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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Gerald Nordland,
2004 May 25-26

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

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally-recorded interview with Gerald Nordland on May 25-26, 2004. The interview took place in Chicago, Illinois, and was conducted by Susan Larsen for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Gerald Nordland and Susan Larsen have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

MS. LARSEN: We'll begin this. Okay, we have to wait until -

MR. NORDLAND: Making a little noise.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Okay -

MR. NORDLAND: Not nearly as big as my Walkman.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. All right. I'm here with Gerald Nordland.

MR. NORDLAND: Should we put it like this?

MS. LARSEN: Sure, you're the important one. I'm here with Gerald Nordland - art historian, curator, critic, museum director - and we're in his home in - on Sheridan Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. It's May 25th, 2004. And interviewer is Susan Larsen.

So, good afternoon, Gerald.

MR. NORDLAND: Hi.

MS. LARSEN: Good to go. I'm going to be asking you some just basic questions about your life and about - and we'll proceed chronologically for a little while if that's okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Certainly.

MS. LARSEN: You were born in Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a big place. About -

MR. NORDLAND: I was born in Hollywood -

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: - near Sanborn Junction, where Santa Monica and Sunset come together. And my parents worked in the film business. My father was a printer, and he taught my mother how to be a printer. And she, subsequently, after his death, became a cutter, not a positive cutter, but -

MS. LARSEN: What does that mean?

MR. NORDLAND: Assembling a film, the final film, for presentation.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: She didn't get screen credit.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, she didn't?

MR. NORDLAND: It wasn't the editor, but it was a person that was doing the work that finally got to be okayed and became the film.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, and did she -

MR. NORDLAND: She worked for Columbia and then for Desilu, and he had worked for Warner Brothers.

MS. LARSEN: Oh. And when did your father pass away?

MR. NORDLAND: When I was 10.

MS. LARSEN: My goodness.

MR. NORDLAND: 1937.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, my goodness. And so did you then grow up in the kind of film industry milieu?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, my uncle lived in the valley, and he was a film credit editor for Paramount. And his wife was – did work similar to the work that my mother did. And they actually tied up and worked for Desilu when that was an important kind of facility that supported the whole industry in Hollywood.

MS. LARSEN: Did she work on “I Love Lucy”?

MR. NORDLAND: I think she did. And I think she worked on “Zorro” and all kinds of things, you know? But I don’t think there was any particular aesthetic involved with it. It was just a technological kind of responsibility. The lights had to be just right, and you mustn’t overexpose or underexpose, and keep everything very disciplined.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. And so you lived in Hollywood?

MR. NORDLAND: I lived at 4243 Virginia Avenue, which crosses Hoover, and then Vermont would be the west – the biggest north-south street near there. And it was a small house that my grandfather had built in the 1930s.

MS. LARSEN: So you –

MR. NORDLAND: – depths of the Depression.

MS. LARSEN: And you go way back then into Los Angeles?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: I went to Lockwood Street School and Thomas Starr King Junior High School and John Marshall High. And then I took two degrees at USC before I went to Yale.

MS. LARSEN: Now, was Thomas Hart King? Is that what –

MR. NORDLAND: Thomas Starr.

MS. LARSEN: Starr.

MR. NORDLAND: S-T-A-R-R. King.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, good. We’re sort of doing that for the transcriber.

MR. NORDLAND: Sure.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, so when you were in, say, junior high and high school, what were your enthusiasms?

MR. NORDLAND: Jazz. I played drums, string bass, and fooled around with cornet, which I never got to be adequate at. But I was acceptable on drums and string base. And I used the string bass from high school. I took some kind of band program. Theater. I wasn’t thinking at all about art. I was going to be a lawyer.

MS. LARSEN: Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: And when I went to USC, of course, I had a debate scholarship, and all my colleagues were planning on law. And it was only when I got into law school that I realized that I didn’t like lawyers –

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: – and I thought that the adversarial life would be unpleasant. And so I spent a lot of time in the LA County Museum, which was across the street then.

MS. LARSEN: Now –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, the LA County Museum of History, Science, and Art was across Exposition Boulevard. And I went – instead of having lunch, I went over there to look at things anyway. So I got to know most of the

curators, and –

MS. LARSEN: How old were you then?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I entered college when I was 17, and I graduated when I was – I graduated from law school in '50 when I would have been 22 going on 23.

MS. LARSEN: And you went to USC Law School?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Aha. And since we both have a background at USC, I just wanted to ask you what USC was like at that time? What, if any – did you take any art classes at USC?

MR. NORDLAND: No.

MS. LARSEN: No?

MR. NORDLAND: No, I took poli-sci and the requirements, you know? And –

MS. LARSEN: Did you live at home or did you –

MR. NORDLAND: I lived at home until my grandmother died, and then the house was sold. And then I lived on campus, a block or so from Fraternity Row, in a – what had been a living room of a place, but two of us shared this as a bedroom and had our desks and our rather limited wardrobes. I still had a set of drums and a record player.

MS. LARSEN: Was SC – was it a serious, serious school? A party school? Or what kind of a place was it?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I don't know that I'm really a good person to comment on it, because I was living a very monastic life. I didn't – I was not a member of the fraternity group. I was usually working as well as studying and going to classes, and I thought somehow that I would either get a PhD. in poli-sci or go to law school, and as I got closer to law school I had more reservations, but I finally made the leap. I was deciding not to go toward the PhD. And –

MS. LARSEN: Did you take a degree in law?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: You did?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: A JD, 1950. And, as I say, I spent a lot of time in the museum, and I found the museum people were very encouraging, and so –

MS. LARSEN: And who was there?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, James Byrnes was the first curator of contemporary – or 20th century art I guess it was called in those days. There was a woman – I think it was Nauman – who was an educator there. And she had been a junior high school teacher of mine, too. Francis Nauman I believe was her name. And there were a variety of people. There were people in prints. And at the time I knew their names, but I can't dredge them up right now [Ebria Feinblatt, Print curator and Henry Trubner, Oriental art].

MS. LARSEN: Did you go – did you just introduce yourself and go back into the offices, or did you just happen to meet them or –

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I don't know how it was that Dr. [William] Valentiner gave me his book on modern sculpture, but he did. And he said, "I want you to bring this back."

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: And I did. And, of course, that was where I first encountered Brancusi, which was a pretty wonderful thing for somebody to introduce you to. And I started going to galleries and seeing what was going on, and there were a lot of galleries. I was – in law school, I had – I was also doing some teaching. I was a TA in poli-sci and American history. Those were sophomore requirements.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And so I – those were big classes, and you had to have discussion groups, and so I led those discussion groups and made up – helped to make up tests. I didn't make up all the tests myself.

MS. LARSEN: But you helped to grade them I bet.

MR. NORDLAND: But – well, they were done – they were multiple-choice tests. And – but you had to do, you know, 400 questions to get 200 good ones. So we would do that. And as a result of that, I had colleagues, and some of them had cars. And as a result of that, I was able to get around and see what was going on in the galleries. I encountered Gaston Lachaise at a gallery in Beverly Hills.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: Might not have been Beverly Hills exactly. It was on – off of Little Santa Monica toward Beverly Hills. It might have been just on the edge of it, or it might have been just on the outskirts of Beverly Hills, but it was a big gallery that had a New York outlet. It was a New York gallery, but they had now a California outlet. I think it was called the AAA [Associated American Artists]. And a man named Frank Perls was operating it. P-E-R-L-S.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And he had the *Floating Woman* – the small *Floating Woman*, 1922-24. And that was quite a revelation to me. I just found that very perplexing, and so I may have spent more time in the art library than I did in the law library at USC. And I found that there was a monograph that had been in done in '33 [1935] by Lincoln Kirstein at the Museum of Modern Art. And I found in an *Art News* that Kirstein was planning a book and he was doing a show at Knoedler. I think it was in '48, and I was in law school in '48. And there were some remarkable reproductions, including the *Striding Woman*, 1926, a wonderful, wonderful, powerful sculpture. And so I began corresponding with Lincoln Kirstein, saying, "When is this book coming out?"

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: After two or three years he said: "You know, I'm falling out of love with him; I think you should do it. I've got another project." And it was later that I discovered that his other project was Elie Nadelman. Of course he did have work to do. I mean, he had been the founder of the ballet program that we now refer to as the City Center Ballet or the – then the Lincoln Center Ballet. It's not named after him. It's Abraham Lincoln.

MS. LARSEN: Did he also write for *The New Yorker* and other things like that?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he was an inveterate writer. I have a bibliography of his. It's a sizable book, and it's just a bibliography. But he wrote for the *Dance Index*. He founded a dance magazine. He wrote about the neo-romantics. He wrote about some of the surrealists. He wrote about Tchelitchev for the Museum of Modern Art. He did the Nadelman show for the Museum of Modern Art. He did the draft catalogue raisonné on Elie Nadelman for Eakins Press. And he did the catalogue for the Whitney Museum Nadelman show, not as good as Barbara's, though, show – recent show, which was just right.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's great.

MR. NORDLAND: It's something to be able to do a show that's compact and still touches all the bases, which she certainly did.

MS. LARSEN: So, when he said this to you, that you should pick up the Gaston Lachaise project, what did you think about that?

MR. NORDLAND: I took a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad and saved some money and put new tires on a '38 Ford and headed toward New Haven.

MS. LARSEN: Gosh.

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.] That took a little while.

MS. LARSEN: Now, you were going to Yale?

