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's what I'm thinking. But—

MRS. KAPLAN: And the mere fact—but the mere fact—I mean, the fact that we are established, that the building is in New York makes people, those who don't know, think we're a New York institution. We are a national institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The trustees and myself were known nationally because we were involved with exhibitions that traveled. Our names were on the letterhead.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: We were known. Our trustees come from all around the country. We have— well, I must confess I don't know the exact number of states. But we have a great—we have—a majority of the states are represented on our board.

MR. CUMMINGS: You have a huge board.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, the board is apparently huge, because half the members are professional board members.

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

MRS. KAPLAN: But they don't all attend meetings. But they're always available for advice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we have—by law, we have 60 members. But we don't always have the full—we have about 50. I don't know the exact number now, probably 50-52-53 members.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

MRS. KAPLAN: Some of the museum directors will attend some of the meetings through the year. But they have to. A working board is about 26-20.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's still a pretty good group of people to get together and—

MRS. KAPLAN: It's a good board. Yes, they do. And they're effective.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, you must have seen several changes over the years there.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. I think the most important change is that it has become less of a club and more of a very vital, functioning institution, because when—when I say "club," I don't really mean it that way. I mean that it was sort of slightly ingrown, not nearly as—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I remember. You know, I know what you're saying because I remember when I first found out or got interested in AFA, it was maybe about 1960-61, as a matter of fact.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And it seemed to be a very small, quiet little organization.

MRS. KAPLAN: Small. Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Following the pattern as you'd been doing since, what, 1900 or thereabouts.

MRS. KAPLAN: 1909.

MR. CUMMINGS: 1909.

MRS. KAPLAN: That is when it was founded.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, that's what I mean. And the exhibition—it was smaller in scale, less ambitious. And it has widened now. It's become very effective.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, they do mass exhibitions that I'm sure would have terrified people 10 years ago.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, we couldn't have done it without the help of a national endowment [National Endowment for the Arts].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: You see. And another thing that's happened in the art world is the underwriting of exhibition by corporations, corporate support.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And more and more of the corporations are going to come into the art picture, in the art world.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, have you done anything with that, with AFA, as far as getting corporate support?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yeah. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, you personally in any—

MRS. KAPLAN: No, not me personally. I mean, the actual running of the AFA and its daily—it's—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, the director.

MRS. KAPLAN: Is the director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Always has been. And while there's been very good about that, very clever about support, getting and seeking support from the national endowment and from corporations—

MR. CUMMINGS: From corporations.

MRS. KAPLAN: And now they even seek us out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, do they?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, in a sense. I shouldn't be speaking out of turn because I can't tell you exactly. But the point is that the corporations are very receptive and want to support it and have supported it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Yeah. Yeah.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

MR. CUMMINGS: So this is side two. I want to go back a little bit.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah?



MR. CUMMINGS: Because there are a couple of things here that I wanted to ask you about. One is, you, during your years as president of AFA, I suppose even before as a board member, were involved in selecting trustees, proposing people. What general qualities did you look for in somebody?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, we had a search committee. We had a committee. We did [inaudible]. Well, clearly, it had to be somebody who would be interested in the arts. Secondly, it would be, we would hope, someone who would be supportive financially and eager to work and cooperate. That's all I can say. And you—because, what do trustees—the responsibility of trustees is, by and large, financial. But at the same time, with a point of view and an interest in what the organization is doing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: All the trustees, I mean, all those who became trustees were people that were either collectors themselves, serious collectors, or people interested in the art without being major collectors.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That was half the board. These were the members who were able to support the institution financially. The other half of our board were made up of museum professionals, as I mentioned earlier, who lent a very important and decisive element to discussions, to decisions. And that was the makeup, in general. The professional people supported by interested individuals who could help financially, but at the same time were deeply involved with the arts, and in many, many instances, very decisively influential as to the direction the institution would take.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: You take a person like Warren Newburg, Eloise [Spaeth]. I mean, they come to mind quickly—of course, Curt [phonetic], myself, other old-timers. But I mean, the whole board—these are people who are very deeply involved with the arts.

MR. CUMMINGS: They looked at a lot of art, collected a lot? They're involved with the artists?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And of course, the professionals were exceedingly important.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find that with problems, though, because the professional museum director, say—all of—sort of thinks with a much prettier hand than somebody who has to raise the money? Although they are now becoming fund raisers so much.

MRS. KAPLAN: You mean the director?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, the director doesn't really raise the money. He does in some ways. He asks his trustees to raise the money, and that's their function, in fact.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But more museum directors are becoming fund raisers now, don't you think?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, in a sense, they have—yes, I think so.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because it's impossible. You can't do anything without money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's true. Never could.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Never could. And the museum or art world is even more so. You can't—but the artistic director is the—the director is really the artistic director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: His primary function, I think—this is my opinion—has to be artistic because in a way he sets the tone and he's responsible for the choices, artistic choices, clearly. We have an exhibition committee composed

of professionals and nonprofessional trustees. And the nonprofessional trustees have a strong say in the direction of what we're doing. But in reality, it's the professional staff are there—they together with the exhibition committee that make the choice as to what to do, what is possible to do, where the funding can be gotten, the possible funding.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The exhibition committee meets twice a year in the spring and the fall and considers ideas for exhibitions proposed by the staff. And the committee then decides, yes, we would like this, this, provided we can get funding for this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that, you see. So it works together. You can hardly separate one section of AFA, whether it's the board or among the staff. They join each other to make a whole. And one without the other couldn't function.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But what about corporate support, because, you know, I know perfectly well that it's increasing.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, it is increasing.

MR. CUMMINGS: And companies are finding there are all sorts of uses they never thought of supporting art, culture, programs of various kinds.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it increases their image, for one thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but that's—I've known art exhibitions to produce more money for companies. And there are all sorts of amazing things.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, that's true.

MR. CUMMINGS: And I think in the last maybe 10 years it has been more corporate support for specific exhibitions at AFA.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes, it's increasing. It's increasing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you had much to do with that in any way, or is it something—

MRS. KAPLAN: Not personally.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Certainly, the matter comes up in board meetings. But that is—to a great extent, that is the function of the director. He's the one who makes the contact. He's the one who supplies the information for such an exhibition, with the consent always of the board. But the director plus the head of—

MR. CUMMINGS: The exhibition.

MRS. KAPLAN: —the exhibition.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: It is the top staff members who make the decision.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you—you know, it's one thing to be the trustee of an organization. It's quite something else to become a president of it.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't know. First of all, I was there. And I was interested and active.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Then I became vice president.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I got along very well until—

MR. CUMMINGS: Roy Neuberger was there?

MRS. KAPLAN: Roy Neuberger was there. He was making out, and that was fine. I loved being his vice president.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then his term came up. I mean, it was—and then it was sort of logical. It seemed fairly logical at that time, particularly since things were not going too well at the time I became president.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you were president for a long time, 10 years?

MRS. KAPLAN: Ten years. Can you imagine? Well, at first—it was not my doing or anybody's, just because for the last four years, I should have resigned or stepped down four years, five years ago after the second term of three years. That's six years. Well, then I agreed to stay on for another year until we could get someone to accept the job, take on the job. And then we—not only is it to be president, no, we had to get a new director, for one thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that was traumatic, that experience.

MR. CUMMINGS: How so? For what reason?

MRS. KAPLAN: It was difficult to find.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was quite—it was a year or something, wasn't it?

MRS. KAPLAN: It was a long time, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Between Moyer's leaving and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. We had a—

MR. CUMMINGS: Interim—

MRS. KAPLAN: Not too good.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: We won't go into that. That's in the past.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then Wada [phonetic] came on the board, and he's been wonderful. He's Viennese, very effective. He knows what to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I agree.

MRS. KAPLAN: And in the meantime, we got other new people on the board, new trustees, personnel. Some of the deadwood vanished.

MR. CUMMINGS: Flowed away.

MRS. KAPLAN: Floated off.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And on all levels. And the good departments were strengthened. And we have some very good new trustees over the last three or four years. And then also, we initiated four years ago a three-year campaign for raising X dollars. I think I was a critical factor in the success of that, not because I made a major contribution—Roy did. It matched mine. Other people did the best they could, and it was excellent.

We did suggest for the first time in that campaign that in order to impress private enterprise, companies who then asked about it, and said, "What are your trustees doing?" we suddenly realized all the trustees had to do something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that included the professionals. And for the first time in the association of professionals, they were asked to make a contribution—minor ones, however small, however big, whatever, but to make a contribution and a commitment for three years. And every one of them did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that in effect, we had 100 percent—

MR. CUMMINGS: Support.

MRS. KAPLAN: —support.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right across the board.

MRS. KAPLAN: Right across the board. Commitment for three years. And that turned the tide.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, well, that's very impressive.

MRS. KAPLAN: And yeah, we did that. And I did at the time approach all of the professional trustees, explaining the situation. And they all responded generously and agreed. And they were not important contributions, but psychologically they were indispensable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that what occurred—

MR. CUMMINGS: You have a lot of power when you go to a company and say—

MRS. KAPLAN: When you go the—because we found out that they want to know, "What are your trustees doing?"

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this way we could say, "Our trustees have given us—we have 100 percent acceptance and support of the trustees." And that was really critical.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's very good.

MRS. KAPLAN: And after the—

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you do that with all those museum people? I mean, that must have been a delicate—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, the members on our board, the professional members who were trustees, they didn't do it for their museums. They made personal contributions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: They were modest. But they were personal, and they were committed. And that was a wonderful thing about it, you see. And then at the end of the three years, we almost made our quota. We did. But we were still in trouble. And we had a new president. By that time, we had met with Maya Ewing [phonetic], and he had agreed to take on the job. This was then already in my 10th year, you see. Each year I went on for another year. "All right. I'll go on for another year."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] One more year, one more year.

MRS. KAPLAN: One more year [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the search committee was interviewing an awful lot of people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So we were very, very fortunate. Meyer is distinguished and excellent. He's a different president than I am, but then, that's what this institution needs, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's okay. Sure.

MRS. KAPLAN: Actually, in some ways it's better because he's forcing all the trustees to respond, whereas I felt I had to do perhaps more than I needed to do, but wanted to do, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, one of the hard questions to answer, I think, is, you know, what does one sort of get out of all of this in terms of one's own personal feelings about art?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I sometimes wonder. I've been asked that question before. I enjoy the process. I don't know what I—I never think of what I'm going to get out of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's maybe it.

MRS. KAPLAN: I like being involved.

MR. CUMMINGS: Maybe that's it.

MRS. KAPLAN: And in fact, I don't like to get on any board where what I do isn't going to be critical. In other words, what I'm saying is, I like to be in a situation where my contribution, whatever it is—time, money, energy, ideas—ideas, mainly, which is the creative relationship with an institution—if I cannot be involved that way, I don't want to be involved with this institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right. It just doesn't interest you.

MRS. KAPLAN: It doesn't interest me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's the process. That I found creative, to solve problems and to help and to make a thing grow. I feel that is a—

MR. CUMMINGS: Put the ideas and the interplay with all the people.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's interesting, too. It's always wonderful working, of course. It's marvelous to work with a group of people towards a goal. But when you ask me personally what I get out of it, is being president—I mean, the title didn't mean a thing to me. If I were just a president and attended a meeting and sent in a check or something like that, that would be—I would find that—

MR. CUMMINGS: Boring.

MRS. KAPLAN: —boring and depressing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But to be involved in decision making situations, this is what I enjoyed. And I enjoyed the possibility and what has happened, of solving problems. I like to solve problems.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: That's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: I do. I do. I think it's creative.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's the perfect requirement for trustees, you know, if you think about it and want to do something.

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly. And I'm a perfect trustee [inaudible]. Everybody wants me to get on the board. I'll tell you who. I'll give you a long list of people and situations.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I have to say no all the time because the subjects or the particular institution, while very worthy, is not my particular interest.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. And you can't do it all. I mean, one can't spend their life going to meetings and reading reports.

MRS. KAPLAN: I am, though, getting to a point where I don't feel I want to do this so much anymore.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you've done it for a long time.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I'm very much interested now in helping another institution, which is the American Folk Art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, the museum?

MRS. KAPLAN: The museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, that's interesting.

MRS. KAPLAN: American Folk Art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's more or less recent.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I was always interested, but never as a trustee. I could never side.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, well—

MRS. KAPLAN: But there they're facing very much similar problems to what we faced 15 years ago, AFA faced—survival, support, and enlarging the board, a new director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Carl Brown [phonetic].

MRS. KAPLAN: They have a wonderful new director.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Bob Bishop, excellent [Robert Bishop, director of the American Folk Art Museum, 1977-1991]. And it's going to develop because suddenly there's an enormous interest, as you probably noticed, in American folk art.

MR. CUMMINGS: What's interested you in folk art? Because you've been interested for a long time, haven't you?

MRS. KAPLAN: I always found it intriguing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Piecemeal here and there?