MR. NORDLAND: It took me about nine months to put together enough money to be able to do that comfortably and get rid of my apartment, and my wife and I headed out toward New Haven.

MS. LARSEN: And that was to attend Yale?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, that was to use the Sterling Library's rare book room where the Lachaise material had been deposited by Madame Lachaise, Isabel, who was still alive. And my first thing was, of course, to call on her. My second thing was to call on Lincoln, and Lincoln put me in touch with Donald Gallup, who was the head of the rare book program and who later became the librarian of Rare Books at Yale. And I was a resident there for two years.

MS. LARSEN: Gosh, now, were you – did you have this arrangement when you – before you left, or did that evolve as you came?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, Lincoln helped a great deal. His word with Don Gallup carried gold weight.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, and so at that point – you did this out of love and enthusiasm and excitement. Did you think it would lead to a career? Was that the –

MR. NORDLAND: No. I didn't know what it would do. I just felt it was something that was worth doing, and I didn't think of being a lawyer or – I didn't think about going back to the idea of being a political science professor was – I'd already had seven years of university, and I did come upon some quite wonderful people at Yale, and I discovered in their lecture programs that there were all kinds of ways of looking at life that I hadn't seen at USC. SC was basically a Harvard-type case method law school. Yale was very much more sociologically oriented, very much more concerned with the objectives of public policy.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. So the lectures you attended were in political sciences?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, no, they were much more in art –

MS. LARSEN: More in art.

MR. NORDLAND: – but they were – it would be dependent on who was there that day. I –

MS. LARSEN: Who was there? Do you remember any of the people there?

MR. NORDLAND: [George Heard] Hamilton was on the faculty, and he was very interested in Dada and surrealism. And, of course, the Yale collection's greatest strength is the Societe Anonyme, which was founded by Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray. Now, Man Ray had been a friend, and I had a couple of Man Rays with me in my –

MS. LARSEN: You did?

MR. NORDLAND: – '38 Ford.

MS. LARSEN: You met him in Los Angeles?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes, he lived the Second War in Los Angeles, and I owned five Man Rays.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And he had also encouraged me in this whole business, and of course he'd introduced me to Max [Ernst] and to Marcel [Duchamp] and to visiting firemen as visiting firemen showed up.

MS. LARSEN: Now, how did you meet Man Ray?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it was well known that he was around town. He showed at the Fraymart Gallery and he showed at a variety of other galleries. He had an exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum. It wasn't called the Pasadena Art Museum then. I think it had another name. But he had the Fraymart show on La Brea. And I got Josephine Kantor, who was Paul Kantor's wife and was really the brains or the eye of that combination, and Jo made a date for me to go to see Man Ray.

MS. LARSEN: Great.

MR. NORDLAND: And I kept doing that about every other week for a long time. It took me a little while to find a little bottle of scotch to take with me.

MS. LARSEN: Until you learned the ropes, huh? [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: But I was very taken by him. Then Bill [William Nelson] Copley was having a gallery on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. I have the catalogues. And he showed Man, Max, Magritte, Joseph Cornell –

MS. LARSEN: Magritte, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – maybe [Robert] Matta. And he was building a collection. I remember going to Copley's first show at a gallery called the Royer Gallery, which was really a bookshop. Royer – R-O-Y-E-R.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And years later I would talk to people like Herman Cherry or others in the New York school who had actually run the Royer Gallery for the bookstore.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: Because it was just a –

MS. LARSEN: Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: It was kind of like a mezzanine up above the bookstore where you could have some works of art.

MS. LARSEN: It was like the coffee shops now.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, like a coffee shop

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Yes, right.

MR. NORDLAND: Exactly. Exactly. Yes. And –

MS. LARSEN: Interesting. Well, that's heavy-duty exposure to real artists. I mean, that's very intense stuff.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, there was also a gallery called the Modern Institute of Art, and it was on the same street as Copley – Bill Copley's gallery. And people like Vincent Price and the [Walter and Louise] Arensbergs and Ruth Maitland – distinguished names among private collectors – [Wright S.] Ludington from –

MS. LARSEN: Santa Barbara?

MR. NORDLAND: – Santa Barbara. Movie stars. Big names. Edward G. Robinson. I mentioned Vincent.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I can't think of all of them now, but people lent things to this, and a fellow named Ross – there was one director – a German-speaking PhD – and then [Kenneth] Ross was the second director. And it – I don't think it lasted two years.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: I have a catalogue or two. They did shows that were, in a sense, anthologies of European modernism, maybe with an American picture or two. Maybe somebody like [Arthur] Dove, maybe [Marsden] Hartley would get included along with Picasso, [Georges] Braque, Juan Gris. The Germans were mostly excluded, though occasionally there'd be a Paul Klee or two. But I mean, the real expressionists, the Kirchners and the Heckels and the Muellers, wouldn't have been included.

MS. LARSEN: Did sculptures –

MR. NORDLAND: And no sculpture.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, no sculpture?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, no German sculpture. We didn't know Germans did sculpture in those days, though God knows there was Lehmbruck, wasn't there? Anyway, there were some very good shows there that were very illuminating. And to have Bill Copley doing Joseph Cornell or [Rene] Magritte or Ernst or Man Ray or the various things he did – and that wasn't very long either. I don't think it was more than nine months that he was in business. But it was sensational. And he made a pledge that he would buy a couple of pictures – or he would sell a couple of pictures, and, of course, as he didn't sell them, he had to buy them. And he was buying them for 1947-1948 prices.

MS. LARSEN: Well, that collection – a bunch of it – ended up in Los Angeles collections and then ended up in the museums. So I think of the Magritte of the woman cut into parts. I know Edwin Janss bought that. I don't know, you know, how many hands had it before him.

MR. NORDLAND: I think he got it from Iolas in New York. But there was a great Picasso crying woman, a Dora

Marr kind of, you know, crying woman, that was – that – of Bill's that went to the County, and I think the Magritte went to the county – a cutout figure with various apertures in the torso. And I think there's at least one more from Bill's holdings that somehow got there. He was an adventurous guy.

MS. LARSEN: Good connoisseur.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, really.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. And, of course, he was beginning to paint, and that's why he did the Royer show. And I didn't take it very seriously, but I was very impressed with his girlfriend.

MS. LARSEN: Who was that?

MR. NORDLAND: Gloria de Herrera.

MS. LARSEN: Aha.

MR. NORDLAND: Who ultimately did work for Matisse and – in the cutouts and whatever. And Jimmy [James] Byrnes has made a kind of a archive of her work, which I think there was some talk about it going to the Getty, but I don't know whether anything happened about that or not. But I do see Jim. We're always – we don't talk on the phone every day, but we – when I was out there for the Woelffer show, I saw him. And when I was out there for my talk on Ynez Johnston at the Norton Simon the other day, why, I saw them a couple of times – once in the evening of the talk and then once the next day in Torrance with Connor Everts and his wife.

MS. LARSEN: Where does Mr. Byrnes live now?

MR. NORDLAND: He lives on – oh, my – that famous drive that has been memorialized by the British artist Hockney.

MS. LARSEN: Sunset?

MR. NORDLAND: No, no, no.

MS. LARSEN: Mulholland?

MR. NORDLAND: Mulholland Drive.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: It's also got a movie title in it.

MS. LARSEN: Sure, sure.

MR. NORDLAND: He lives up there in a [Richard] Neutra building that I think he sold his Rothko to buy.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, well, art for art, you know?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I don't know. I think I'd rather have the Rothko. A beautiful painting. He got it from Mark.

MS. LARSEN: Where did it go? A private collection or you don't know?

MR. NORDLAND: I think so.

MS. LARSEN: Not to a museum, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: I think so, yes.

MS. LARSEN: So two years working on Lachaise, and –

MR. NORDLAND: And then I got drafted into the US Army. So I got in a 1951 Ford now, which I bought from somebody – I'd met a Cuban at a writers' conference at Storrs, Connecticut. And I bought this car from him, and we had a decent, safe car to drive to LA to get drafted. And we went through the South and my first visit to New Orleans, and I didn't say that – in that '38 Ford – that I stopped off in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in September 1951 to spend an evening with Richard and Phyllis Diebenkorn.

MS. LARSEN: Now, how had you first met him?

MR. NORDLAND: I met him at, I think, an exhibition at the LA County Museum of Art. I think it was the centennial exhibition in 1949 that was put together by James Byrnes, and there was a party afterwards at Mary Stoddard's in Pacific Palisades or Santa Monica. And we had our first meeting in the kitchen there, and -

MS. LARSEN: And you had some exposure to his work or a lot?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I knew his work already.

MS. LARSEN: By that time you did? Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I knew his work already. Paul and Jo Kantor had shown a couple of his pictures around. There had been a picture in the 1948 annual that Paul and Jo bought and eventually gave to the Pasadena Art Museum, now the Norton Simon Museum of Art, in Pasadena. And it was a wonderful '48 picture by Dick that - it was a kind of a definition of abstract expressionism. You know the picture?

MS. LARSEN: I think so.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. And so I knew that picture. And then in '49 he exhibited a picture called *Miller 22* [1951], which was an Albuquerque picture, I believe. Now, he didn't go to Albuquerque until January of '50.

MS. LARSEN: Had he been there for an interview?

MR. NORDLAND: Could be. This picture - we didn't move pictures around in those days the way we do now. This was a pretty good-sized picture, much larger than this one, and horizontal. I have a catalogue where they reproduced that. If it isn't reproduced, at least it's listed as *Miller 22*. I'm confusing things. The '49 show was another show. The '51 show at *Miller 22*, because he did that picture in the spring of '51 as he was coming up to the period of graduating with his master's degree in June of 1951. That's when *Miller* was done.