MRS. KAPLAN: Piecemeal. I really don't collect folk art. I don't like folk art as folk art. But I find many, many folk art pieces intriguing and interesting and original. And they do represent an aspect of our life.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I have many extraordinary pieces. And people say—people often ask me about my folk art collection. I don't have a collection of folk art. They've seen it published or one thing or another. I may have a dozen, maybe 15 major pieces. That's not a very big collection.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, but [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: But they're great works of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: They are really not just folk art. The fact that we don't know the name of the person who created that painting or sculpture, it is nevertheless a wonderful piece.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, of itself. Oh, I agree.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that's kind of fun because the museum, the folk art museum is struggling to survive now, and I'm trying to help them survive.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's great. You know, several people—or a couple of friends in particular of mine say, "Well, you know, maybe it really should be a part of Cooper-Hewitt or it should be part of the Met" or something like that [Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum].

MRS. KAPLAN: The folk art?

MR. CUMMINGS: The folk art. And I don't know enough about it, so I really never—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, there was one time when the Whitney—you may not remember.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, in the '50s.

MRS. KAPLAN: In the '50s. And the folk art was then a struggling little institution looking for a home, a building. And they were able at that time to—it was possible—it would have been possible to have the building on [inaudible] 76th, was it? I think so. On 76th Street right next to the—

MR. CUMMINGS: 75th Street, yeah. Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: On 75th Street. The house—let me see. They could have had that. And it could have been a small—that building could have been a small museum of folk art, connected with the Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the president at that time didn't—

MR. CUMMINGS: Want it.

MRS. KAPLAN: —no. They didn't want—they wanted to be separate. They didn't want to be involved with that. It was a great mistake, I think. It would have been a great asset to them and a great asset for the Whitney.

However, in the meantime, they struggled. And now the new director, Bob Bishop, there is a campaign on, a new building, away from the little building they have over on 53rd. And they're looking for a new building. The board has been enlarged, new trustees, some good trustees, supportive trustees have been added. And suddenly, you know, folk art is in now. It's the newest thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And all over Europe, too, you know, they just love American folk art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, I know. There's a big show just going to Europe or something.

MRS. KAPLAN: Mm-hmm. To France, I think.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's right, that's right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The embassy, the new ambassador, the wife of the new ambassador is redoing one room to hold an exhibition of American folk art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic. Yeah, I've been reading something about that. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the folk art museum is lending about four pieces, four sculptures.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, do they have a big collection there at the folk art museum?

MRS. KAPLAN: They have a nice collection, but it isn't—

MR. CUMMINGS: —not visible.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, because there's always an exhibition on of a particular thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And they want to move now. They haven't got the space. They've got to go. They've got to get out of that—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, tiny little floor.

MRS. KAPLAN: —tiny little floor there. But they are. We're looking for a building. And we have some new trustees. And again, there, you have an enlarged trustee board and a large board, new trustees with great interest in the museum and an excellent director, energetic and timely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Speaking of timeliness, the Metropolitan Museum in its new wing is establishing a department of folk art.

MR. CUMMINGS: You're kidding. Are they really? I didn't know that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. As a matter of fact, I've been asked to be a visiting, a volunteer a guest curator.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: Which will be fun. Nobody knows anything about folk art over there. But the—it's—they have to have it.

MR. CUMMINGS: I didn't know. Sure.

MRS. KAPLAN: They're planning to have it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And the department, the area allocated—I haven't seen it yet, but I'm told one-half will be devoted to Shaker furniture, and the other half to early American painting and sculpture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: So it's going to be fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because they have those few rooms up there now.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: And this will [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, it will all change in the new—in the new building, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's interesting, though.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's going to be great.

MRS. KAPLAN: I think that would be interesting.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, one thing that you did which I saw and found very interesting, of course, was the 50th anniversary of the Armory Show in '63.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, yes. Where did you—oh, that was somewhere?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, one of the—yeah. We find all this little—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, you see, it was because at that time I was on the board of Henry Street [Henry Street Settlement].

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this—oh, I can't think of his name, the director up at—what was his name?

MR. CUMMINGS: Buffalo?

MRS. KAPLAN: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Syracuse or someplace, upstate New York?

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

[Audio Break]

MRS. KAPLAN: You know the museum. William—

MR. CUMMINGS: Munson Williams Proctor?

MRS. KAPLAN: Munson Williams Proctor [Munson Williams Proctor Art Institute, Utica, New York].



MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Utica.

MRS. KAPLAN: Utica, right.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: All right, right. Well, at that time, I knew what-was-his-name, the director. Bill—it's awful. But anyway—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Not—and I knew Mr. Travat [phonetic]. And Bill Murray. He had been on one of our trips to Europe, AFA trips, and we became friendly. And this show was coming up. And they were talking, after the exhibition ended up there in Utica, possibly bringing it to New York.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I told—I was then very active with the Henry Street Settlement. And at a board meeting, I suggested, if we could have that exhibition come down, you know, would you consider supporting it? I think we might share that event with Henry Street. So I got in touch with them, and they were thrilled. And we shared the cost, and we shared the benefits. And the opening night, there was a benefit for Henry Street Settlement.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's great.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I worked very hard on that. I was co-chairman with Mrs. Carlton [Margaret Gillies Carlton, trustee and supporter of Henry Street Settlement]. And I attended that opening in my wheelchair because that was in 1963. It opened in November or early December. I had the accident—I fell, as I told you, early November.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MRS. KAPLAN: By the time the opening came along, I was well enough to sit in a wheelchair and move about, but that's how I attended the opening that night. But I was very much involved with that. And it was a great success.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was a very fascinating process.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was fascinating, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Absolutely.

MRS. KAPLAN: To see all that. And I remember we couldn't get all the things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: All the works of art we wanted. They wouldn't lend. They did lend from the Cone Collection in Baltimore [Cone Collection of Modern Art, part of the Baltimore Museum of Art], you know, the Blue Lady [Henri Matisse's *Blue Nude*], which was almost a disaster. I think at one point something happened to it, they almost took it away. But then they left it there for us. But we had practically everything we—everything that appeared in the original show, with one or two exceptions—two or three exceptions—was there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was fun to see all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. Fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, that was very nice. My god, that's a long time ago. That's 26 years ago. Twenty—what am I talking?

MR. CUMMINGS: No, no, no.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was 28 years ago?

MR. CUMMINGS: Fourteen years ago—'63, fifteen years ago.

MRS. KAPLAN: Fifteen years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fifteen years ago. [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, I was thinking '50. It wasn't in the '50s, it was in the '60s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: The 50th anniversary, I was adding the time to our 50th anniversary.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, but something like that where you're working with two different organizations—how easy was that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it was easy enough. I mean, you know, I wasn't at AFA—I wasn't a member of the staff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I wasn't there every single day. The other took more time. That particular exhibition was a daily thing because they had meetings every day. But that was short-lived.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That was, you know, concentrated.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: One more crisis after the other, you see. And that was the preparation of maybe six months preparation or less. But AFA, after all, as a president—you know, a president who's not supposed to interfere too much with the—

MR. CUMMINGS: Operations?

MRS. KAPLAN: —with the operations. I don't think many directors like busybody presidents.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think you're right.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: So therefore, you know, I had time to do other things.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with Henry Street?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, that goes back a long, long time. I got in through friends, and I'm always involved in something. But I was involved in the Henry Street Settlement, oh, maybe 20 years. It goes back a long time.

MR. CUMMINGS: I've never been there. There are several buildings, aren't there?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. In fact, I was there just about two weeks ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I hadn't been there in a long time. I was asked to come down to see—they had a very good art department. They did some wonderful things there. And so I went down. I hadn't been there in years. But I resigned from that long ago. At its heyday, it was a revolutionary institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I think it was very, very important.

MRS. KAPLAN: Very important.

MR. CUMMINGS: That whole neighborhood has changed so much.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it became a model almost for similar schools.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. You seem to like things that are education, political, social oriented.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, I seem to be.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's kind of—

MRS. KAPLAN: I know. It is true. I've often thought about that. Why am I attracted here? It's like somebody would say, "What makes you—how come you're interested in pre-Columbian art?" Well, I never thought about

pre-Columbian, but I went to South America. I saw it. I was involved. And I came—I learned about it, and then I bought a piece. And I thought that's true of practically everything I have here.

The one thing that I've always liked, and that had been consistent in my purchases or my interests have been drawings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well that's how I think I first heard about your collecting activities.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. And I have now—refined—I love drawings. As I was saying, I'm a good draftsman myself. It's something that I felt deeply—

MR. CUMMINGS: You can identify with it.

MRS. KAPLAN: —[inaudible]. I feel it, and I have a good feeling for it. I used to have a lot of drawings. But then we moved from the house into this apartment. I'm skipping around here, ignoring your question.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's okay.

MRS. KAPLAN: You did ask me that question earlier. I think I have become more visible as a collector and known in the time since we've lived here, in the years that we've had this apartment.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because suddenly you see everything all at once, whereas in the house, some were downstairs, some were upstairs, some were in my bedroom, some were in the dining room.

MR. CUMMINGS: They were separated.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was all separated.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there were many, many objects about which you didn't have as great of a sense of the many objects here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: When we moved, practically the same furnishings are here, as in the house. But in the course of organizing the apartment, I disposed of a lot of objects I had, and gave some to my children and some to institutions, a few. But—and I kept only what I really loved that had real significance to me, you see. And then we've been here now going on eight years. And I can say that I think I've bought more in the last 10 years, 8 to 10 years than I did in the 20 years before.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And now I'm really avaricious about having it. Now I—I never used to want them. I'd acquire them accidentally. Now I wish I had bought this, and I wish I had bought that—

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And certain things—and so people comment on the diversity. Well, I really and truly love everything. I like the object. I like the painting. Now, if I'm not able to have X, either because it's not available or it's disproportionately extravagant or some other reason, well, if I can't have A, I'll take B because B is just as beautiful. It's different, but just as beautiful. You know, nobody can have everything. And I must say, I like everything. So how can you have everything?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] You just have to pick and choose, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't know. I wish I had more.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: Of certain things that I missed.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kinds of things?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, a lot of drawings I could have had.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

MRS. KAPLAN: I do like drawings. I think there were several occasions where I very foolishly thought a particular painting was outrageously expensive, which it was, but is no longer, you know, 15 years later.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And in a way my husband didn't share the same interest, so I didn't want to make too much of a thing, you know. That's—I do want to—I don't want that to seem harsh of me. I mean, he never discouraged me. But he wasn't involved. And it was sort of a secondary issue. And then I deliberately decided to go off in a different direction.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you do that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it evolved from the studies, from the time I went to school.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: So as I learned about a particular area—

MR. CUMMINGS: You wanted to get a part of it.

MRS. KAPLAN: —well, then I went to look at them. And Oriental things, I like very much. I love these primitive things. I was all primitive art. And then I went to China—I mean, Japan. I bought that Japanese screen. It was 1958 I brought that back. I brought one or two other objects back.

MR. CUMMINGS: So the travel has influenced—

MRS. KAPLAN: The travel has influenced me a great deal. I have been to South America quite often. I'd rather live in South America, so that in Peru I bought things, and in Costa Rica.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you've never really had a plan?

MRS. KAPLAN: Never, nothing.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MRS. KAPLAN: The only time that—you know, the only—no, I never had a plan to buy specific things. When we moved into this apartment, I got in touch with an artist which everyone—you know, that contemporary hanging.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: Have you seen it?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: You have seen it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, because on that wall is one of the early things that she did, this artist. And everyone, you know, is crazy about it. And, you know, I did that. I never did anything like that. I commissioned it. I'd never done anything like that before.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like that? That's an experience.

MRS. KAPLAN: It was. Well, I had seen her work. Her first exhibition at the Modern Museum [Museum of Modern Art] took place about a year before we moved in. And I had sort of made a mental note of her work. So I knew when I was planning what to put in that room, that big empty wall—I had nothing big. I keep saying if I had had one of, you know, the—

MR. CUMMINGS: What? Jackson Pollock is all.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Something spacious.

MRS. KAPLAN: The big—

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: —abstract, a 15-foot, what is it, *Blue Poles* [inaudible]?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: A huge 15-foot Jackson Pollock, that would have looked beautiful there. But I didn't have it and couldn't get it and wouldn't get it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: So then I thought, "Well, what if?" And then I remember that particular—

MR. CUMMINGS: Weaver.

MRS. KAPLAN: Weaver, right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Got in touch with her, and she came here. And I told her what I wanted. I didn't want a flat weaving. I wanted something that was three-dimensional. And we talked about it. She brought me samples of this nice little [inaudible], and made a few little sketches and said, "Something like this might be nice." She made two or three, and I chose one design. I said, "All right. Do that." She went ahead, and three months later she came with this. And we hung it up, and it's been fabulous ever since.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fantastic. That's great.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I've done that in many instances here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you commissioned more things since that? Or is that—

MRS. KAPLAN: No. That is the major commission.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. But, no. Another thing here, for example, this staircase, everybody wants to know who did that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I don't know. It was done in the nineteenth century or eighteenth century. It's a model for something. But there isn't a person that doesn't, that comes here and—

MR. CUMMINGS: And wants to know who and what it is, in turn. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Mm-hmm. I put it on a revolving stand so you can see it as it moves.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. That's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: Very funny—I had a group of women here once. And they were here walking around. And a few of them stood there in the corner and called me over and said, "Mrs. Kaplan, we have a question." And she said, pointing to the staircase, "We're deciding who the artist—we can't decide who the artist is. Is it or is it not Giacometti?" [Alberto Giacometti, Swiss sculptor]

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I said, "No, I'm sorry. It is not." "Then who is it?" I said, "I don't know. It's a model of the staircase." "Oh, it's so beautiful." And it is beautiful. It's a beautiful object.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: It's such a beautiful object. And there it is. And it has a prize setting. Well, many of the pieces—I mean, the Benin bronzes, for example. I just love them. I bought them when not too many people were interested in Benin bronzes. Can't get them now. And whenever I was interested in something, then I bought in an area. That was particularly true when I was at school [inaudible] learning different.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what about the trompe l'oeil painting there?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, this one—this is—

[Simultaneous conversation]

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I don't know the time around it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it's—

MR. CUMMINGS: It's one of those—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, it is. It's—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I have it here. Hewling—Mr. Hewling Roth [phonetic] picture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I have to tell you a couple of other things I just thought of I have to tell you.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay.