MS. LARSEN: What does "Miller" refer to? Do you know?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't. I never asked him.

MS. LARSEN: Okay. Who knows? [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I mean, you did your share of interviews with him, and aren't there an incredible number of obvious questions -

MS. LARSEN: Oh, sure.

MR. NORDLAND: - that didn't think to ask?

MS. LARSEN: Oh, absolutely. You bet.

MR. NORDLAND: I must have spent 100 days with him, and I mean grilling him.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. He wasn't easy to grill though, was he?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, well, you know, I'll tell you another thing. He never let me use a tape recorder.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: But he'd let you use them.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I don't know why.

MR. NORDLAND: He forbade it.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh. Well, I'll tell you the story of that first interview when we're off the tape. You know -

MR. NORDLAND: Sure.

MS. LARSEN: - take time for -

MR. NORDLAND: Sure. Anyway, he had a picture in that '49 show that was a San Francisco or Sausalito picture. And I told him that I wanted to write about him, and I corresponded with him a little, and, of course, nothing came of it. I didn't have a publisher, and I didn't have a museum, and you know?

MS. LARSEN: You wanted to write at length about him? Is that what you meant or -

MR. NORDLAND: I wanted to do something to make him – make his work known and to interpret it for people. Anyway, nothing came of it. I had also – in subsequent years when I was working at the library, I talked with Frank Lobdell about it, too, and maybe with others, because I was very struck by the depth and seriousness of the San Francisco group and little knowing that I would eventually go to a San Francisco museum. In those days my objective was to go to a place like Santa Barbara.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: I thought that would be just heaven.

MS. LARSEN: Just heaven. Well, it's very nice there, yes. So we have you getting drafted.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And how long did that last and what did you see?

MR. NORDLAND: Two years.

MS. LARSEN: Did you go overseas?

MR. NORDLAND: The Korean War.

MS. LARSEN: Were you in Korea?

MR. NORDLAND: No.

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: No, I did have a law degree. I sold myself to the staff judge advocate, and I worked as his secretary for a few months, maybe a year, and then I –

MS. LARSEN: In California?

MR. NORDLAND: – then I – at Fort Ord.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And – near Monterey, California. And then I became a clerk of military justice and eventually become a sergeant. And I was out in two years, while the people that took – the people who were willing to take a commission were in a minimum of three and a half, four. And I was anxious to get back to my book. But then we – my wife and I – had a baby, and I had to do something else. I – while I was at Yale working on the Gaston Lachaise book, almost every weekend I was going somewhere – to Maine, to New York, to some place in Connecticut – to interview Carl Van Vechten or – let's see – Edward M.M. Warburg; Gilbert Seldes; [Philip] Goodwin, the man who designed the Museum of Modern Art; people who had been friends and collectors of Gaston Lachaise. And, of course, I spent time with Madame Lachaise in – both in Lexington and in Maine.

MS. LARSEN: Where – this is Lexington, New York?

MR. NORDLAND: Lexington, Massachusetts –

MS. LARSEN: Massachusetts, okay near Boston.

MR. NORDLAND: – where her son was in a government hospital there as a result of trauma he suffered in World War I.

MS. LARSEN: Where in Maine did she live?

MR. NORDLAND: She lived in Georgetown, Maine.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: Or near Georgetown, Maine. And she lived very close to the Zorachs.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: In fact, they – her first – she had had a place in Maine with her first husband, Nagel, and then she found this other place, and Lachaise bought it for her. And then I don't know whether you know this, but Lachaise gave [William] Zorach a set of carving tools.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: He was a watercolorist.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And sometimes an oil painter. But he was primarily a watercolorist. And Lachaise really inspired him to be a sculptor.

MS. LARSEN: Gosh, when was this? Probably – what – the teens, the '20s?

MR. NORDLAND: I would put it in the early '20s.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: I've never – I never asked – I never knew Lachaise, you know? He died in '33. I did know Madame Lachaise, and I lived in her house for a while. And, as I say, I visited her often. But while I was doing all of this, I was also working for Winchester Repeating Arms half – four hours a day, and I started out just doing menial work, putting 50 calibers into boxes and then crating them. And – they were machinegun loads for the Korean War. And then crating the boxes that would be rationed to each weapon. And the – one of the people in personnel who was involved with training asked to have an interview with me, and so I interviewed with him, and he found out that I had done college teaching, that I had a law degree – he knew that – that I had an undergraduate degree with poli-sci and government and economics. And he said, "How would you like to teach for me?" So I began doing industrial teaching for the development of supervisory skills and talents and procedures for Winchester. So I was four hours a day at the Winchester Repeating Arms. I was four hours a day, or maybe 5, I could squeeze out, at the Sterling Library. And then on the weekends I would go to do my interviews –

MS. LARSEN: Busy, busy.

MR. NORDLAND: – with these people. And I got drafted, and so that was all done. But as soon as I got back from each of these interviews I would transcribe my notes. And, as you know, if you transcribe your notes within a day or so, you can remember what you didn't write down –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – and you could fill in "blah, blah, blah, blahs" which otherwise two or three or four or five or 10 years later you wouldn't know what you'd said or what happened. So I had hundreds of pages of typed script with all the people that I visited with. And that was – when I finally got back to working on my Lachaise book, I had very good records, and most of these people were dead.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And you had a definitive collection material that could be gathered it sounds like.

MR. NORDLAND: That could no longer be gathered.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, right, right.

MR. NORDLAND: And I – because Gallup had given me a carrel in the Rare Book Room, had given me a typewriter, one of those awful, old typewriters that were so-called "silents." You know, they're quiet ones?

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: They're all muffled, but they're also – they have no –

MS. LARSEN: No snap –

MR. NORDLAND: Not like my wonderful Royal. But anyway I did the two years.

MS. LARSEN: Now, did you – you know, other people around you were studying art history and taking art history degrees. Did that ever – did they ever offer you something like that, or did that occur to you? Or had you figured you –

MR. NORDLAND: I was quite busy, you know? I didn't – if Hamilton were to do a lecture, I would certainly go to hear him, and I knew every work in the Societe Anonyme collection better than the curator did.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. And you already had an advanced degree, so maybe that didn't seem to be –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, a JD [juris doctor] is hardly equivalent for anything except to practice law, but,

no, I wasn't thinking about that. My present wife kicked me around the block most of our life together for not having gotten a terminal degree in my sphere, but I said, well, you know, what could I prove with a PhD? That I could do some original work?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, you already did.

MR. NORDLAND: I have done it. I've done it. I've got 75 publications that I'm proud of.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And some of them are quite substantial.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it's great. Right. Well, it always struck me as surprising that faculties would meet and huddle over resumes for artists, you know, and they would toss out anyone who didn't have an MA. And I thought to myself, well, de Kooning doesn't have an MA? And they wouldn't hire half the wonderful artists in the world because -

MR. NORDLAND: They wouldn't have hired Hans Hofmann -

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: - and they wouldn't have hired Josef Albers.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: And, you know, both of them made great schools.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, they did.

MR. NORDLAND: They built great schools.

MS. LARSEN: They defined their -

MR. NORDLAND: And they created curricula.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, they did. Sure.

MR. NORDLAND: And they changed the world.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, right, and it's curious, you know? School's are very curious in that way.

MR. NORDLAND: Did you know that Mr. Albers was the only professor at the Bauhaus who was a trained teacher?

MS. LARSEN: No, I didn't know that.

MR. NORDLAND: The only one. His father had said you can't make a living at art, you've got to make - you've got to get yourself a teaching credential.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: So he taught grammar school, he taught German, he taught everything, you know?

MS. LARSEN: He learned how to teach.

MR. NORDLAND: He did the whole thing. And when he went - when they asked him to come to the Bauhaus, and you know he went to the Bauhaus to make glass, stained glass -

MS. LARSEN: Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: - abstract stained glass, very quickly, you know, the powers that be - Kandinsky and Klee and all of these people - were saying, "[Johannes] Itten has to go" -

MS. LARSEN: Itten, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: "Do you think we could do it with Eupie [Josef Albers]?" And so they brainwashed Eupie to become their teacher. And look what he did.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Look what he did.

MS. LARSEN: Then he went on to Yale and –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, or he came to Black Mountain.

MS. LARSEN: That's true.

MR. NORDLAND: He founded a whole college curriculum.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's right.

MR. NORDLAND: Remember?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's true.

MR. NORDLAND: He was something. He was really something. And, you know, I know that a lot of people considered him arrogant and a lot of people thought he was, you know, so dictatorial, and if you took his class, he didn't want you doing homework for other teachers; he wanted you doing homework for him. And if it wasn't right, he wanted you to go back and start over. But he was trying to teach something, and he knew you taught yourself best. So, anyway, he was magnificent. He was a great, great man and a powerful influence. His students are so loyal.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, they are, almost to a fault sometimes. Yes, they –

MR. NORDLAND: We're not going to talk about [Neil] Welliver.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. [Laughs.] He lives near me. I see him all the time.

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: He is a very interesting guy. Okay –

MR. NORDLAND: Do you know about Clarke & Way?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: The publishers, printers?

MS. LARSEN: W-E-Y –

MR. NORDLAND: W-A-Y and Clarke with an E and Way, New York City.

MS. LARSEN: No, no.