MRS. KAPLAN: I saw that at auction, Park Vonet [phonetic], several years ago, thought it was great. Went to the auction, bid on it, and lost it. And about six months later, I had to go to a dealer to settle a bill about something else. It was at Kennedy. And I happened to be there while he was telephoning. And he said, "Well, I don't know, I'll have to think about it," to the person on the other end. "I'll let you know, but we'll talk about it." He hung up. And he told me that this had come back to him because the man who had bought this suddenly got into some financial difficulty and had to return the picture.

And Washington, the Hirshhorn collector—the Hirshhorn wanted it [Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden], and the National Gallery wanted it [National Gallery of Art]. I said to him, I said, "You promised me the next time you found a very good Harnett, you'd let me know. I'd bid on that and lost it. I'd like to have that painting." So he said, "You shall have it and not pay."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: And so I got it.

MR. CUMMINGS: So then?

MRS. KAPLAN: And then the man who had bought it at auction had to return it. Well, actually, Kennedy bid on it for this man at the auction.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So he was returning it to Kennedy and said, "Sell it for me."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's one of the great—

MR. CUMMINGS: Marvelous painting.

MRS. KAPLAN: It is the greatest Harnett, I think.

MR. CUMMINGS: I love it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I'll just tell you one or two other things too—I had a thought—oh, yes. Another instance which is—was a lucky thing. My Ammi Phillips—I probably had the best Ammi Phillips and the most well known. And there again, it's not because I knew who Ammi Phillips was. But in 19—it must have been 10 years ago, where are we '78? '68? Yeah. At the antique show here—no, that came later. I'll tell you exactly what happened. In '58—it was 20 years ago—'58-'59 I went to an auction. A friend of mine had a charity auction at Park Gwinnett. He said, "Please come buy something." I promised.

I got there a little bit late. It started. I sat down, and about 10 minutes after I sat down, this painting—a woman in black, was in the Whitney show—came up. I bid on it and I bought it for \$100.

MR. CUMMINGS: You're kidding.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, I'm not kidding. Two years later—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] I don't believe it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Absolutely. Well, I bought that. And two years later at the antique show here, the West Side Antiques Show, I was in a booth there where I had bought some furniture before. And I said, "No, there's nothing here." You know, I said no. He said, "But I have this very nice painting, a primitive painting of a man." It was a very nice painting. It was a country [inaudible]. It was \$300. By the following year, that man had been identified. You know, they discovered who he was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there was an article in *Art News*, I mean *Art in America*, the antiques magazine, this long article about the discovery, who this primitive painter is, Ammi Phillips.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah.

MRS. KAPLAN: That year down at Louners [phonetic], down in the Village, a friend of mine called up and said, "You're interested in those primitive things. There's a big sale on Saturday, and I think there's an Ammi Phillips there." I went down to look. I'll show it to you, it's a big one. And I said, yes, I think it's Ammi Phillips. It's a big one, a full-length portrait of a woman and child. You had it at the Whitney once. It was on exhibition there.

Anyway, to make a very long story short, it was very exciting, and I bought that painting for \$1000. And when the bidding—I was bidding against the Garbishers [phonetic], and I got it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my heavens.

MRS. KAPLAN: And when I got it, everybody in the audience applauded.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, that was quite a lot for an unknown primitive painter in those days, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, by that time, I had three. By then a friend of mine was interested who works up at the Historical Society, called me and said, "You know, there's a sale coming up, American paintings, and I think there are a pair of Ammi Phillips there. They are listed as unknown American painters." I said, "For heavens sakes, I [inaudible]." She said, "Well, I think you ought to have a look at them." And I said, "Well, if they go very cheap, I'll get them. I really don't need them. I'll put them in the [inaudible]." I went to look at them. I did. I got them for \$500 apiece. Well, I had five. Well, from then on my troubles began. Because by then—

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: Everybody knew.

MRS. KAPLAN: By then, everybody wanted an Ammi Phillips.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I've since gotten three additional extraordinary ones. But I had to pay a price then. And now, he's—well, he's too late. He's too expensive.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: So that's the saga of my—I have seven Ammi Phillips now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Seven?

MRS. KAPLAN: Seven.

MR. CUMMINGS: You've cornered the market.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, and I've cornered the best corner. I have the best corner. It's not the total market.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that was fun, you see. And now the same thing happened to me—now, that's what I like

about collecting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Since I was not—you know, it's one way. You find, you discover things or you go to the dealers and get the most assured things, both of which are very—both of which are valid.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But since I missed the boat on one side, I'm having fun on the other.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But you know, with discovery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my god.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, two other areas that were—for example, years ago I bought—for the first time Egon Schiele drawings were show in this country.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my.

MRS. KAPLAN: I bought, out of the first exhibition, which must be a good 15 years ago—

MR. CUMMINGS: At Colliers.

MRS. KAPLAN: At Colliers, yeah, St. Etienne Gallery there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I remember the first one, \$300. There it is. I'll show you them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Are they really?

MRS. KAPLAN: Three hundred, eight hundred dollars, eleven hundred dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: I have seven of them, and the only expensive one, the one I had to pay a good bit of money for at Park Vonet about four years ago, is finished now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that's what I like to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: What fun.

MRS. KAPLAN: To get something a little bit original, I mean.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you know, one thing that's intrigued me is your hallway where you have drawings of so many centuries.

MRS. KAPLAN: Mm-hmm, all the Old Masters.

MR. CUMMINGS: All put together.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, they go together.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you decide to do that? Because so many people put, you know, early Italian here, and French here.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because everything in this apartment is mixed up because it's all art.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: You know, I always make the analogy. If you have a dinner party, for example.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.



MRS. KAPLAN: And you have, say, only doctors or you'd invite shoe manufacturers or something, it would be an awful bore.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But if you had an artist and a shoe manufacturer and a doctor and a businessman and all kinds of interesting people, artists—

MR. CUMMINGS: Makes it lively.

MRS. KAPLAN: Teachers and professors, then you have a very interesting and lively, a give and take of ideas. Otherwise, it's a bore if you have only one—

MR. CUMMINGS: It's the same thing.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, if I have only drawings, at least I run the gamut of a wide range. I have some contemporary drawings in my bedroom. And they're [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, what do you have in the country?

MRS. KAPLAN: Mostly the folk art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: The primitive things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh, that's fun.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And all the elegant things in New York.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, yeah. I don't divide it exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But by and large—I don't have that much. In fact, I'm having—I'm going to keep even less good things there. For instance, I think—I don't remember ever seeing it—about eight years ago in the country—oh, it must be longer than that, 10 years ago. I bought some quilts for the first time, serious quilts, when people were beginning to collect these. I knew very few people collecting quilts. Everybody is collecting quilts now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, now.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I—it must be—no, it must be more than that. Time goes by fast. It must be at least 13 years, I think. And I bought out of an exhibition of quilts. And I called it my—who's the name?

MR. CUMMINGS: Who, Stella?

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: No?

MRS. KAPLAN: It was on the cover of a little book you have at the Whitney.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Jean Lipman's book [Jean Herzberg Lipman, editor of *Art in America*, 1940-1971].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Parallels? [Jean Lipman, *Provocative Parallels: Native Early Americans/International Sophisticates*, 1975]

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: I call it my Frank Stella.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I bought these quilts, and I hung them on—in a sort of big room with white walls. I hung them as big paintings because they were seven foot square. And it was amazing. Everybody was astonished. Now it's become a cliché. It's no more fun. I have to think of something else.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Something else to do.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

MRS. KAPLAN: So it's fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you know, over the years, your acquisitions seem to have been made on a very personal discovery basis.

MRS. KAPLAN: Mostly.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, with no particular advice. Or—

MRS. KAPLAN: I know what I like. And I know enough about art to make certain judgments.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I'll tell you another thing. Certain things—I go to the galleries, and I learn. I have studied. I did get a degree. I know a little.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But the point is that I go—I love to see everything, from the most contemporary to ancient art, which I love very much.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But you can't have everything. And you can't have everything in your house. So there are certain things that you want and certain things you want with your heart.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And other things you look at with your mind, intellectualize. Just like you know an awful lot—we all know a great many people. But we have a few intimate friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: You see? So—

MR. CUMMINGS: The collection becomes like that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. And so, little by little over the years, I've kept the things I really love that have great meaning for me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you traded work for [inaudible]?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes, I do it all the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Things come and go?

MRS. KAPLAN: And I [inaudible]. They come and go, but some things stay for—the two little Morandis [Giorgio Morandi, Italian still life painter]—I bought years and years ago. I just—the first time I ever saw a Morandi watercolor, I mean painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Painting, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I loved them and I bought them then. Thank goodness.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I know.

MRS. KAPLAN: But you see, that happened—I mean, so many people are surprised that I have such a diversity, for example, in this room.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But then—and they all go together. They're all very friendly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Well, but you're picked them all.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I place them. It's like again, I use the analogy of a dinner party. I try to put the right people sitting next to the right guests.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. But has it made any difference to you in your feelings or attitudes as the sort of market values increased on these works?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I'm astonished how much they have increased.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm thrilled about it, I must say.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I've done very well in certain instances. In some instances, I wish I had done better.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean, I wish I had followed my instincts but didn't, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's amazing. One really has to do that, don't you?

MRS. KAPLAN: I never did.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, even if you know the facts and—

MRS. KAPLAN: No, I never did. I never thought in those terms.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, but I mean follow one's instincts.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I think so. If you really—it depends on what your objective is. When I see something I like, I want to have it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm not thinking of, "That's a good thing to"—

MR. CUMMINGS: No. It's a good buy or not a good buy.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, no. My husband and I, we're going to have to quit.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay.

MRS. KAPLAN: He'll have a fit if he—

[End of Tape 2, Side B]

MR. CUMMINGS: This is Paul Cummings, the 8th of March 1978, Paul Cummings talking with Alice Kaplan. This is side three. Going back to Columbia, and sort of be more specific about what happened and how it—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. I decided to go back to school, but I really went to Columbia. I believe it was in 19—after having studied at the Institute {Institute of Fine Art}, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Did we talk about that?

MR. CUMMINGS: A little bit, yeah. A little bit.

MRS. KAPLAN: Do you want to go back to that?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, we can hit some of it, and I can tell you if we've mentioned it, if it was mentioned before.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. The point is that in '59, when I decided to go back—I think I told you that I had taken some courses at Columbia at the General Studies.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And when I decided to—yes, to formally study towards a degree, I decided to go to the Institute because we lived just a block or two away.

MR. CUMMINGS: What interested you in doing that? I mean, you—

MRS. KAPLAN: Going back to school, you mean?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. You sort of talked it over with your children and things like that.

MRS. KAPLAN: No. The point is I think I told you that I had been very much involved previously in the two Adlai Stevenson campaigns.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that after the second loss, the failure of Adlai to be elected—and we were all so let down by the campaign and so forth—I was rather depressed because I had been so involved for the last five or six years in politics.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That suddenly I felt, oh dear.

MR. CUMMINGS: What am I going to do?

MRS. KAPLAN: What am I going to do? Not really, but I was sort of down. And my daughter—my youngest daughter Mary said, "Well, you know, you're interested and involved in the arts now, Mother. Why don't you go back and finish your last year and get your degree? Go on and study?" And I said, "Yeah, that sounds very nice, but I don't think after all these years I can study anymore." Or take an exam would be something that, at that moment, frightened me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: "No," she said, "Go." And she persuaded me, and finally I thought, well, I will take courses. I won't do it seriously. And so I went to Columbia in—to do General Studies.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And matriculated there, and just took various courses, one with Julius Held, one with Howard Harbarden, another one with Meyer Schapiro.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find all of those courses and those instructors?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I just went up to Columbia and looked at their catalog. I knew Meyer Schapiro personally. And then I just signed up with different courses in the arts because I was only interested in taking art courses.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: In ancient art, in Greek art.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find him as an instructor?

MRS. KAPLAN: Meyer?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Brilliant, marvelous. I'll tell you an interesting—but he would talk, and, you know, on and on. And he would—and here everybody was sitting around taking notes, and it was impossible to take notes. He talked so fast, and he said so much in a sentence and all these dates.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And after one lecture, I was walking out of class with him, and I said, "I enjoyed this lecture very much, Meyer. But I simply can't get down all the material. You say so much." And he said, "Don't take notes. Just look at the slides, and just listen. Don't bother with notes." And in a way, I thought, that was a very good advice because if you're busy taking notes, you're not really concentrating. You're taking down the—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. You're not looking and you're not listening.

MRS. KAPLAN: You're not looking and you're not really listening.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this way, you listen more intently, and you look at the slides, and listen to what he has to say about the slides much more.

MR. CUMMINGS: And they reinforce each other.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And not—much more intently than you would be busy taking it down. And I enjoyed that. I took two courses, one on nineteenth century art, contemporary art, and the other on Medieval art.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you were studying just all general art history?

MRS. KAPLAN: Everything, every art course I could take. And I did that for two years, without credit. That is, I took the exam. But I wasn't working towards it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: At the end of the second year, and I felt that I was able to take an exam, had the courage to take an exam, I decided to go and work for a degree.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I did go to the Institute [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. We already talked about that, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then in the middle of that, well, in January, I slipped and fell and broke my hip.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. You said that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. And I couldn't take the exam. Charles—I can't think of his name—from Paris, who gave a course on—

MR. CUMMINGS: Sterns?

MRS. KAPLAN: No—yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: He gave a course on stelai.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] And it was a concentrated course at six weeks. I had to miss that. I never took the exam because I was in the hospital.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I was also taking a course with Robert Goldwater, contemporary art. And I did finish that. And I did take the exam in my wheelchair. But then I thought, "Oh, well, this is getting nutty, and I can't continue." So I stopped. And as I told you, I was called in, and it was suggested that I not continue. The space was allocated for young, going on to careers. And I thought at the end, what's the point?

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you not have a purpose in mind for this education?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, no. The purpose in mind at that point, I wanted to get my degree. I wanted to have the degree.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But then did you then want to do something?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. It was the idea of finishing it and going on.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: I was then with the AFA, but it had nothing to do with my—I was involved with that world, and I

wanted to learn more. And having started, gotten my undergraduate degree, I wanted to go on for a masters, just for the fun of it. I loved studying. And it was then, as I told you, after deciding not to go ahead in the fall of the—that fall, I decided, yes, I would go back.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then went up to Columbia and asked for my record. And I went to see Professor Vitcover.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Who then looked at my record—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: And I told you that. And I've told you that. He would accept what I had done in General Studies, but he couldn't give me credit for the 15—

MR. CUMMINGS: Did he ever give you any reason why?

MRS. KAPLAN: They just didn't do it. It was a rule at Columbia not to credit exchange studies for a masters. You see, they give you credit for work done towards a Ph.D., but not towards a masters.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, not towards a masters.

MRS. KAPLAN: So it was all right because I enjoyed it. A year and a half, I did finish the requirements and got my masters degree. And then, as one of my professors said to me, Professor [inaudible] when I got my degree—we shook hands. He said, "Congratulations." He said, "Now you're on our side of the fence, albeit way down in left field, but on our side."

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: In other words, I was welcome into the society of scholars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, yes. Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that was a lot of fun. And then from then on, somehow I remained involved with Columbia. And I'm still involved with it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you're on their committee on art and archeology.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. Well, that is—

MR. CUMMINGS: What is all of that?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. I'm not on that anymore. That was at one point for a short time. But I am chairman of the council for the department.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. What does that—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, what is chairman of any council? Its main purpose is to raise money, isn't that right?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, but what does the council do?

MRS. KAPLAN: Right. They meet periodically. There are visiting committees to different departments. And they are concerned with different problems the department has, for which money has to be raised. And the council—the members of the council make a yearly contribution, and there is an event every year of some sort to raise money for various purposes—the library, books, scholarships. Specifically two major scholarships. And one of which is the most important one, which I did and inaugurated in the first year that I was chairman. We had, after Professor Wittkower died—do you remember? I don't know if you do remember.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. I remember of him.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And one day—I don't know how many years ago this must be now, four or five years ago, he just toppled over at lunch at the faculty house and just died. And it was a terrible shock to everybody. And so at one of the meetings on the occasion, on that particular occasion shortly after his death, there was a great deal of discussion, what to do to honor him?

MR. CUMMINGS: That's when you did the auction?

MRS. KAPLAN: And that's when we did the auction, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, what we did in the meantime, other events have taken place. The yearly or the every third year, the graduate students organize an exhibition. And this year, they had the great exhibition at Wildenstein's.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we raise money. That's another thing that I did. Instead of the usual thing for an opening—people had dinner parties and all that sort of thing. You buy tickets, you're invited to a dinner before the opening.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I find it very boring because the—

MR. CUMMINGS: It can be the same after awhile.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's it. I buy tickets now and don't go to the dinner.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I said, when—this was last year, a year and a half ago. And I said, "We ought to do something different." And I had the idea of having one big party at the Custom House. That's the first time that was ever used that way. I got permission to use it. And so that the \$100 ticket entitled you to a dinner and party and dancing before the opening.

MR. CUMMINGS: Before the opening.

MRS. KAPLAN: Before the opening, with buses taking you down and buses bringing you up to the gallery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Aha.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that night, we had the worst storm, rainstorm, that they've had, I think, in years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I thought—I was there at 6:00 o'clock to greet the guests for the—first we had buses taking people from the Plaza Hotel down and bringing them up to Wildenstein.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I said, "Nobody"—I was sure nobody would appear. Well, whether it was due to friendliness for me or whatever, we had—everybody came. We had so many people that we ran out of food. And everybody had such a good time nobody wanted to go up to the exhibition.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: But we had to get out of there by 10:00 o'clock. So the buses were still running. And we went up to the exhibit, which was a great success. So it was a marvelous event, and we netted for the department a net from the party, and from the whole evening, \$45,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: My heavens.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's the best they ever had. And that means the money raised for those events concerned with the exhibition, every three years—the money was used for summer travel grants for the students.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: The Wittkower thing of two—

MR. CUMMINGS: Scholarships.

MRS. KAPLAN: —scholarships.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: A year's study abroad, and they were \$7500 apiece. They were able to—

MR. CUMMINGS: But, say, that \$45,000, was that sort of capital? Or was that used as regular—

MRS. KAPLAN: No. No, that was used only for the summer grants. But what it means—this way, they were able to allocate for three years, this past year and for two more years, \$15,000, which means they can give summer grants for 12 to 13 or 14, because they get anywhere from \$750 to \$1000 for students who have to travel or go abroad.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now they were able to give, I think, 15 this year, \$1000 summer grants, travel grants.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] And they have enough money for two more summer grants—two more series of it. Now that we're already thinking what the next exhibition—the next event should be to raise money, within a year or so, for the next few years.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it must have cost a lot of money to do something like that.

MRS. KAPLAN: It did. But we earned it. We got a lot of money. We had grants—the council did, all the members of council, you see, made contributions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Certainly [inaudible] lots of money that way—I mean, lots of people on it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, let me—well, I'll tell you how it went was, the catalog—we got a grant from the Quest Foundation to underwrite the catalog.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that was underwritten.

MR. CUMMINGS: So that was pure income, then.

MRS. KAPLAN: That was pure income, the cost of the catalog, which is well over \$30,000. So then we had—the expenses we had for that night, which opening night usually covers, are the gallery, insurance, transportation the works of art and so forth.

MR. CUMMINGS: All the organization.

MRS. KAPLAN: All the organizational thing. And usually, people buy tickets, \$50 or \$75 or whatever it is. And as I say, friends of the department had dinner parties and so forth. This year, by changing it and taking it down and making a really exciting event, we charged more. We charged \$100 a ticket per person. Which included—

MR. CUMMINGS: Per person?

MRS. KAPLAN: Per person.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's \$200 a couple.

MRS. KAPLAN: Instead of \$150 or something like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah, they were \$200 a couple. And that included buses down and buses back. And the whole party at Wildenstein, and dinner, dinner and dancing and music. Then we got—it cost something to put on the—to put that party on. But we got some things donated, but not terribly much. But we netted for the party—we netted for that evening about \$45,000–46,000, after expenses.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. That's really incredible.

MRS. KAPLAN: So that was very impressive. And I must say, I worked hard and I never—I swear I never—

MR. CUMMINGS: How many months did it take to do that?

MRS. KAPLAN: We had about eight months to prepare.



MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. You can't put one of those things up overnight.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, no, you couldn't. We did it. We had to raise money. People—you know, different members of the council contributed X dollars for this and X dollars for that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I made a small contribution. I mean, everybody made a contribution. I underwrote one particular section, and other people did something. So somehow we—we still had to spend everything, but we were able to get enough to—and I think if it hadn't been such a rainy night, we would probably have had a few more people, maybe another 50 people might have come, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But now, you're going to say \$100 a person, \$45,000 net—

MRS. KAPLAN: We had over 600 people there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Good Lord. Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: And then everybody bought catalogs, and they bought tickets.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But now, why do you think somebody will spend \$100 for a ticket for something like that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Maybe because your friends ask you to. Because it's going to be a party. And we wrote to all the alum—oh, I forgot to add that we wrote to all the alumni. And a lot of them couldn't come, but sent in money, you see, contribution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's a party. I mean, people spend—you know, don't you spend money for events? Don't people buy tickets for events at the Whitney?

MR. CUMMINGS: More and more, yes, sure.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it's a way for—you go to the theater, and you go out to dinner and you go to the theater, and nothing happens.

MR. CUMMINGS: For \$100 or something.

MRS. KAPLAN: You know it's something. And this way, part of it, I guess three-quarters of it is tax deductible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I think—I'll tell you what the whole thing—contribution, dinner, we figured about \$35 a person. That's not [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: They can get credit for about three-quarters of it, I guess. And they have a wonderful time. Nobody wanted to go home. Everyone wanted to keep on dancing. You see? It was very nice.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

MRS. KAPLAN: But never again, my dear. Never, never again.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: That was a long time.

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] Sure. But anyway, it's very satisfying when you ask what I do at Columbia. It's very [inaudible] because I tell you why I do this because my experience going back to school with Professor Wittkower and all the other professors, at a time in my life when I might have been very downcast with—at a point when family matters were no longer the major concern in my life—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And going back to school just literally changed my life. When was that? I got my degree in '63, OAR [phonetic]. It was 15 years ago. And these last 15 years have been the best years of my life.

MR. CUMMINGS: Terrific, great.

MRS. KAPLAN: I've been enjoying myself. And I feel more alive and enjoying every minute of my life than I ever have before.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you about the council. Did they advise on other projects, or is it basically a fund-raising and support action?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, it's—no, because half the members of the council are professional people, also.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see. So they talk about curriculum and programs and [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, to a certain extent. At every meeting, I—yes. Things come up. But we only meet three times a year, so there's nothing of critical importance—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: —is run by the department head.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But certain questions do come up, of policy questions, not immediately—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, kind of overview—

MRS. KAPLAN: Overview, students, interesting—I would say not the most critical problems of the department. I wouldn't say they were art historical or educational or learning problems.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: But rather, how things might better be organized or problems in the library, for example, or problems of students smoking in the hallways, or things like that. Or other particular problems, how to handle a certain situation. And there's general discussion. There's all the people—most of the people on the council, other than the professionals, are in some way related to Columbia, either had a—were themselves involved or had connections or a son or a daughter or a cousin or a friend or somehow became interested in Columbia, per se. Or a friend brought another friend on who would be helpful at Columbia.

MR. CUMMINGS: How many years would people stay on it?

MRS. KAPLAN: They were elected to a three-year term.

MR. CUMMINGS: Three years. And then they can be reelected?

MRS. KAPLAN: And reelected.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it's undergoing a reevaluation. I think we're going to try to get more of the graduate students involved, so to have different categories and rethinking the whole council and how effective—whether it could not be more effective in terms of the lives of the students in the university, as well as later on.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Are there graduate students on it now or not?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, there was at one point, I believe, a period when two students, a girl and a boy, would be asked to—I don't know if they were members. They were asked to sit in.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: But as I remember the last year or two, they didn't do that. But we often invite the faculty to come in, other than members, to discuss.

MR. CUMMINGS: On specific things?

MRS. KAPLAN: On—and we usually like to focus on a thing, a talk. Meyer Schapiro, for example, the last meeting, came and gave a talk after dinner. It was brilliant. It was marvelous. And there were one or two other members of the faculty. Another time John Walsh from the Metropolitan, who is now up at Boston Museum [Boston Museum of Fine Arts].

MR. CUMMINGS: Boston, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: A former graduate of the department came and gave a lecture with slides on the particular—on the conservation problem at the Met that they have. Things like that. So it's very interesting. The people who talk to us are professionals in their area and in some way connected with Columbia. We have a couple of trustees of Columbia University on the board.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do people get picked for that committee? Is it from the members suggesting people they know?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And one person resigns, and the department heads would think, "Well, so-and-so has been interested in Columbia." Or perhaps they should be invited—a former student—generally somewhere, somehow related to Columbia.

MR. CUMMINGS: At some point.

MRS. KAPLAN: And a graduate. And usually, a graduate of Columbia.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Or related to a graduate.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, how did this differ from the committee at the Institute of Fine Arts?

MRS. KAPLAN: No different; same thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's pretty much the same?

MRS. KAPLAN: Pretty much the same.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I'm a member of that. I went there. I'm on the council there as well.

MR. CUMMINGS: Don't you find that a competing interest?