MR. NORDLAND: Or those people at Ives and Sillman?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, they were students of his that formed a printing shop.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And Clarke & Way did wonderful printing for me when I was at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art and published my Albers book, and wonderful typesetting and, you know, hot type, old-fashioned. And [Norman] Ives and [Sewell] Sillman did these original silkscreens, and the kids in the class tipped them in – one yellow, one green, one red.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes. Elegant. Yes, hard to come by.

MR. NORDLAND: An edition of 1,000, except that about 90 of them were ruined. So it's even a smaller edition.

MS. LARSEN: You don't see that anymore.

MR. NORDLAND: No, you've got to have people that really – you know, they have this real devotion and they want to see it done right and they know you don't have any money and we're putting it together with just sweat and –

MS. LARSEN: Sweat and love.

MR. NORDLAND: – and love. And so they did their part, volunteered.

MS. LARSEN: That’s what makes things special like that, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. It creates morale.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it creates art too. It creates great things. Okay, so I was – in my questions, I was wondering were you drafted, and you were. And so then you were discharged, and about what date was that?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, the end of June 1955.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, then was it back to Los Angeles?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, I was at Fort Ord, and down to LA. And I think my wife was pregnant again. And I got a job with the Civil Service Commission as an industrial trainer from the experience at –

MS. LARSEN: New England Harbor – Winchester, I’m sorry –

MR. NORDLAND: – at Winchester. And I had been corresponding with Kirstein, Madame Lachaise, all kinds of people – Charles Egan, Betty Parsons, Sam Kootz. I had bought my Motherwell my first day in New York. I bought three Diebenkorns on that evening in Albuquerque. I told him what – “I want to buy that painting; if I get to New Haven, I’ll write to you and we’ll set that aside and I’ll get it.” And I did.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: It took about a year to pay off these things, you know, because –

MS. LARSEN: This was the Albuquerque –

MR. NORDLAND: *Albuquerque Number Three*, 1951.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: While I was at Yale, Paul and Jo Kantor formed a gallery on Beverly Drive. Beverly Drive? I believe – I think it’s Beverly Drive.

MS. LARSEN: Was it Beverly Boulevard?

MR. NORDLAND: Maybe it’s Beverly Boulevard.

MS. LARSEN: I think it is.

MR. NORDLAND: Okay, Beverly Boulevard. It doesn’t sound quite right.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Ynez Johnston opened the gallery with her show. She did a mosaic for the front to be in the cement. The people that installed it broke it, ruined it. She made a quick ceramic substitute, which was installed and is still there. The second show, I think, was a Diebenkorn show. This was the cover – this was the folder that announced the show. I didn’t have possession of it. He had moved it from Albuquerque to LA with his other pictures, and they chose it for the cover. They thought it was the most distinctive work and it would be the best reproduction. I have a copy of it. In the army I would be writing back and forth to Jo. She was a really good friend, the greatest personal friend of Ynez. And, for example, out of the first de Kooning show at Egan –

MS. LARSEN: The black and white show?

MR. NORDLAND: – she wanted to buy the whole show.

MS. LARSEN: Smart.

MR. NORDLAND: Only one picture sold to Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd of Philadelphia. See, Kantor didn’t have this nerve. She had the nerve. She said “This is – this guy is great.” Anyway, she took one of my – this was McCarthy days. I was being investigated by the CIA because I had associated with all kinds of radicals as a kid on campus, and –

MS. LARSEN: You had all these French friends and all this other stuff –

MR. NORDLAND: I had some friends who were, I guess, possibly members of the Communist Party, but – I didn’t know that, but I was – I subscribed to the Socialist Labor Party newspaper. I was a student of poli-sci. I was trying

to find out what was happening. And I went to meetings, and I attended things. And I was photographed, and I saw the pictures.

MS. LARSEN: Who showed you the pictures?

MR. NORDLAND: The CIA.

MS. LARSEN: They –

MR. NORDLAND: I was being investigated.

MS. LARSEN: They came to you?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, man, I went back to the judge advocate, and I said, “Colonel Turman, I may get discharged; I may get thrown out.” He says, “Don’t be silly; we’re not going to let anything like that happen.” I was worried.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But as it all worked out, it was McCarthy days as you know, and there were hearings on radio and television. I didn’t have a television, but I heard them. In the office of the staff judge advocate I heard generals being humiliated by Joe McCarthy in New Jersey.

MS. LARSEN: Just hearing the voice you knew what the content was, even just the tone of voice, you know? Terrible.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I wrote to Jo about things like this, you know? And I did – I told her about going to the San Francisco Museum of Art and seeing these shows, and I explained to her why these people were all communists and radicals and this, that, and the other thing. And it was all in high-spirited foolishness. And she showed my letters to Gifford Phillips, and as soon as I was in LA, he said he’d like to have an interview with me. And we sat in a car outside of the Paul Kantor Gallery on Beverly Boulevard.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And he said, “How would you like to try to write a few things for me?”

MS. LARSEN: Cool.

MR. NORDLAND: Monthly articles on, you know, what’s going on in LA. And I did that for 10 years.

MS. LARSEN: And what was the publication?

MR. NORDLAND: *Frontier Magazine*.

MS. LARSEN: *Frontier Magazine*, and what – since I’m not –

MR. NORDLAND: Published in Westwood.

MS. LARSEN: Okay. And was it a general cultural magazine?

MR. NORDLAND: It was the *West Coast New Republic*.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Not *The Nation*.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, right.

MR. NORDLAND: The *New Republic*.

MS. LARSEN: Right. And who else wrote for *Frontier*?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, let’s see. Giff did. Do you know who Giff is? Gifford Phillips?

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He’s a, you know, famous collector.

MS. LARSEN: I know him as a collector, yes. Mm-hmm, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And he's a member of the board of the Museum of Modern Art.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: I think he's emeritus now, but he doesn't do a lot of work.

MS. LARSEN: I think I went to his house.

MR. NORDLAND: He gave them a de Kooning. He gave them a de Kooning of 1948. He gave a Diebenkorn, which they don't use. He's given them a lot of nice things. He's on the board of the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. I think his wife is on the board of SITE Santa Fe. They have a house in Santa Fe. They have a house in Palm Springs or Palm Desert or - I don't know. One of those places.

MS. LARSEN: Artists always spoke very fondly of him, of his very high level of intelligence about art.

MR. NORDLAND: Very intelligent. Very modest. Very straight. No haggling. If the price is there, if that's the price, then you either pay it or you don't pay it. No adjustments. And they've been extremely liberal about giving things to museums, to the county, to Albuquerque, to Santa Fe, to Colorado Springs. He was born in Colorado. And he's in the same family, of course, as Laughlin Phillips -

MS. LARSEN: Oh, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: - and - who is his cousin, and Duncan, who was his uncle.

MS. LARSEN: So that was a - so there you suddenly - I'll ask, but I think I know the answer. Did this provide a living?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, no.

MS. LARSEN: No? Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: No, no. No, no. I was, as I say, at the Civil Service Commission. I was teaching night school.

MS. LARSEN: Where?

MR. NORDLAND: At LA Trade Tech.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And I was - and then I was writing - every Saturday was in the galleries and every Sunday I was writing and preparing - and then I went to the public library and continued the same thing.

MS. LARSEN: No, I'm not understanding. What did you do at the public library?

MR. NORDLAND: I was personnel officer for the LA County Public Library.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Because I had all the knowledge that goes with the Civil Service Commission itself. Actually Rick Brown tried to get me to be personnel officer for the LA County Museum, but his board wouldn't let me, even I didn't have enough experience they thought.

MS. LARSEN: Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: But Rick did.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, mm-hmm, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Anyway, then I went Los Angeles County Public Library for about three years. And then I went - then I was invited by - oh, my - the director of the Chouinard Art Institute to come down. Mitchell A. Wilder - who had been the director at Colorado Springs and went to Colonial Williamsburg. Then he came to Chouinard. And he went from Chouinard to the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, where he died.

MS. LARSEN: After a long time or very shortly thereafter?

MR. NORDLAND: Ten years, 12 years, something like that.

MS. LARSEN: You know, Chouinard is a very famous place that many people have on their resume. Can you tell

me what the purpose of Chouinard was as you understood it?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it wasn't a fine arts school

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: It taught drawing and painting, but they were as tools to be used by illustrators, fashion designers. In the war years, in the - well, not in the war years, but in the years after World War II, we had such a magnificent crop of young people, mature young people, who were ready to take on the world and felt that they lost three, four, or five years in getting to this point. Their sense of possibilities were kind of unlimited, and in those - in that period, why, I would say that maybe 25 percent of our people turned out to be professional artists.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: They were successful.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Now, some of them were in advertising. Some of them were in illustration. Now, illustration doesn't exist anymore. Some of them were - for example, we didn't teach photography. We taught etching, but we didn't teach anything else.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: When I came in there, I said we're going to teach wood block, we're going to do monotype, we're going to wood block, we're going to etching, we're going to do -

MS. LARSEN: Silkscreen?

MR. NORDLAND: - we're going to lithography, and we're going to do silkscreen, we're going to do the whole thing because all of these are techniques that artists need. And it isn't just fine artists; it's commercial artists have to do it too. And then I built in photography.

MS. LARSEN: Look at Andy Warhol, who had a sort of recipe there for silkscreen and photography and - now, it was founded - was it Ivan Chouinard?

MR. NORDLAND: No.

MS. LARSEN: No?

MR. NORDLAND: It was - her name was - gawd, she broke practically every bone in her body while I knew her [Nelbert Chouinard].