MRS. KAPLAN: It certainly does compete

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I would say I have more opportunity to be active at Columbia.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: Than I was.

MR. CUMMINGS: How would you explain that?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, not really, I don't know. Somehow—now I'm devoted to the Institute. I like them both.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. But why more active at Columbia?

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't know why.

MR. CUMMINGS: Just the people or the activities?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. I guess being chairman, I had to be more active.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. You're just a member at the Institute.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah, I'm just a member. And if I don't go, it goes on just as well without me.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] But you were up on the fine arts commission in the city [Art Commission of the City of New York]?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. That was a different thing, yes. But that was for the chairman for three years.

MR. CUMMINGS: For three years.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then reelection, again, for six years. That was fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. What did you do?

MRS. KAPLAN: Not too much. Make decisions. No, I wouldn't say that.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: That is a different thing. The Fine Arts Association elects members—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, they—

[Simultaneous conversation]

MRS. KAPLAN: Typically, no.

MR. CUMMINGS: The mayor will pick.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And, you know, you have a representative—you have an architect, an artist, a painter, a muralist—

MR. CUMMINGS: Layman.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. There are three laymen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I was one of the three. And we just had a very interesting meeting. The graduates or the former members of the council have a [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, that little association.

MRS. KAPLAN: A little association. Once a year there's a dinner. And we meet at the Knickerbocker Club, and this year I persuaded Ada Louise to be the speaker [Ada Louise (Landman) Huxtable, architecture critic and writer]. They called me and said—Robert—I don't know his name. But anyway, I was asked to speak to Ada Louise and invite her to come and talk to the council. Here are these—it's really very funny. Please don't quote me.

Here is this council, all gray haired people sitting around, all these oldies. It's funny. Very distinguished club like a cartoon right out of *The New Yorker*, really funny.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: But Ada Louise is there. She said she'd love to come. She'd never been to such a meeting. She was curious.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, she'd never been to one?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, not to this kind of thing, all these old—

MR. CUMMINGS: All the old members. Oh, that's terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: And she enjoyed herself very much. So that's right. I was on that. It was fun because it was interesting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. And that's the one that passes on landmark buildings?

MRS. KAPLAN: On landmark—

MR. CUMMINGS: And works of art that go into [inaudible]?

MRS. KAPLAN: Works of art that —it passes on all works of art paid by the city, not by any other organization.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Only city, and usually in connection with new buildings going up, school buildings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because, you know, based on that one-and-a-half percent of the total cost of the building is set aside for works of art—hospitals, what kind of painting?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Now, how effective do you think that is? So-so?

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: It's moderately successful, I would say.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Only moderately successful, not because the council couldn't cope with it, but the nature of the material that's presented to it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's the thing, because I'm on the nominating committee for the [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Ah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And I'm very interested in people who have been on it and their experience.

MRS. KAPLAN: I see. Well, it's very interesting. And we met—at this last meeting, as a matter of fact, that very subject came up, how better to use the facilities, or what other way could works of art of merit be chosen?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because if it's up to the architect, to choose the artist, and you see, without—with due respect to the architects—and my son is an architect—I have found that architects, the best ones, know a great deal about architecture, but very often are not as visually receptive to works of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: They're very competitive.

MRS. KAPLAN: And very competitive.

MR. CUMMINGS: I remember a famous architect with his cane, beating on a coffee table, looking at the Mac Hetter [phonetic], a piece of sculpture, saying, "If you put that in front of my building, it will fall down."

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, this little tiny sculpture; it was a 30-story building.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, that's typical. We found that, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: And very often, an artist—an architect doesn't even know whom to choose as an artist. He has the ability—I mean, the availability of choosing someone.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It could be a friend. Or they don't have that kind of—well, a visual perception.

MR. CUMMINGS: A group of artists that seems to promote themselves to architects for public things.

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And sometimes we've had—we've had some good things, some very good. The piece down there, the Tony Rosenfeld piece in front of the police building is a very nice piece of contemporary art. And just off the top of my head, I mention that. And there are quite a few others that were very good. I don't want to be unfair. But there was an awful lot of stuff that we just—on several occasions, we just turned it down. We present another. And so, in a way, it's a rather superficial way of choosing.

MR. CUMMINGS: You can't really make suggestions to them, can you?

MRS. KAPLAN: Not really, except to say no, give us another.

MR. CUMMINGS: Another chance.

MRS. KAPLAN: Another version, or make it bigger. It's too big or too large. I personally think it's not a very satisfactory way of choosing works of art, permanent works of art for the city in New York. I would think a competition among artists presented to the city in some form or another.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I mean, applying for a competition. And to present something, and that those who don't win to get some compensation for the effort and the cost.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Then you get the best artists and sculptors to present.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] don't like competition.

MRS. KAPLAN: But for them to spend a lot of the—well, not to spend a lot of time presenting something and then not being compensated for it, they won't do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. They don't want to do it. Yeah, that's true.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the average is not very high. The quality of things chosen is, in my opinion, not very high.

MR. CUMMINGS: I don't—

MRS. KAPLAN: But it was fun being on it. It's interesting to see the process.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's a cross section of New York, isn't it?

MRS. KAPLAN: Definitely.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Definitely. So I've been on that. It was several years ago, I've been on that.

MR. CUMMINGS: What about this other committee at the Cooper-Hewitt?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I was very active and instrumental in saving the Cooper-Hewitt. I haven't been very much involved in the last years. Because at that time—

MR. CUMMINGS: Was that before it moved uptown, right?

MRS. KAPLAN: Before it even was saved. And we formed a committee that was—oh, my goodness, I'd have to go all the way back—

MR. CUMMINGS: '68 or something.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, '68. That was—I was brought into that when word was leaked out that they were going to destroy the museum or sell it—

MR. CUMMINGS: They were going to sell it or something, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: You know, and that the Cooper Union was going to take over the art department and sell the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: The collection, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Disband it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I remember a group of friends. I know some of the people there and one or two other friends. As a matter of fact, the whole thing started at my house. We were still living in the private house. And we had a meeting at the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we formed a committee to save Cooper Union—to save the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Cooper Museum, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: At Cooper Union. It was not then called Cooper-Hewitt. It was the Museum at the Cooper Union, the Cooper Union Museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: We formed a committee, and we worked on that. And I was chairman of that committee, co-chairman with Henry—

MR. CUMMINGS: Hitchcock, wasn't it?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. [Inaudible]

MR. CUMMINGS: Henry Dupont.

MRS. KAPLAN: Henry Dupont. Yeah. So I was co-chairman. Now we put his name in it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I was co-chairman with Henry Dupont. But he didn't come to meetings very often, so in a sense, I was chair.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But we had a wonderful committee. And we worked hard to raise funds. It took about two years to find a location.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: Arthur Houghton—this is really quite interesting. Arthur Houghton was their chairman of the committee for the Cooper Union. And for the art departments—he was the head of some department. No, he was the head of the trustees. There was a small trustee, but he was president of the trustees.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: They were at that time very eager to dispose of the Cooper Union.

MR. CUMMINGS: The building?

MRS. KAPLAN: The building. And most of the drawings, or the Frederick—

MR. CUMMINGS: Church?

MRS. KAPLAN: Church, and a great many Winslow Homer, the big collection of —were going to the Metropolitan [Metropolitan Museum of Art].

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: And that he had hopes of becoming president of the Metropolitan Museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this committee was formed in outrage.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: And in effect, we succeeded. And after two years, and then this was all—came out. And then there were—what's his name?

MR. CUMMINGS: What?

MRS. KAPLAN: The museum director.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hoving?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, no, it was before Hoving.

MR. CUMMINGS: Roma.

MRS. KAPLAN: Roma, I'm sorry. It was all worked out very amicably with Roma and—not Hoving. I mean—

MR. CUMMINGS: Houghton [Laughter]

[Simultaneous conversation]

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, Houghton was elected president. Then there was a cooperation. Anyway, without going to all the boring details, this was—this extended over a two-year period. The committees were enlarged, and a lot of people. There was a great deal of publicity in the papers. I have a boxful of all the notices and everything that went on at that time.

And then they became quite helpful because then it was agreed that they would leave the collection intact, but we had to move out. And then that's what was formed. The committee was formed, and we tried to—then the search was on for a building.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And finally, we got—Columbia University was then in what is now the—in the old building, the Cooper—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, the social studies—

MRS. KAPLAN: The social studies program was ensconced there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And—

MR. CUMMINGS: In the Carnegie House.

MRS. KAPLAN: In the Carnegie House. And then as this was proceeding, they were about to move, get out, and go to Columbia into their new building, their new quarters up there.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see. Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so that just happened to work out. And we managed to raise enough money to ensure the security of the new museum, now to be called the Cooper-Hewitt, in honor of the two daughters.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, Hewitt?

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] Cooper.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so it became the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. And the collection was moved up there. And enough money had been raised to support it for a few years. And that's how it was established.

MR. CUMMINGS: But then it got involved with the Smithsonian [Smithsonian Institution].

MRS. KAPLAN: And then there were some difficulties. Harry Dupont, envisioning the future, then got the Smithsonian to support our efforts.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: And, oh, it was quite a bit of going back and forth, and it became the first—another museum under the auspices of the Smithsonian, and the only one in New York, of course, the [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And there was some—and it is still under the auspices. They don't help very much, though, the Smithsonian. And the Cooper-Hewitt still needs to raise money, like every other museum. But it's done a marvelous job and enlarged its membership. Lisa Taylor became president. And then the committee was disbanded once the museum was established.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did it have its own trustees?

MRS. KAPLAN: Everything. And I was a trustee for about five or six years subsequently. And then I got off the board. I'm no longer on the board, although I'm very much interested in the museum and a friend of the



museum. But I'm no longer active in it. But I must say—I've got to say for my own efforts, if it weren't for me, there would be no Cooper-Hewitt.

MR. CUMMINGS: What interested you? I mean, that really took a lot of time and effort.

MRS. KAPLAN: It did. Because I like very much being involved in a situation. I don't like committees, to be on committees and board meetings. But you have to be. I like to be involved with something in which I play—I use my own energies. I don't mean I want to be the head of something. But rather, I like to be involved in the situation where I can—

MR. CUMMINGS: Really do something.

MRS. KAPLAN: —do something, where the difference between my being there and not being there would be critical.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The same thing happened with the New School and all that.

MR. CUMMINGS: At the time, too [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes. I don't like to be involved where I just go to meet, to listen to the minutes and so forth. Unless I can play an active role in a situation, I don't want to be involved. I might be a member and be a good public citizen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But unless I can play and take a—

MR. CUMMINGS: Really do something.

MRS. KAPLAN: Be effective in a constructive and creative way and use my energies in that way—I like to solve—I'm a very good problem solver. I like to solve a problem. I mean, artistic problems. Or be involved in a situation where I can use my own—the equipment I have, my own talents. But just to be another name on a list—and I do it occasionally to please friends of mine—"Oh, please join," and they put my name on a list, but it's meaningless.

MR. CUMMINGS: But how did you interest people in Cooper-Hewitt or what became Cooper-Hewitt? Because it was a [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, yes, but we all went out and talked. And we pleaded, and we had meetings, and we had articles in the paper. And people joined. And then we raised money. We had events. And then we divided our—we had to raise \$200,000 for four years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Per year?

MRS. KAPLAN: Two hundred thousand dollars per year—

MR. CUMMINGS: For four years.

MRS. KAPLAN: For four years.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's a million dollars.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. Well, what we did, we wrote—we raised not quite that, but we got close to it. And what we did, we divided the efforts. And people went to foundations. We went to businesses. There were a lot of people involved with—teachers, designers, dress designers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, you use it all the time.

MRS. KAPLAN: The whole fashion business was behind us, you see. So they took care of that side. And then there was two or three of us who formed a little committee and had a committee that went to individuals for support, personal foundations, you see. It was divided, say, between the trade, the fashion trade, or the people who used the assets of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and then the general public.

And so we got pledges for that two-year period, three-year period, four-year period. And at the end of two years, we were in the position to become an independent institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's incredible. You really like to see results.

MRS. KAPLAN: I like to see results. I like to feel that—it's what I did for—if I'm going to be chairman of that for Wittkower, and when we did the—and I suggested the auction, then, by golly, are you going to make it succeed?

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: And I did. It's a challenge.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean, here I am a hausfrau, you know, a former student. What else? I'm not going to—I don't have a personal career in that I have a thing. I could have been a painter. Incidentally, I am a painter. You may not know that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, you told me.

MRS. KAPLAN: I did tell you. I could have done that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Cecilia Beaux.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I could do that. I had a family. I was involved in my family. Now everybody is off on their own. What am I going to do? Go around and have lunch every day and go to—I mean, what am I going to do?

MR. CUMMINGS: So boring—yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I'm very happy when I'm using my abilities. And it's usually for a cause in which I'm involved.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how would you—because you became a fellow of the Morgan Library [The Morgan Library and Museum, New York]. Now, that—

MRS. KAPLAN: No, that's, A, I became a fellow because I was asked to be. And I admire the Morgan Library. And it's another—it's all the same, really.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's the arts. It's the visual arts. Why does anyone ask someone to do something? Maybe through a friend or through a situation, and you meet people, and they say, "Wouldn't you become a member and support it?" Then I became a fellow, and then I was on the council. You know, one sort of passes to another.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] the activities covered such a wide range of visual material.

MRS. KAPLAN: It seems to be a wide range of material, but when you analyze it, it's the art world. And the art world consists of the visual arts, the literary arts, the decorative arts, all of which I'm interested in.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, the whole thing, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's all—in effect, they're all different, but they have a connecting link.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, you know, over the years you must have met an extraordinary range of people.

MRS. KAPLAN: I do know an awful lot of people, I must admit.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, how can you walk down the street without seeing people?

MRS. KAPLAN: As a matter of fact, a friend of mine was visiting with me one weekend from out of town. And we walked down. We said, "Well, let's go to some of the galleries." She was spending the weekend with me. We went down on a Saturday. What do you do on a Saturday?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: You go to the galleries if you're in New York. Otherwise, you're in the country. Anyway, I tell you. I must have met—some I stopped and talked with, some I said, "Hi," "Hello"—at least a dozen people.

Sometimes in the galleries or something, and sometimes on the street. And at the end we stopped for tea. She said, "I'm bewildered."

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] all the people you've met [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, people think that nobody in New York knows anyone else.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, I happen to know an awful lot, it's true.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: In different levels, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, another thing, too, my children—I know a lot of my children's friends and their relationship with other people. I'm involved with that. My husband knows a lot of people I don't know, but now I know them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So—

MR. CUMMINGS: Speaking of him, what about the fund? Are you involved with the Kaplan Fund?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes. The Kaplan Fund was founded by my husband 30 years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it was called something else?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. Always it was the J.M. Kaplan Fund, and still is.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but before that, wasn't there another name?

MRS. KAPLAN: No.

MR. CUMMINGS: Before then?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. No. There was the Welch Grape Juice Company that my husband was president of.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then after he got out of that, he was retired. Then I think the fund was founded then. No, it was always the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because I know that I went down to do some research, because I had questions about it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: And what fascinates me is the range of grants. Not only in size, but [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: It has because, you see, the members—it's a little bit different than a great many foundations, in that the trustees are all members. They're only family in that foundation. And first of all were the two older children, and then the next two that came on. There was a brother of my husband's onboard as a trustee, and a cousin. And the two lawyers involved with the fund were also involved in my husband's affairs. So that it was by and large—but only the family members had a voting power.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MRS. KAPLAN: So by and large, it was a small family foundation. And one of the advantages of such a situation is that we can meet frequently. We can make decisions quickly. We can be effective, where time is of the essence. And we can have long-range plans as well.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, in the early years, we did less than we did in sort of the middle years. My husband and I are still trustees, but we've now taken a back seat, and Joan is now president. I remain a vice president, but I'm not as active. And the children are much more active. And then we have done many very innovative things.

The fund really was instrumental with the help of the few other people in saving the New School, in which my husband was very much involved.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: He was a trustee. And through his strength and his imagination and energy and help of the fund, he was able to raise and get other monies and to save the school at a very critical point in its life. And he established, helped to established the New York City—what is it? What's the full title of it? City Affairs—the New School Department of City Affairs. It's an adjunct to the main school concerned mainly with the city affairs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Then another major thing was the West [inaudible] undertaking.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's the thing I was going to ask you about, because it was an immense adventure.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, unfortunately for the fund, it was a—well, Roger Stevens at that time, who was a friend of my husband, came to us and said they wanted to build, undertake this, and would we say—

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did the idea come from?

MRS. KAPLAN: From Roger Stevens.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, it was his idea?

MRS. KAPLAN: It was his idea for—he was then—what was it? He was the head of—

MR. CUMMINGS: The endowment?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, he was not with the endowment—yes, for [inaudible]. He was with the endowment for—interested in the arts.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this was to be a housing for artists.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the reason he came to us, because in a small way, we did the first artist housing meeting down on—I forget the street. It's in the Village. It was a small building, and it provided—let me see. And I'm not sure of my facts here. You could ask Joan about it if you'd be interested. She knows more about it than I do. But there were a small building, maybe four or five floors accommodating artists and their family and studio. And he remodeled; we did, the fund. We undertook to remodel this and rented out that space, that very—

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

MRS. KAPLAN: —reasonable housing for artists. And it was a nonprofit thing. Well, on the basis of that, Roger came to see my husband. And there was this marvelous building, you know, the building [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: The Bell Telephone.

MRS. KAPLAN: The Bell Telephone—available—had come up for sale. And it was Roger's idea to maybe turn that into a great building for artists. He came to Jack and suggested they might share, the government and the J.M. Kaplan Fund share in the cost of putting the building up. Halfway through—incidentally, my son was very involved in that, or partly that, but as the son of the donor, he couldn't—

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But he was the one who suggested Richard Meier [American architect], who was his best friend and associate.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: And Richard, of course, Richard Meier, made a great success. And that started him on his current career.

MR. CUMMINGS: Great career he's had.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it was very good. He did a marvelous job. But Dick couldn't do it. My son Richard couldn't do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was an arm's length deal.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, he couldn't be involved.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: But he did suggest Richard, and—Richard Meier, and it was great.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now, is the fund still involved with that?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. Then there was a very difficult period, because suddenly when the change of revenue, and Nixon came in, Roger was out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. That's right.

MRS. KAPLAN: The foundation—no more money for us. And the building was half finished. What do you do?

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you pick it up and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Either that or drop it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: So we all decided to finish it. And it was much, much more costly than you could have imagined, the funds they thought. But there were many things—we couldn't do other things with the funds, the money. It was terribly costly and difficult. We were not prepared to run a building.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, of that size.

MRS. KAPLAN: Of that size. Then when the building was finished and all that sort of thing, then we had several managers, which didn't quite work out. And then Joan came in. My husband thought it would be good if she took over with some of the personnel in there. It was the first time she had ever done anything like that. That was a little bit difficult. And there was always resentment because the donor—no matter what she did, and she did many good things, they were on the whole not good enough, and then she was the daughter of the donor. And you can imagine the psychological difficulties.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So one thing or another, finally, we turned it over to the tenants.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's a co-op now?

MRS. KAPLAN: It's a co-op now. And we're out of it, thank goodness. Have been out of it for some time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But what turned out—what started out as a great public [inaudible] turned to be a terrible headache. And the fund was unjustly accused at times for different things. But looking back—

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, because nobody came to support you after the endowment—

MRS. KAPLAN: No. We had to struggle with that. And what started out as a very good idea, which we heartily endorsed, turned out to be rather difficult for us in the end.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, there were so many people.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. And now I think it's become a co-op and, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. [Inaudible] clean anymore.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's too bad.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: It hasn't developed. But nevertheless, it became a prototype for other efforts.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, there are still lots of fantastic people there.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, now—yes, I understand it's better. And it's gotten better. I think the rents have gone up. It's not—it's no longer for poor artists anymore, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But Merce Cunningham [American dancer and choreographer] came in at that time, the first time, I had got the whole top floor a marvelous studio. And some of the other living quarters—some of the rooms were just wonderfully designed.

MR. CUMMINGS: Terrific, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So it's still a model for other people to follow.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you're glad it's gone off on its own?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, indeed.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] But you know, the thing that also interests me is, so many of the foundations—

MRS. KAPLAN: Incidentally, if you want to know more about that, you can talk to Joan. She can tell you more.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. Is that so many foundations seem to have much narrower interests.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, let me tell you this, in responding, you're absolutely correct. And we've come to that conclusion, because we found, at a given time, we all had our interests. We'd—you know, we did a lot of things. And then there were the Jewish charities that we supported for many years. My brother-in-law, who is not living anymore, who was very much involved and very close to my husband, wanted to—that was his main interest in life.

MR. CUMMINGS: He endowed a chair or something, didn't he?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. At NYU [New York University] [inaudible] downtown. And he was in the Medical Center, a medical chair at the hospital.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And they were devoted. My husband was devoted to him, an older brother. And so that we felt anything he wanted, he should have. His chair, his chair. And so that took a major part of the resources. And then there was another brother. So some of the things we did were on their behalf.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because it amazed me in going through the report at the Foundation Center that, you know, the grants would range from \$250 to—

MRS. KAPLAN: To \$200,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: —to \$100,000 to \$250,000.

MRS. KAPLAN: I think that was some of the medical things. And some of them were small. Now, we've cut that out to a great extent now. And we're reorganizing it even now. Well, sometimes, you know, you can do more with a quick gift of \$500 for a particular situation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Or \$1000, than if you have to sit and wait for the spring board meeting. In the meantime, that little dance group has died.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And \$1000 at a given point could make the difference between life and death.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Sometimes other people match it and all sorts of things.

MRS. KAPLAN: They match it, and we have done that very often—give the first grant, and then with that they go to the second, and they get what they want. However, we have in the last years, and particularly since Joan has taken over, and our imminent retirement, a reevaluation of what would we can do most effectively.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: What we have done, I think, more than any other—we are, relatively speaking, a small family foundation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well—

MRS. KAPLAN: In terms of, well, you know, a great—a large family. We're a middle-sized family.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, I would say middle-sized, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But what we have been able to do because it's confined to family members, is that we can use our imagination in a way that perhaps a larger board—

MR. CUMMINGS: Finds it difficult.

MRS. KAPLAN: —finds it difficult to do. Also, we can act quickly, where, say, \$10,000 in a particular situation can attract \$50,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you're all mostly right in New York City area, too.

MRS. KAPLAN: Mostly.

MR. CUMMINGS: So that you can—

MRS. KAPLAN: Or the—

MR. CUMMINGS: —quorum together and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, and do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, we as a family? Oh, yes, we're all here within walking blocks of each other.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] So it's no big problem to keep cutting in.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, we keep in touch regularly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. So we can have our formal annual meetings or biannual meeting, monthly meetings, and then we can have quick, small, little interim committee meetings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And another thing, what my husband did, which I think was innovative, we made possible up to a limit decision—a single decision. I mean, personal decisions—a small amount—personally that we could act on alone without consultation with other members.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Oh, that's good.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. So I mean, if somebody came to me and was pressed for a particular thing, I could—a book, to publish a book or something happening in the university or something, I could decide, all right. I will give my share of this up to—freedom to use \$5000 without—

MR. CUMMINGS: Total consultation.

MRS. KAPLAN: —consultation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So up to \$5000, we could act independently.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hm.

MRS. KAPLAN: So, you see, now sometimes \$1000 [inaudible], or two \$2500 could just change a person's life or direction or an institution.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, amazing, absolutely.

MRS. KAPLAN: You see. Or if it was important. So that's—those are some of the smaller amounts reflect that particular theory. Now, we have changed that again now. And we are simplifying the decision making and also limiting, reducing certain areas and committing ourselves now to three major categories. We are right now in that reevaluation where we're going.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because I know in '76 or something, there must have been grants to 100—

MRS. KAPLAN: A lot of them are very small.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but I mean, it's just different things.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes, different things all over the place.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, I mean [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, if you look at the list, a lot of them are many dance groups, music groups.

MR. CUMMINGS: Poetry.

MRS. KAPLAN: Poetry readings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And all the intellectual and study things that all of us are involved in, my children particularly. And so whatever small amount could make the difference, well, we came to—we rescued them from oblivion here and there. Or a special performances, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's always that little bit of money that seems to be the hardest.

MRS. KAPLAN: Of course.

MR. CUMMINGS: And then the big money will just come—I've never understood that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, the big money reflects a great deal of publicity. Furthermore, we feel that we can help more situations with it this way. However, in some ways, it's not even becoming practical now. In my own personal opinion—this has nothing to do with the foundation—I feel that some of the smaller little groups and everything, that it isn't a practical thing. They cannot survive. A larger group—most groups begin in a small way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But if there's not the potential for becoming effective, in some ways one ought not to even encourage them. I mean, Pap's Theater [phonetic], for example. We did a lot for that place. It started in a small way, but the potential was there. And evidence of its potential growth was clear very early on, you know. Other things? How many little groups flounder.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, a lot.

MRS. KAPLAN: But there again—

MR. CUMMINGS: But that's the survival game, too.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's a survival game. You can't do everything. You can't help everybody.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And now we are reducing the—into more controlled areas. Civic affairs, my husband is primarily involved in supporting worthy city affairs, the city in which we live. All of us are involved in the arts and the humanities.



MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's a major interest of ours. And the third category—I've forgotten—special.

MR. CUMMINGS: Charity?

MRS. KAPLAN: Special, yes, the charity remains, although that particular area has lessened somewhat, but it remains, the charity. But there is one group—we're leaving that open for very special and particular events that may arise.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Contingencies.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: In which we're all interested. So.

MR. CUMMINGS: Does that take much time? I mean, the involvement with the foundation?

MRS. KAPLAN: Not for me. It does for Joan. And one or two others. We're involved. But she and the director are the most closely involved. And she [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: It takes so much time reviewing those projects and talking to those people and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. Oh, it's a full-time —yes. We have a very good young woman, Suzanne Davis, who's [inaudible]. And they cull all the letters, and they go through and pick out those that will need approval by the full board. And if there's an urgent matter, we have a special meeting.

MR. CUMMINGS: As it comes along.