MS. LARSEN: I can look it up.

MR. NORDLAND: I can't think -

MS. LARSEN: It's okay. I can look it up.

MR. NORDLAND: I can't think of her first name.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: There's a book called *The Selling Out of Chouinard*, which Dick [Richards] Ruben was very fond of. It was written by a guy named Perine - P-E-R-I-N-E. I can give you the exact title [*Chouinard: An Art Vision Betrayed, The Story of the Chouinard Art Institute 1921-1972, 1985*].

MS. LARSEN: Okay. So was it really -

MR. NORDLAND: If not -

MS. LARSEN: You know, there have been a number of notable art schools in Los Angeles that have a certain kind of a spirit that less - that's sort of unfettered, and they've flourished for a certain amount of years. Were you there at a time when this was a very dynamic place?

MR. NORDLAND: It was a very hot school. We had people like Dick Ruben, and we had Bob Irwin and Don Graham.

MS. LARSEN: Was Ken Price there as well? No, that was Otis -

MR. NORDLAND: Ken went to USC, and then he went to the wonderful school in Upstate New York where Bob Turner is.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Alfred [New York College of Ceramics University, Alfred, New York].

MS. LARSEN: Yes, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: [Stepping away from microphone.] This is a Bob Turner. I did his first great museum show at Milwaukee, and I did [Richard] DeVore's first great show at [Milwaukee] - I did Voulkos show, but my Voulkos show was sculptured bronze. It was at SFMA.

MS. LARSEN: Right, right.

MR. NORDLAND: This is probably the wrong order.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's okay. This happens, you know? Loopy like -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Okay, so you were -

MR. NORDLAND: I was only there four years.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, were you the director or where you the program director?

MR. NORDLAND: I was dean and director, yes.

MS. LARSEN: You were dean and director, okay, so you were in charge - were you in charge of curriculum and faculty and fundraising as well?

MR. NORDLAND: Ultimately, but Mr. Disney handled my fundraising.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, so -

MR. NORDLAND: He picked up - we usually ran around \$100,000-\$110,000, my deficit at the end of the year.

MS. LARSEN: Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: And he was quite disturbed when I decided to leave. But it was only - it was a stage for me. I was - I thought I wanted to be in a museum. And I got my opportunity in Washington.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Now, this is not a - I've seen this in your resume. I should ask you, though, before - a couple of things. When you were writing for Frontier, did you write about the Ferus Gallery?

MR. NORDLAND: I probably did more than anybody.

MS. LARSEN: And what was that like? Was that one of many in your esteem? Or was it -

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it was one of the classic galleries in the city at the time, and you noticed when we were going down the hallway I couldn't remember where this guy's show or that guy's show - Oscar Mayer was the name of the antique dealer from whom I got the Cypriot pot and from whom I got a Proto-Corinthian pot -

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A.]

MR. NORDLAND: - which I gave to my assistant in Washington, who just died. And then I jumped to Ray Lewis, who was a very good print dealer in Frisco, who I bought my Kirchner from. Another wonderful dealer [Ralph Altman] did primitive art on La Cienega near Melrose. I think he's memorialized in the Ethnographic Museum at UCLA, where his wife worked there after he died. But that's the fellow who - probably closed about '75 - that you wouldn't have had a chance to know.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, right, that I wouldn't - yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Emerson bought a lot of good things from him. Emerson got a New Ireland piece that is, you know -

MS. LARSEN: Magical, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, top museum quality. He paid a lot of money for it, but – I mean, in those days it was a lot of money.

MS. LARSEN: And then there was Landau –

MR. NORDLAND: Altman. Altman.

MS. LARSEN: Aha! Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Ralph Altman – A-L-T-M-A-N. I don't remember the name of his wife. Quite a pretty woman, brunette. She went to the Ethnographic Museum and handled things. Now, how do they call that museum now? It has a name.

MS. LARSEN: I don't remember. Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: I don't remember.

MR. NORDLAND: I think it begins with a "K." I can't –

MS. LARSEN: It's a nice – it's a great place. So there was like the Landau Gallery.

MR. NORDLAND: The Landau Gallery was a pretty good gallery. And he got better and better. He asked me who were the great sculptors, and I said, well, the great sculptors are – there are just three of them, Americans. There's Lachaise. There's Nadelman. And there's Nakian. And he made a lot of money on all three of them. He would learn.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Paul Kantor had a good gallery. Frank Perls had a very good gallery. Frank Perls was already showing [Jean] Dubuffet, and he was showing Giacometti, and he was showing – well, of course, he always showed Picasso. He was getting the new prints, you know, the new wood cuts. That was a very exciting moment. Paul was starting out with Kirchner. Well, he started out – I told him about Weyhe [Weyhe Gallery and Book Shop] on Lexington Avenue. I said there's a Solander box there with Gorky. He went and bought the whole box.

MS. LARSEN: Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: Dove.

MS. LARSEN: And so in all of this mix – from my perspective –

MR. NORDLAND: Then he moved into the Germans, and he was getting things from Germany. I don't know he did that. He was very – Jo pushed him on Diebenkorn, and then Diebenkorn pushed him to show [Elmer] Bischoff and [David] Park.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: Now, he only showed each once.

MS. LARSEN: Really? Hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: He didn't really cotton to that. And he didn't cotton to Diebenkorn's figurative period.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, really?

MR. NORDLAND: He got rid of it.

MS. LARSEN: Happily, there were takers who were far better able to help him. So that's good.

MR. NORDLAND: There was Ellie Poindexter [Poindexter Gallery, New York City].

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And now –

MR. NORDLAND: And he stayed with Ellie for years, very loyal even though she didn't sell, even though she didn't know anything about pricing art, but she loved the art and she was loyal. He eventually went to

Marlborough.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And he left Marlborough as soon as he legally could. He had three shows, five years. And I wrote the first catalogue. Russell wrote the second one. The third one doesn't have a text.

MS. LARSEN: You could feel the weaning of the relationship that way, huh? So from my perspective, like the people in my generation who came along in the mid '70s into the '80s who were looking back on that time, a lot of the texts and accounts of it focus very heavily on Ferus.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, a lot of those are – I gave it a lot of credit. I treated it as an important aspect of what was going on, but there was a lot of not very good stuff there. It wasn't so clear. It was one thing when Ed Kienholz was running it. It was another thing when Irving [Blum] was running it. Blum was more involved with glitz and flash than he was with content, and he did bring a New York point of view. And that, of course, is why he went with Stella and why he went with –

MS. LARSEN: Warhol.

MR. NORDLAND: – with the Warhol things. Well, you know, the Warhol things had not been shown in the East, and then he bought the whole thing. And, of course, that was his retirement fund right there.

MS. LARSEN: But it also kind of put a period to the end of the – it kind of – the LA artists who were gaining a perch and who were exploring being out there as artists and exploring the community suddenly were upstaged by this tidal wave from New York, and I don't think they ever – I mean, they all struggled, I think, to find another perch, to find another time when they could address the audience in that continuous way they had before.

MR. NORDLAND: [Craig] Kauffman had been shown at Felix's [Landau]. And then he came over to Ferus. And Chico and he were buddies.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Dick Ruben knew everybody, and he was quite a bit older. He was born, I think, in '25, while Chico was probably born in '32, or something like that.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Maybe less. Maybe – because he was still in college when he was running the Syndell Studio. That's why the place was never open. I made appointments with him, and he never came. I never saw the Syndell Studio. I made appointments to do a favor for him. He never showed up.

MS. LARSEN: And he didn't show up.

MR. NORDLAND: He never showed up.

MS. LARSEN: Who is Chico?

MR. NORDLAND: Walter Hopps.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, okay. Right.

MR. NORDLAND: I wonder what happened to his wife.

MS. LARSEN: I don't know.

MR. NORDLAND: Did you know Shirley? She also married Blum –

MS. LARSEN: No, I didn't.

MR. NORDLAND: – later.

MS. LARSEN: No, I didn't know her.

MR. NORDLAND: She was the first Ph.D. from UCLA.

MS. LARSEN: Really? Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: Art history.

MS. LARSEN: No, I didn't know her.

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know what happened to her.

MS. LARSEN: When I came, the relationship between UCLA and USC was up, and there was very little discussion and there was frank – a very frank enmity. And I didn't even – I wandered into that not – you know, kind of not knowing.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And then I got busy and I didn't care.

MR. NORDLAND: Sure.

MS. LARSEN: You know? So it never was a big deal for me. But there wasn't a warm open door or collegial back-and-forth. It was strained. So – and I'm sure it was the creation of people before us, but we just knew that was there.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, there were some awful people at UCLA. [Jan] Stussy and [Gordon M.] Nunes were god-awful people. They got rid of Dick.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he told me about them, but I'd like to hear a little, whatever you wish to say, you know?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, whatever he said is right.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Whatever I say is –

MS. LARSEN: Well, he –

MR. NORDLAND: – is second-rate.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he was so discreet about it. He just said that he explained to them that his work was starting to sell well and there was a lot of demand for his pictures and the time in the studio was really precious. And he asked most respectfully to have a half-time appointment or a one-semester-a-year appointment or some kind of reduced appointment and retain his teaching. And he didn't lay it out for me, but I could pretty well figure that whatever they were paying him was pittance compared to what he was making as an artist. So some of these other people were so envious and so narrow-minded that they said, "No, no, you either show up and do the full load or forget it." And that's what he told me that I remember.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, they didn't have anything to say in the studio so they liked to sit around and drink coffee and –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – and philosophize and talk forever about who would be promoted and who wouldn't and this, that, and the other thing. And he just couldn't give it the time.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: He always said, with David Park, that a professional artist has to work every day. Every day, 365 days a year, unless it's a funeral or you're out of town or – you work every day. That's the way it is. Ulfert Wilke had a German phrase for it, and you may know it. But –

MS. LARSEN: I don't, no.