MRS. KAPLAN: And we have our regular meetings. But in between.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then we can act, and we are effective in small ways because we can act quickly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. And you see something happening.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. And we see something, and the decision making process is relatively simple.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay.

[End of Tape 3, Side B]

MR. CUMMINGS: Let me say it's side four. You know, all the things you say, I noticed you were also involved with saving Carnegie Hall.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's my husband.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that was him? That was him.

MRS. KAPLAN: If it weren't for him, there would be no Carnegie Hall. He's a remarkable man. And there are lots of things in New York that would not exist if it weren't for him. For his initial response and his ideas and his energy—but Carnegie Hall is a very interesting story, if you really want to know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Tell me.

MRS. KAPLAN: I was involved one night—I was involved with the Young Audiences, which is [inaudible].

{Simultaneous conversation.}

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. Very much involved at one time on the board. I'm not any longer. But at that time, it was a celebration, a board meeting, and a party. And we were celebrating it here in my home. And everybody—Isaac Stern [American violinist] was then on the board. But he had a concert that night at Carnegie Hall, and he couldn't come to the party. We were honoring our president, Fred Richmond, who is now a Congressman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: He was chairman of Young Audience then, and in his honor we had this party. So everybody had left, oh, 11:30—no, about 11:30, practically everybody was gone. One or two people were still there, Fred was still there, when the telephone rang. I answered, and it was Isaac Stern. He said, "Is everybody still there?" And I said, "Well, quite a few people are there. Come on up. We've still got lots of supper for you."

So he came up. And his wife, Vera, was then pregnant, very much pregnant. They came in the house. We lived in the other house—we lived in the house. And he came up after the concert, and we had drinks and talked. And Vera sat in one chair and fell asleep. And I was there, sitting and listening. And my husband and Isaac were talking about everything.

And suddenly Isaac said, "Jack, you know, maybe you can help us. The building Carnegie Hall is going to be sold." This was in January, you know. "The building will be sold in April. And we've been trying to raise money to save it. And I have a concert. I have to go to Europe. I've been working hard. We have so much," this, that, and the other thing. "And I don't know what to do anymore. Maybe you have some ideas. Maybe you can help us."

Well, Vera at that point—she had just fallen asleep. And it was then midnight. And Isaac and my husband talked and talked. And Jack said, "All right. I'll help you." Well, it must have been 2:00 o'clock when he went home, 2:00 o'clock in the morning, something like that. Jack got busy, got in touch with the builder who was to do it, persuaded him—oh, no. First what we did, we engaged a very dear friend of ours who was in some difficulties, financial difficulties. She is no longer alive. She died several years ago. But she was then going through, as I say, she was in some financial difficulties.

But Jack got in touch with her and said—explained the situation, "Would you like to be the secretary and take charge of this under my direction?" as a paid personnel for this new committee that was being formed. She did, and she was wonderful. She knew everybody in the music world.

We called a meeting within a few days. We called a meeting at our house. About 40 people appeared. And the whole point was to present this problem, that Jack had talked to the builders. They were going to tear it down, put up a big house.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And now I'm very hazy about just how that—the point was to help support—not only to get psychological support from the community, but to raise money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And this was committee, and the plan was to raise money, X dollars, and I've forgotten what the detail was. The important thing was—two things; A, to get permission to declare the—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, a landmark, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: —Carnegie Hall as a landmark and get support from the city and so forth and so on. And Jack went up to the mayor, to Bob Wagner [Robert F. Wagner, Jr., mayor of New York 1954-1965], whom he knew well. And anyway, to make a very long story short, in the end everybody—even the builder agreed to give up his—I think there was a compensation difficulty, to stop the plans, not to tear it down.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow.

MRS. KAPLAN: The thing was converted into a nonprofit situation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: A board of trustees was formed to support it. And the nature of Carnegie Hall turned around. It's a landmark. It's now a nonprofit institution. And it has survived. And Jack was on the board for quite awhile, and then he got off. And I was on the board. I'm still sort of on there. He's an honorary member still. Ray Rubidal [phonetic], who was the chairman of the fund at that time, Director of the JMK Fund, he became an active member of the board.

And we supported it with yearly contribution, as did others, but we did mainly, for quite awhile. And it's self-supporting now.

MR. CUMMINGS: It is. Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And that's the way it was saved. We all—I forget what year it was, but it was way back when Isaac came because he was hungry after the concert—came to our house. And—we often—Vera will point to the child that was born, I believe it was the youngest child, and say, "That's the child that I fell asleep with in your living room."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Oh, that's fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: And last year, they had the 80th anniversary. Was it the 80th? Eightieth anniversary, I forget.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. I know a celebration at Carnegie Hall at which there was a tribute made to Jack. And it is truly—without his energy—oh, yes. He did something. He went to the mayor, and also made it into a tax-exempt institution. I think they pay a dollar a year or something like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I lose track of all those technical details. But it was declared a landmark, no taxes, everything. We were able to go ahead and raise money to renovate the building.

MR. CUMMINGS: So then its own income from rentals really did support it.

MRS. KAPLAN: Did support it. And, also, contributions from the board. The board raises money for it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Still has to raise money.

MRS. KAPLAN: Still has to raise money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I don't go to the meetings too much, but the board seems to be successful. It's doing very well. And then Julius Bloom then became the artistic director. And he's done a marvelous job. And Fred Richmond was president of the board for a long time—still is, I think.

MR. CUMMINGS: Isn't it funny that the man who managed it there for something like eight years for Carnegie was a painter.

MRS. KAPLAN: Who is that?

MR. CUMMINGS: Michael Davies. He was a portrait painter.

MRS. KAPLAN: For goodness sakes. Isn't that funny?

MR. CUMMINGS: So the arts have helped the arts for a long time.

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] always.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But that's the kind of expertise, imagination, and gift that Jack had, his energy, and he knows what to do in a situation like that. And he has the daring and vision to—he saved quite a few institutions in the city because of his energy and getting other people to come and then help save it. And his own contribution, both physically, mentally, and financially. And so that's where some of our major grants have—we have saved, literally saved several institutions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's marvelous.

MRS. KAPLAN: It's gratifying.

MR. CUMMINGS: It makes you feel really a part of the city.

MRS. KAPLAN: But you see—yes, but you see that's because we can act quickly. He can act. He was able to act quickly in decision making situations, where if you had to go back to your board and wait for the next board meeting—

MR. CUMMINGS: To meet and [inaudible]. It can be gone.

MRS. KAPLAN: It can be gone. To that extent, I think we are perhaps unique in acting the way we do.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Now, I was going to ask you, which we have hardly talked about some of the pictures and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, here.

MR. CUMMINGS: —works of art. How are we doing on time?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes. Let's say another half-hour. Okay?

MR. CUMMINGS: That will be fine.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, what's that?

MR. CUMMINGS: You had talked about this painter's name. I've forgotten already.

MRS. KAPLAN: From the [inaudible] or the Harnett?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, the Harnett, and the other—the Ammi Phillips?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, the Ammi Phillips.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ammi Phillips.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yes. I garnered a reputation as a collector of folk art because of my Ammi Phillips.

MR. CUMMINGS: The one artist, yeah. Now, what about all the other things?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, suddenly, you know, that's another aspect of my life which really amuses me a little bit, because suddenly I'm known as a, quote, "collector."

MR. CUMMINGS: A collector, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: A name that I really don't like, because I've always had works of art around me, with me, some of them in the early years of our marriage, in the years with our children growing up, and my own painting. I had a houseful of early Kaplans that were stupendous.

[Laughter]

MR. CUMMINGS: A big collection.

MRS. KAPLAN: A big collection of early Kaplans from age seven to—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah [inaudible]. That's right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Because Joan and Betty, my second daughter, Elizabeth, is a very good painter. She's married to an artist—a very good painter. My son is an architect and also draws well. And Joan used to paint. I have a lot of her paintings.

MR. CUMMINGS: But I particularly wanted to ask you about the drawings, that you have a whole—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. So over the years, I was so involved in other aspects of art, always interested in the art. Even when I joined the AFA, I was—never very consciously bought paintings in a way of collecting. For one thing, I don't share this interest with Jack, with my husband. With few regrets—and he says it's too late now; I say it's never too late—it was always something that I did. And so that I never was seriously involved in—in buying paintings so much. I don't know. I did a little bit.

But when I went back to school, you see, in 1958–59, that I became more seriously involved with a particular artist, particular school. And it was then that I began to, for example, to buy things. For example, the first course—I think I mentioned it earlier—that when I—the first course in American painting that I took was with Barbara Novak.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And for the first time, I heard all about Luminism, which never heard the word.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, nineteenth century art, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: Nineteenth century art. And I never knew the artist Fitz Hugh Lane [American painter, 18-4-

1865], who I think is a great artist and extraordinary. And so one day, one weekend, I thought, "I'd love to own a painting by Fitz Hugh Lane," and I was fascinated by him. And I went looking at the galleries. And I went down to—and nobody—said, "Oh, no. He's rare. There aren't too many paintings." But then I went to this gallery. I won't mention the name. When we're off the air, I'll tell you why; it's funny.

And I went there, and they said no. But then I saw that Blakelock [Ralph Albert Blakelock, American painter, 1847-1919] sitting underneath and all. And I said, "My goodness, that [inaudible] is being cleaned." And he said, "This is a marvelous painting." I looked at it, and I thought it was marvelous. It was. It is. It's the best Blakelock considered by most experts, certainly one of two great Blakelocks. Anyway, I bought that.

And then I bought a few things. And little by little, out of each thing that I studied—when I studied about Asian art, I became interested in Asian art, and then I got that. And so, that. And then I fell in love with African art. I would have—I had a good deal, a great deal of it more, but my husband didn't like it too much. He's more—he wasn't attuned, somehow didn't like the cruder aspects of African art. So I didn't have that much. But I kept what you see here, the Benine bronzes and the few pieces I have, and I have some in the country. [Inaudible]

And I have a little of everything. Every time I—but I never felt in terms of collecting or having a point of view. And the diversity here primarily is what I happened to be studying at that particular point.

And then when I became—some of the paintings that I did want to buy, and I'll never forget the fact that I was able to buy—I had the opportunity of buying a fantastic Cezanne still life—now it's at Kansas City at the museum. And at that time I was not accustomed to the cost. And although I could well afford it, I thought, "My god. That's"—

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Today it would be—

MRS. KAPLAN: "I can't afford that." And I was never much involved with the cost of anything, so I didn't think—and my husband thought I must be out of my mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: And he regrets it as much as I do now. But then, you know, that's—

MR. CUMMINGS: It's sort of the whole thing.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's part of the whole thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Actually, it's the only regret I have. Of all the other things I could have had. Then I slowly began, instead of that, acquiring Old Master drawings and drawings of all kinds.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that evolve, though?

MRS. KAPLAN: Always out of the studies. First of all, I am an artist, although one of these days I am going—I've had training in art. I think I told you.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And one thing [inaudible]. I don't know about a painter, if I ever could have become a good painter. But I do know how to draw. I understand drawings, I love drawings. And someday I will draw again.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's good. Good.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I do—I did appreciate drawings, and I used to collect drawings.

MR. CUMMINGS: What started that, though, because you have so many out there?

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, that's only half of what I had. I've sold this group—when we moved from the old apartment, I got rid of the lesser ones, kept only the very best. But what brought that? Because—well, you didn't buy drawings. I don't know. I was interested in drawing.

MR. CUMMINGS: And they were available.

MRS. KAPLAN: They were available, and I was very much interested. Now, for example, all the Schiele drawings. Well, when I bought the first Schiele, when the first—nobody knew what I was talking about. They thought I was talking about a child Schiele when I talked of Schiele.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And I paid very little for those drawings, except for one, which I bought at auction, the one with the pink—

MR. CUMMINGS: The color, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: —the color in it. I bought it at auction about four years ago, five years ago. I had to pay a good deal of money.

MR. CUMMINGS: But that's because the first ones were \$300, you said.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's all. The first one I paid for was \$300. Then I never paid more than \$1500.

MR. CUMMINGS: Until you bought the—

MRS. KAPLAN: Until I bought the expensive one, which I had to pay thousands of dollars for. And now they're out of sight. And in the front, I find—and that's what happened with some of the other things I did. For example, you asked me about my Ammi Phillips. Well, no, I have a little reputation right at this moment being a folk art collector. I'm not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, we talked about that. Buy one, and—

MRS. KAPLAN: Yeah. Well, I told you. I told you the story about, I went to an auction because my friend was the chairman of the auction.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: "Please come and buy something."

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: So I did. I bought that one painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: For \$100. I love this story.

MRS. KAPLAN: For \$100, which is today considered one—and it's been published many times—under the grapevine. I'll tell you precisely, because it's interesting to see what happens when the things become fashionable.