MR. NORDLAND: – the essence of it is "if you leave painting for a week, it leaves you for two."

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I've heard that. Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Dick always worked. Now, let's say on Sunday maybe he would not work as many hours, or let's say, if they were having a dinner party, he would cut it short a little and try to do a little something for Phyllis, but Phyllis really was very understanding that he had a vocation.

MS. LARSEN: Sure, sure.

MR. NORDLAND: A real vocation. And –

MS. LARSEN: And to be busy with all of the school's business, a faculty member at a big university is already a full-time job, and I remember, you know, just feeling that it made perfect sense to me that – but I think they probably felt he saw himself as above them or better than them. And, of course, he was.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, he was.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, so –

MR. NORDLAND: A damn sight better.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, but a long shot.

MR. NORDLAND: And, you know, they were – Nunes said that he would – said about my stewardship of the galleries that he'd rather not have a gallery on campus than have the kind of thing I was doing.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm. That's a typical thing that goes on with faculties and art galleries, though, isn't it?

MR. NORDLAND: He didn't think I should bring Houdon [J. A. Houdon 1741-1828], that it had no relevance to the 20th –

[AUDIO BREAK.]

MR. NORDLAND: We did what needed to do with the Washington Gallery of Modern Art?

MS. LARSEN: I think so, unless there's –

MR. NORDLAND: And –

MS. LARSEN: – something that you remember that we should – see when this starts, and – okay, I think we are moving along here now if I move this further over toward you. Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Okay.

MS. LARSEN: You're the important speaker. One thing we didn't talk about was CalArts, and that – I'm a little unsure where that fits in terms of –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, while I was serving as dean of Chouinard and before Mitch Wilder left to go to Ft. Worth to the Amon Carter, there was a Pasadena lady who was interested in music and the LA Conservatory who was speaking to Mitch and Walt Disney about the possibility of having something that would be parallel to Caltech that would be called CalArts, California Institute of Arts, and that it would involve the fine arts, the applied arts – music, dance, probably opera. And we began to collaborate and work together with the LA Conservatory, and we rented an Elks building which was down the street from Otis. And I employed my humanities staff, and you know, I hired them from Pomona College and USC and UCLA and Cal State University – Los Angeles. And –

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. That's nearby.

MR. NORDLAND: And I got my faculty like that. I had – for example, when we taught astronomy, we didn't do mathematics, but we had a man from the observatory come. And I tried to do things that were visual.

MS. LARSEN: Sounds great.

MR. NORDLAND: I had a botanist – a fabulous teacher, a fabulous teacher. And they were dissecting flowers, and they were taking plants apart, and they were learning the scientific method. They were getting what they needed, but they weren't taking physics or chemistry.

MS. LARSEN: Sounds terrific. Delightful. [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: And they didn't have any math, you know, because they couldn't handle that.

MS. LARSEN: Where do you sign up?

MR. NORDLAND: But we also had a department of industrial design. You see, we hadn't had one, so I brought in John Lautner, the architect, and a couple of very spiffy designers, and we had an annex down the street from Chouinard on the opposite side of the street. It was a kind of a warehouse. And I used to paint that thing three

times a year because, you know, artists are so rowdy.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: But in the basement of that I had the technical school, and I also had a requirement for – it was like a foundation course in handling materials. It was called Materials and Methods, and we had all the electric saws and sanders and everything that you could possibly want to have in the making of wooden and plastic and metal objects. And everybody had to take that in their freshman year, even if they were fashion designers.

MS. LARSEN: Oh. It probably helped in some way or another –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I kept saying you mustn't make a decision about what you're going to do until you know what the supermarket has in it. And until you've been through a couple of years here, you'll not going to know what your choices are. I mean, you can't make your choice in high school because you don't know anything about the world. Now, of course, some people say, "I'm going to be a fashion designer," and that's it. Or somebody says he's going to be a painter, and that's it. But if he finds out that there are other things, he may decide to branch. And –

MS. LARSEN: Sometimes you find out that the thing you might want to do you're not especially gifted at doing, but you do have a knack with something else.

MR. NORDLAND: I had taken a class – I taught modern art history, and I did a class one meeting a week – it was about an hour and a half – for graduating people. And it went all through the year, the senior year, and I would have, like, an accountant come in and we would talk about why does one need an accountant and what does one have to do if one's an artist and how to set up things in order to have a business-like kind of protection for yourself. And I had lawyers, art critics, curators. And I had one girl I brought in every year. She drove a rather fancy Mercedes-Benz convertible, and she lived in the Hollywood Hills, and she went to Europe twice a year, and she painted most of the time. But she also did about 20 to 30 swimsuits a year, and the swimsuits, of course, supported this lifestyle.

MS. LARSEN: She sewed them or designed them?

MR. NORDLAND: She designed them.

MS. LARSEN: She designed them.

MR. NORDLAND: She designed them, and she went to see what they were doing in France, what they were doing in Italy, and this and that. And she came back and did what she did, and she got them made up and she went back to her studio, parked her Mercedes very carefully. I always felt that she was real example for those kids, you know? But, as I said, I had about 30 guests a year. I didn't pay them anything. They all – they did it just to be – to give back to Chouinard. And I thought that was wonderful.

MS. LARSEN: Sounds great.

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, it gave them a sense of contact with the real world, and I had doctors come in and talk about the side-effects that come from breathing certain kinds of materials that are used in industry, because, you know, at that time there was an awful lot of playing around with synthetics and there were people that were going to hospital or even people dying. Do you remember a fellow named Robert Mallary [b. 1917]? M-A-L-L-A-R-Y

MS. LARSEN: Yes, uh-huh..

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he was a close friend of –

MS. LARSEN: Thiebaud.

MR. NORDLAND: – Elaine de Kooning's.

MS. LARSEN: Okay. And also Wayne Thiebaud.

MR. NORDLAND: I didn't know that.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, we talked at length about Robert Mallary.

MR. NORDLAND: I'll be darned. Well, he died from some kind of synthetic plastic material that he was using in the preservation of his sculptures and the making of his sculptures.

MS. LARSEN: Was this kind of period when Craig Kauffman and Larry Bell and –

MR. NORDLAND: It was a little bit before that.

MS. LARSEN: – all of those guys were doing that.

MR. NORDLAND: A little bit before that.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Because those kids were still in school.

MS. LARSEN: Right, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: But – I also – as often as anybody came to town, like Ray Parker was having a show at USC or he was having a show at Dwan Gallery, I had him do a talk. He didn't want to do a talk, and it was a burden, and I said, "I'll give you a wonderful lunch."

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: And Reinhardt did, and Reuben Nakian did. Mallery did. Larry Rivers did. Whoever was dropping by, I had them talk at lunch time. I put up a public address thing, you know? And in our atrium everybody would line inside and on the second floor, and they would get an idea of what was going on. On average I would have them about once a week.

MS. LARSEN: That's right. Now, this was at Chouinard?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: So as this CalArts idea was cooking –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, we – so the dean of the college – of the LA Conservatory and I and Nelbert Chouinard – I finally got a name, Nelbert – and Mitch Wilder and I think a representative of the Disney Corporation were the incorporators of CalArts. And this lady from Pasadena who had the concept of CalArts/Caltech, a great institution. And, of course, eventually Mr. Disney thought, "Well, you know, I can give this piece of property that's of no use to me up in Valencia, and I'll give them \$20 million." And –

MS. LARSEN: There it was.

MR. NORDLAND: There it was.

MS. LARSEN: Now, had you any – so, now, had you any interest in going to Valencia or being involved with that program?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, if I hadn't gotten the museum position I would have done it, but I – because I loved my years at Chouinard, and I – when I went out to the Disney concert hall, Los Angeles [Ghery Building] opening with – I was just inundated with – old kids, you know? They were all bearded and aged and all.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Nobuyuki Hadeishi and Jerry McMillan and Larry Bell and, you know, all these people. It was just – George Herms.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes. Yes, he's an old friend of mine.

MR. NORDLAND: It was very affectionate. They really treasure their experiences at Chouinard.

MS. LARSEN: Well, it always sounds, when people speak of it, as a place of true experimentation and a place that didn't feel stultifying, but felt invigorating and it –

MR. NORDLAND: It was fun.

MS. LARSEN: They look back on it as a – as you say, as a time that was productive and fun.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I stayed over with Connor and Judy – Connor, I had him come in – I think I told you that Dick Ruben had taught etching at the school.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And when he went to Pomona, I brought in Connor, and I said, now, I don't want you - because he was an etcher - "I don't want you to teach etching; I want you to teach the whole thing about the processes one uses, all of the processes."

MS. LARSEN: Now, Connor is Connor -

MR. NORDLAND: Connor Everts. E-V-E-R-T-S.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, yes, that's what I thought.

MR. NORDLAND: And so he not only created the curriculum; he built the studio. And he kept it so that etching thing down here would not etch the lithography stones down there. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: That's good.

MR. NORDLAND: You know? And he would start them out with monoprints - the whole idea of you're doing something here and putting it there and having it reversed. And then he would take them to woodcuts. And then he went all the way along until finally he was working with photo processes. And, of course, he really came to his fulfillment at Cranbrook [Academy of Art], where he was the master of printmaking there. And they had all the photo things. We started the etching thing before I'd brought Edmund Teske and a variety of people in to do photography.

MS. LARSEN: You brought in Teske to teach, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: What kind of teacher was he?

MR. NORDLAND: Very tender. Yes. And then Edmund didn't work out. Alexander Hovsepian took over for him.

MS. LARSEN: How do you spell Hovsepian?

MR. NORDLAND: H-O-V-S-E-P-I-A-N. I collect Armenians.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] There are a lot of them in LA.

MR. NORDLAND: There's Altoonian. There's Sarkisian. There's Nakian. There's Tchakalian. There's Hovsepian. God knows I've got more.

MS. LARSEN: There were a lot of Armenian people on the faculty and boards at USC.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes?

MS. LARSEN: Lots. In powerful positions. Especially when I first came there because I kept seeing all these "-ian" names. I thought what's that. Okay, so in 1966 you decided to move to San Francisco. How did that come about?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I - in '64 I went to Washington, and, as I said, after a little while, after a year or so when some of my shows were circulating in the country, why, I was invited to go to San Francisco, and it was very flattering. But I felt like I had unfinished work and I said no. But it didn't seem to impress my board that I had done this, and one of my board members said to me, "You know, we appreciate your thinking about us and your loyalty, but, you know, you have to think about yourself too, and that is one of the most important places in the country, and it's a great, honored institution, and, anyway, thanks, but ..." So when they came back and invited me again I went out and accepted.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Now, who did you - who was your predecessor there?

MR. NORDLAND: George Culler.

MS. LARSEN: And how do you spell his name?

MR. NORDLAND: C-U-L-L-E-R. And he went to the Philadelphia school. I always call it Philadelphia College. It was called The Museum College, and then it changed its name to Philadelphia College of Art. And I think it has changed its name again now. I did a show for them of Fred Sommer.

MS. LARSEN: For the San Francisco -

MR. NORDLAND: No, no. For the Philadelphia Museum School once.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And that's quite a famous essay. Metzger was – do you know that name? M-E-T-Z-G-E-R. Metzger? Was the head of photography at the school.

MS. LARSEN: Ray Metzger?

MR. NORDLAND: I think it's Ray Metzger. That's the name that comes to mind. Again, I never met him. I've seen his work, and we've corresponded. But I did my work entirely with Fred. So I – and I did take the show to San Francisco. I took my own show from Philadelphia. Yes, and I had –

MS. LARSEN: What year was that? What –

MR. NORDLAND: I had done a Fred Sommer show before that. I did one in Washington. Fred made a deposit of material at the Pasadena Art Museum with the idea that – he could refer people to them and they would make the loans and all and he wouldn't have to go through the ordeal of packing, crating, shipping, insuring, etc... by making a deposit there. Walter Hopps was at the Pasadena then, and the condition was that they would make a show. Well, Walter never got around to the show. So through Fred I approached Walter and said, "Why don't I do the show?" So I did the show in Washington, and then I sent it to Pasadena.

MS. LARSEN: Now, is this about '65-'66?

MR. NORDLAND: This would be in '65, '66, yes, something like that. Anyway, that was how they really justified having their collection, which – you know, because he had given it to them that they would do these things, and then they weren't doing these things. You know, he did a Jasper Johns show and there was no catalogue.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: He did a Marcel Duchamp show, and you know what he did? He cut up the Lebel book [Robert Lebel. *Marcel Duchamp*. New York: Grove Press, 1959] and reprinted it – as a collage.

MS. LARSEN: Wow. Without permission, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, maybe he got permission.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Oh, no.

MR. NORDLAND: What do I know?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that was weird.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Well, catalogues are daunting enterprises, and often people have no patience and no wish to work that hard.

MR. NORDLAND: That's what endures. It's because you're able to find this.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: You're able to find this – [picks up a catalogue] – with all its documentation, these pictures, these – you know, this is – boy, that's something. That's not –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, there he is at Tamarind.

MS. LARSEN: That's Emerson Woelffer.

MR. NORDLAND: There's his storage room.

MS. LARSEN: Sure. The show is just a memory in those who've – the eyes of those who've seen it without a catalogue.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, yes.

MS. LARSEN: And artists know that too.

MR. NORDLAND: And I use – well, as you see, I can find these things –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – if you give me a little time.

MS. LARSEN: Very well organized.

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.] No, I'm not.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, but you are.

MR. NORDLAND: I –

MS. LARSEN: Better organized than most of us. I can tell you that for sure. So by hiring you, they were hiring a native Californian. Had they ever had a native California director before who had a passion for the art of California?

MR. NORDLAND: You're talking about?

MS. LARSEN: San Francisco.

MR. NORDLAND: They had Grace Morley, who wasn't a native, but she was a very fabulously connected woman – connected to the Rockefellers; connected to the Museum of Modern Art, which is, of course, the Rockefellers. She was a scientist, you know? She wasn't a PhD. She had an honorary degree. But she was, I think, an earth science major in college, and – well, she was a brilliant woman.

MS. LARSEN: And she was director when?

MR. NORDLAND: She was director from '33 until George Culler replaced her, and she went to work for Jim Sweeney at the Guggenheim. And after 18 months or so she went to New Delhi to run one of the museums. And by the time she was through she was the Commissioner of museums for the state of India.

MS. LARSEN: Remarkable lady.

MR. NORDLAND: She said some very nice things. We met in Milwaukee at a AAM [American Association of Museums] thing, and she was very generous. She knew what was happening.

MS. LARSEN: She knew that you were –

MR. NORDLAND: She knew what was happening, and she was pleased that – because George really fell on his face. Imagine getting rid of "Slow Swirl," but he didn't know how to evaluate it. And Katharine Kuh was a con girl.

MS. LARSEN: Now, how did that – I mean, we're getting ahead of ourselves, but how did that happen? This is the Mark Rothko painting, *Slow Swirl by the Edge of the Sea* [1944].

MR. NORDLAND: "At."

MS. LARSEN: Oh, "At the Edge of the Sea."

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: It's a monumental, very important painting in terms –

MR. NORDLAND: Dick always related it to the *Bayeux Tapestry* [ca. 1077].

MS. LARSEN: Yes, and the whole San Francisco school of painters referred to that painting as well.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

MS. LARSEN: And how had it entered the collection and how did it leave?

MR. NORDLAND: I think it came from – I want to say Peggy Guggenheim. I have the catalogue, of course.

MS. LARSEN: But it was there – how long –

MR. NORDLAND: It was then when – I think it came in probably at the time of the Rothko show, probably around

'44.

MS. LARSEN: And it would have been just about brand new at that point.

MR. NORDLAND: And you know Gorky had a show at the museum. He and his – and Mougouch [Agnes Magruder Gorky] had come across the country, and on the way back they got married, I think in Nevada. And Bob Motherwell had a show.

MS. LARSEN: And what entered the collection out of all of that?

MR. NORDLAND: A Gorky was given by Jeanne Reynal. A Pollock – there was a Pollock show. A Pollock was given by – I think it was Peggy, too, I think it was an Albert Bender fund purchase. Nothing from Bob. The Gorky came afterwards. And then Bob Howard, gave a smaller oil on canvas, probably about – you know –

MS. LARSEN: Twenty inches or so?

MR. NORDLAND: Twelve by 18 or something, just not a – I always wanted – you know, I couldn't afford a real Gorky. What we had was a Picasso Gorky.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: It was a late, high-achieved Picasso Gorky – a fine picture, but it wasn't –

MS. LARSEN: It wasn't –

MR. NORDLAND: – the contribution that he made when – you know, it wasn't a picture like *Slow Swirl*. It wasn't even as – it was not quite as good as the Pollock, *Guardians of the Secret* [1943].

MS. LARSEN: Which is a wonderful painting.

MR. NORDLAND: Which is an important picture. But, again, it's not a drip picture, though it has a panel in the center that suggests where he's going.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, but it's a –

MR. NORDLAND: But he didn't know anymore than we do.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] But it's a picture of scale, and it's a very transitional picture –

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, important picture, more important than the Gorky. But we had the Rothko, the Pollock, the Gorky. I did a Motherwell show, and I bought a Motherwell for – as a memorial to a couple of trustees that died. And after I did the show, Bob gave me two big *Open's* [1968-72] – one brown, one blue –

MS. LARSEN: How nice.

MR. NORDLAND: – and 24 works on paper. Then he gave 24 to the Modern and 24 to the Met. And then I bought an etching collage, and I got 10 lithographs from the Spanish suite. They're like the drawings he did on the walls when he and Frankenthaler first married and went to Spain. And I think that was his first trip to Europe. Yes. She had been to Europe, but he hadn't. She was from a very wealthy family.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Well, that's really –

MR. NORDLAND: The name I said yesterday of the woman who was married to Julian Eisenstein – I got the name wrong. Her name is Lewisohn from Lewisohn Stadium in New York where the concerts used to be given. And her father was a demon collector, and those pictures that she had in her dining room were all from her father.

MS. LARSEN: Those were the Manets and –

MR. NORDLAND: Degas and, you know, just ordinary Vuilliard, Bonnard.