The first one I bought was \$100. The second one, after the article about identifying this artist appeared—shortly thereafter, I bought a second one at the antique show for, I think, \$500. No. The second one, which I no longer have—I gave it to a museum—but it cost me \$300. The third one was at an auction at Park Gwinnett [phonetic]. I bought a pair, which just came back from Albany, which is excellent, but not one of the great ones of my collection. It's at the bottom of the heap of the seven, but a very excellent pair, but rather more conventional. I bought—they were listed as an early American paintings. And I bought them for \$1100. What is that, \$550 apiece?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: By then I had a set of three. When the big woman—mother and child came up at auction down at [inaudible] in the Village, and somebody told me about it and said, "Come down. They have some Ammi Phillips. You might be interested." I bought for \$1000—it's worth at least three more, four more zeroes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MRS. KAPLAN: It's been appraised for \$100,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

MRS. KAPLAN: In the meantime—well, I'll tell you the story about that. Now, we're finishing with Ammi Phillips.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I got that. So those were all my bargains. And the next very beautiful—it's the one of the young boy, the standing boy, which is related to the other one, and which a friend of mine told me was up in New York State, which I bought and subsequently put in an exhibition, Hilton Kramer [American art critic] saying that's a masterpiece, an American masterpiece.

There I had to pay considerably more. By then he was established.

MR. CUMMINGS: And were they \$10,000 or more?

MRS. KAPLAN: Twenty.

MR. CUMMINGS: Twenty? Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: A little bit more than 20. Now they, all of them have reached astronomical—you can hardly get a good Ammi Phillips for less than \$20,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: Even the bottom ones? They start there?

MRS. KAPLAN: The single ones are—at the last antique fair—it was a very nice portrait of a man, not great, but nice, that sold for \$12,000. But run of the mill, but nice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And others—I hear that others now are around—a single lady and a single man, a very good portrait, but again minor, rather unconventional, not typical, except for the one I got for \$500 at the—very typical, husband and wife. And the others are all individuals and unique in spirit and feeling. But they range about \$15,000 to \$20,000 for a pair.

MR. CUMMINGS: And then a major one really gets up into—

MRS. KAPLAN: Up into the—yeah. Of course, I've been accused now recently of setting the high prices.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] You just got there early.

MRS. KAPLAN: I just got there early. This is interesting—well, this is—

MR. CUMMINGS: What's that one called again?

MRS. KAPLAN: What?

MR. CUMMINGS: What's the title of that?

MRS. KAPLAN: That's [inaudible], this is the famous—a very well-known painting by a well-known early—

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: [Inaudible] We can go back. This is a painting by John Gustav. He was, before I saw him, an established early American artist from Massachusetts. And this had been in the Williamsburg—in the museum down at Williamsburg. And he was very well known. When I went to—I think I told you this. I'm not sure, but I think I told you this earlier, in the last meeting, how I went looking for a Peaceable Kingdom, and then I saw this.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, I didn't tell you this?

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, in one of my classes, I believe it was still in Barbara Novak's class or something, the Peaceable Kingdom came up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: I was intrigued by that. At that time, I hadn't seen any of them. So I thought, "Well, another Saturday jaunt." I went down to Knoedler's when it was still down on 52nd Street, because I was told they had a beautiful Peaceable Kingdom. I went there. And they said, "No, we sold that one. But there's a man, Martin" [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, Mr. Bradley?

MRS. KAPLAN: No, no, a dealer.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, a dealer. Anyway.

MRS. KAPLAN: A dealer. I'm afraid I can't think of his name. It's awful. But I have to tell you—wait a minute. Turn that off.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fine.

[Audio Break]

MRS. KAPLAN: "A dealer, Martin Grossman, up on Third Avenue. And he has lots of American paintings. He might have one. He does have one." And this is an amusing story. So I went up there, and I went into his shop and asked for it. He said, "No. I do have one, but it's at home." "Do you have any other pictures?" "Not here." But he had some in there. "Would you like to see that picture?" I said, "Very much, yes." A very nice gentleman. I said, "Yes, I'd like very much to see it." He said, "Well, I'll call my wife." This is about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. He said, "I'll call my wife, tell her we're coming. She'll make us some tea." So I said, "That's very nice. Yes."

MR. CUMMINGS: Terrific.

MRS. KAPLAN: So he closed the shop—called his wife, closed the shop, we got into a cab, went over to West 86th Street. And came in, we had some tea, very nice, charming little lady. And I looked around. And he had Harnett, and he had this painting, and he had lots of American paintings and a very nice Peaceable Kingdom.

Well, not as nice as some I had seen. But I looked around, and he wanted then an outrageous price. I couldn't believe it. Anyway, it didn't appeal to me. But I did see this painting. I said, "What about that painting, John Gustav?" "Oh, no," he said. "That's a masterpiece. I'm keeping that for my daughter." His daughter was younger. "For her college education. No, it's not for sale." [Inaudible]

So I left. We didn't—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: Nothing happened. About eight years later, I was living on 80th Street, still living in our house. I walked down 80th Street towards 79th Street, and I hear a voice suddenly, "Hello, Mrs. Kaplan." I turn around, there's Martin Grossman in front of the shop. "What are you doing up in this neighborhood?" He said, "Well, our building on Third Avenue was torn down. I had to move, and I moved over here." "Well, how are you?" "I'm fine. And you, Mr. Grossman? How are you?"

"Well, I have this shop. And of course, you have some paintings and things." He said, "Come in." And I said—oh, no. No, I didn't say that. He said, "Come in and look," and I said, "Don't you have any more paintings anymore?" He said, no, he had other trinkets—not too many. I said, "How about that girl at the piano? Do you still have that?" "Yes, I still have that." "Is it for sale?" And he said, "No, not really." He shook his head maybe. I said, "Well, do you think I could go and look at it again?" He said, "Sure, sure. Great. I'll call my wife."

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: He said, "Let me call my wife. Maybe she'll make us some tea." He called his wife, said, "All right. Let's go home." Closed the shop, took a cab, went over to the house. I walked in there, and I looked at that painting, and I said to myself, "By golly, I'm going to get that painting." I didn't know its history or anything. Well, and he said, "Well, I might be willing to sell it because my daughter is off to college. Things haven't been as good as I expected." And he told me the price. And I said, "Well, I'd have to tell my husband about it. And I'll let you know."

I come home, told Jack about it. Looking back, now it wasn't much at all. But at that time it seemed considerable. So he said, "Well, let me take care of this. Do you really want it?" I said, "I've never asked you for anything in the way of buying a picture that you didn't like or didn't want me to get. This time I want that painting."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: "All right. Let me talk to him." About that time, he had come around and didn't feel so strongly about painting. And he went over, made a deal, and cut the price a little bit, and I got the painting. And every time I meet Mr. Grossman, he says, "I should never have sold you that painting. I should never have sold you that painting." I don't know about the prices. I don't think you ought to put that down. But if you turned it off, I'll tell you exactly.

[Audio Break]

MRS. KAPLAN: Because Alfred Barr [first director of the Museum of Modern Art] saw this for the first time. He



said, "I know that painting. That's one of the great masterpieces of American art." And Tom would say that, too, and it's now insured for \$150,000. That was four years ago when I had all this—I don't know what it would be today. It was on exhibition at the Whitney. Do you remember it?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it's been published in [inaudible] and several other books.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's a marvelous painting.

MRS. KAPLAN: And it is a beautiful painting. It's this man, the artist, John Gustav's masterpiece as well. He's done another one, the father of this girl, with a son, a young brother, which is up in Boston, I believe, which is a comparable full-size figure and beautiful. But most of the others are waist-length portraits. So that's one of my great treasures.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: And everything is—I don't know, have you seen these things?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, sure.

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean, the other rooms?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KAPLAN: And all the other things came out of various studies and things. It reflected what I was interested in in any given moment. I had no goal.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was just sort of using knowledge you had gained?

MRS. KAPLAN: And I always have to fall in love. When I'm in love, and I love it, and it's a beautiful object, I've got to get it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And so little by little. And then I began with increasing knowledge and experience. I began to weed certain things out, particularly after we moved into this apartment, which was 10 years ago. There was the question of where to put everything, in the first place.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: And then I gave some things to the children. And then when we travel—for instance, most of the Pre-Columbian pieces, and we spend a great deal of time in South America. I used to live in—I met my husband in Cuba. And we had friends. And so then I got involved with that culture, too, and bought a few pieces.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: That's the way it grew.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you traded?

MRS. KAPLAN: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you had things that you've traded back and forth?

MRS. KAPLAN: A little—or get rid of.

MR. CUMMINGS: They don't last [inaudible]?

MRS. KAPLAN: They don't last. I fall out of love as easily as I fall in love.

[Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I mean with pictures I do.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MRS. KAPLAN: But around here, when I got the first of those Morandis, I bought—one of the first—the first

exhibition at World House many, many years ago—

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, 20 years ago.

MRS. KAPLAN: Twenty years ago, the first time I'd ever seen them. And I bought them. I'm only sorry I didn't buy more. I love them.

MR. CUMMINGS: They were \$1200 or something like that.

MRS. KAPLAN: Something like that. That's right. That's right, for the two of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Not any more.

MRS. KAPLAN: Not any more.

MR. CUMMINGS: It is amazing. You know, it's an interesting question talking about money. What do you think about the enormous increase in the prices of works of art?

MRS. KAPLAN: Crazy. I think two things. And I don't know. I'm not—you know, I don't have the Wall Street mentality. I don't think in that, although I understand it. But I think two things. There are more and more people competing for—

MR. CUMMINGS: Fewer and fewer—

MRS. KAPLAN: —fewer and fewer good objects, number one.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But number two, I think people are investing; that is, it's a tangible—

MR. CUMMINGS: Asset.

MRS. KAPLAN: —asset.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: They're buying silver that way. They're buying furniture. Look at the furniture sales, early American.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, unbelievable.

MRS. KAPLAN: Unbelievable. I'm interested—I had—in the country I have lots of early American things. But at that last—at the fair, I was absolutely astounded. There were Windsor chairs, eighteenth century Windsor chairs selling for \$1500–1800 apiece. And one or two rare ones, 1760 or something like that, with the original paint on, for \$2000. Now, I'm not exaggerating.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, you know [inaudible].

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, when I think back, I'm going to change my way of life in the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: I have eighteenth century Windsor chairs in the breakfast room. And my great big six-foot grandson will come there and lounge and break it. And a couple of them had to be restored. No more. I'm going to put them upstairs in a vault and buy contemporary copies for the breakfast room.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughter] Yeah, yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: But this is what's happening—it's only an example of what's happened.

MR. CUMMINGS: But I think also, people have gotten more interested in what—these—American life.

MRS. KAPLAN: American—very much interested in American art. I've just recently become a trustee of the American Folk Art Museum. And I'm interested in helping to present really good American folk art and get rid of the junk, of which there is—

MR. CUMMINGS: So much.

MRS. KAPLAN: —so much.

MR. CUMMINGS: But there always has to be that period of sorting stuff out.

MRS. KAPLAN: Exactly. And I think many of us are interested in really pulling out really the extraordinary gifted people who we don't know who they were.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, one observation is that you are collecting—has stemmed from scholarly interests rather than from knowing various other collectors or things like that.

MRS. KAPLAN: No. Extend—my—I love the milieu. That's why I never thought in terms of buying things that would increase. I mean, I was very stupid in some ways because I could have used my opportunity.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MRS. KAPLAN: But I didn't think like that, you know. I never thought in those terms. I had to like a piece. I had to really get involved with it as a work of art. It had to have that meaning for me. And if the price was high and I could afford it, I bought it. If I thought I couldn't afford it or made that mistake, I lost it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: And the opportunity, like you say—

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you have any favorite pieces amongst the ones—

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, now, that's a question like—

MR. CUMMINGS: Everybody asks you, right.

MRS. KAPLAN: No, not that everybody asks it. But it's like asking me, "Which is your favorite child?"

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's the proper answer.

MRS. KAPLAN: Well, it's true.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MRS. KAPLAN: I love them all. Otherwise—and when I fall out of love or if I find that it no longer—I trade it for something else.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. So it doesn't stay around and annoy you?

MRS. KAPLAN: No. There are no—I have no works of art in closets that I'm just putting aside. I either give them to my children or give them to auctions for institutions to sell, or I put them in the country. They're sort of cousins then, country cousins. And I enjoy them there. But they're not—because each one of these different categories, in their own category, is top quality. That's it.

Now, another thing, this staircase here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. You've already told me about that.

MRS. KAPLAN: I've told you?

MR. CUMMINGS: That's marvelous.

MRS. KAPLAN: Now, I can tell you there's a hardly a person in the house—I mean, knowledgeable people, art collectors, collectors, friends [inaudible] aren't intrigued by the thing. "Well, now, what is that? Tell me about that piece."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. What does it mean?

MRS. KAPLAN: Yes. "What is it?" Because I don't know. It's just a beautiful object. And artistically speaking, it's visionary. Did I tell you last time about the remark?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, the Giacometti or something. That's great. [Laughter]

MRS. KAPLAN: Is it or is it not Giacometti?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I loved that.

MRS. KAPLAN: I've made an enormous amount of mistakes of omission, things that I could have had and just didn't—well, I was either not in the mood, I wasn't collecting. I really was never—I had never gone out of my way to, with a vision, I'm going to get so-and-so-and-so. I go to the galleries or I go to exhibitions. Or I happen to be somewhere and find something. And I trip over an object, so to speak.

MR. CUMMINGS: And it just says something to you?

MRS. KAPLAN: And I react to it. And then I wonder why. And I've certainly made a lot of mistakes, but then I get rid of a lot of mistakes.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's the thing to do.

[End of Tape 4, Side A]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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