MS. LARSEN: Your ordinary home décor that we all –

MR. NORDLAND: Ordinary little things. Gawd, I was gauche, such a kid. I was 24 or something, I don't know. Well, I was – I mean, I was out of the army, but I was – let's say I was 30.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: But I was not worldly.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes. [Laughs.] Didn't know quite what to make of all this, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, it was just - it's so boggling. I mean -

MS. LARSEN: No, it is. It's shocking, because those things you see in a museum, you don't see that in a house.

MR. NORDLAND: Exactly, exactly. And -

MS. LARSEN: I've had that reaction too.

MR. NORDLAND: And she was - he was a genius, a cryogenic physics PhD, and she was a historian at George Washington University, also a PhD. How often do you find two PhDs in one family?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, especially at that time, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. Yes, now you do, don't you?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, well, more people have, you know -

MR. NORDLAND: My assistant, Eleanor Green, called Sue at WGMA [Washington Gallery of Modern Art] when I left for San Francisco, taught here and there and then got herself a PhD, and then she ran Maryland - the museum at the University of Maryland, which is, you know, just a step up the road. It's not like going very far. But we all lived in Maryland. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, I know. My boss lives in Maryland. [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, so, that was - her husband was secretary of the Air Force or something, and he was a Caltech PhD.

MS. LARSEN: Well, it takes -

MR. NORDLAND: It's rare.

MS. LARSEN: - a lot of your youth away. It really does. And, anyway, so when you walked in the door there -

MR. NORDLAND: In Frisco now?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, when you walked in the door there, what did you find in terms of the building?

MR. NORDLAND: Well -

MS. LARSEN: And what did you find in terms of the collection?

MR. NORDLAND: It was the same building that I haunted as a kid, that I had gone to all the time that I was in the army, that I had written these absurd tracts about the radical communist infiltration of the art world that had piqued the curiosity of my friend Gifford Phillips. And - because they so amused Josephine, she showed them to him, and he said, you know - anyway, I found that you had an entrance not on Van Ness but around the corner on Post Street. And you went in there like a side door and "Joe sent me."

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: And there was an elevator, and you went up in this little, tiny elevator. And when you got up there, you got into a bookstore that was kind of jammed and whatever. And then you turned left and the space went up 25 feet. I always thought those were wonderful spaces. They had floors that were plastic tile. And they had been checkerboard, but they were not checkerboard anymore. And then there was a kind of a chair rail around the room. And there was fabric on the walls.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: Where am I? And there was the great room. There was the vault room, the huge, long south gallery, a corner gallery, a great, expansive gallery similar to the first gallery at the end, and then a tiny end gallery. The space on the north side had been entirely devoted to classrooms and the so-called members room. And there was a little kitchenette, and there was a members room with - very dark, a few paintings on the wall, a few sculptures, and it was a place you could lounge around in I guess. Anyway -

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Was it a - since I don't know much of the building's history, was it a remade space that had been -

MR. NORDLAND: No. No, no, no. No.

MS. LARSEN: It was made to be an art museum?

MR. NORDLAND: They partly – the SFMA [San Francisco Museum of Art, now MoMA] paid for part of this in the building in the very early '30s. The architect was a man named Brown, who also did the building next door, the opera house, and the building across the street, the city hall. And the building was a war memorial, and the top floor –

MS. LARSEN: That's interesting –

MR. NORDLAND: – the top floor was the museum, and it was the San Francisco Museum of Art. And – but the veterans call the shots. The front door was veterans. The two big elevators were veterans. Everything was marble. And they had their exercises and, you know, whatever they – whatever Elks and Masons and veterans organizations do, why, they did them: their secret societies, their voting people in and voting people out and blackballing people and all those kinds of things. I was able to negotiate, by agreeing to pay for the renovation of their part of the building, to get them off the third floor, and I would then have the fourth floor for exhibitions, the third floor for offices, classrooms, a conservation laboratory, the rest. And that meant that the spaces upstairs that were used for classrooms would go back to being exhibition spaces. Now, in addition to – There was a great rotunda in the center, which was an auditorium, and we always had to set up chairs and all that sort of thing. And that meant that the rotunda was a kind of a building in itself. And there were corridors, and these corridors I usually had drawings in one and photographs in the other. Then outside the rotunda there was a kind of a little anteroom where I would have occasional special shows, like I did the Clyfford Still show there. I was courting Mr. Still, and I planned to devote a room to Clyfford Still forever, as to Motherwell, as to Diebenkorn, and as to –

MS. LARSEN: Now, that was your list of people that you thought –

MR. NORDLAND: Were associated with –

MS. LARSEN: – were the pillars of –

MR. NORDLAND: – associated with the museum. And I was thinking of Rothko, but it ended up that the collection developed around Guston, not Rothko.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, so can you tell me your list again?

MR. NORDLAND: It was Still, Motherwell, Diebenkorn, Rothko, but as I say, the Rothko thing didn't develop and "Slow Swirl" – I wasn't able to get "Slow Swirl" back. I met with Mark at Bob Motherwell's – just outside Bob Motherwell's. I was going, and he was coming. And I said: "Mark, I need to talk to you. That 'Slow Swirl' is part of Western American art history. It's got to go back." He said, "Gerry, it's only money."

MS. LARSEN: What is that supposed to mean?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know. I think what he meant is that I could give him the money, and he would let me have it back. I said, "Can I meet with you tomorrow? I'm going home on Wednesday." He said, "Well, not this time; next time you're here we'll do it." He killed himself.

MS. LARSEN: Shortly thereafter? Yes. Now, you told me yesterday how that exchange happened, but it was traded away for a lesser painting?

MR. NORDLAND: It was traded away for a very much lesser painting, which I – want to see it?

MS. LARSEN: Sure.

MR. NORDLAND: Does it matter?

MS. LARSEN: The lesser painting?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Sure.

[Transcriber note: Pause as Mr. Nordland gets up to fetch SFMA Handbook with a reproduction.]

MR. NORDLAND: There was an issue of the "Chronicle" when I was fired at San Francisco that I wrote a piece about what I considered a prize collection that I had put together. I think it's in the color. Yes, I've got a little

color section here. That was the cheaper way to do it. Well, it's not coming up.

MS. LARSEN: What color is it?

MR. NORDLAND: There's our -

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes. And he made a comment, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: That was the Gorky. And it's a good picture.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it is. I've looked at it for years. I've taught it.

MR. NORDLAND: It's a -

MS. LARSEN: It's a juicy picture.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, it's a nice picture. And that was my de Kooning.

MS. LARSEN: Wow, strong.

MR. NORDLAND: Oil on paper.

MS. LARSEN: Strong.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, I got it from Paul Kantor. Well, we'll go back to here. "69 by 50, 1960, acquired through a gift of Mrs. Peggy Guggenheim." So she gave "Slow Swirl," and when we traded - when - what was it? He traded in 1962.

MS. LARSEN: Well, you know, at a certain point -

MR. NORDLAND: And I guess I didn't think it was good enough even to reproduce in color.

MS. LARSEN: At a certain point right around that time I don't think people were looking at the earlier work of Gorky or that of Pollock or Rothko as being as important as their mid-period work.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes, that's -

MS. LARSEN: And it took a generation of scholarship to be interested in this earlier work -

MR. NORDLAND: But the artist - and I was in tune with the artists. Dick Diebenkorn has said to me, "The only reason I went to that place was to see that picture." Where did he go? He went to see Jerry [Jermayne] MacAgy's shows at the Legion of Honor. That was the stuff that was exciting. And Jerry MacAgy gave him a show, long before the San Francisco Museum of Art realized that Dick Diebenkorn was a force. And, of course, I also have a tendency to like early work.

MS. LARSEN: I'm just saying that what -

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, I don't put the Gorky as important as, say -

MS. LARSEN: *Garden in Sochi* [1941] or something like that.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, yes, or - well, maybe I do. But certainly not up there with, say, *The Waterfall* [1943] or, you know, some of those absolutely wonderful pictures, which were still available to buy after he was dead. You know, he left a pretty solid estate.

MS. LARSEN: Even despite that fire, he did. Yes, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And do you know about the Everett Ellin thing?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: Everett - do you know - does that name mean anything to you?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: Everett Ellin had a gallery on - I want to say Hollywood Boulevard, but maybe it was Sunset Strip in Beverly Hills, up above - you know, up high. And it was just as the Strip began. And he had a drawing show of Gorky coming to him from New York, and the plane crashed and burned.

MS. LARSEN: Ooooh, no! Oh, no!

MR. NORDLAND: So Gorky not only had the fire, not only had the business, not only had the colostomy bag, the broken neck; he –

MS. LARSEN: Terrible.

MR. NORDLAND: The only kind of luck he had was bad.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's true. The only thing he had was a great gift. Wow, that's surprising that so much has sort of – you know, a certain number of solid things have –

MR. NORDLAND: But it was a wonderful show just now at the Whitney of his drawings. I only went once, but – I went twice to the Guston show at the Met. It was wonderful.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, yes, Guston was – I love them both. They're so different though.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, a totally different deal.

MR. NORDLAND: But the Gorky was – you know, he –

MS. LARSEN: They can make you almost cry.

MR. NORDLAND: He's as big an artist as we've had.

MS. LARSEN: The further that you go down the road with him, the further there is to go. And that comes out as the sign of a great artist, like Cezanne. You know, when you think, okay, I've looked and looked at this for many years, and I've sort of gotten – penetrated a little further in there, you know, and then as far as you go, there's more to go. And that's –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you noticed that there's a – there was a lot of *Miller 22* in this picture [Referring to *Albuquerque #3*, 1951 by Richard Diebenkorn, hanging in the dining room].

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But, you see, he saw his first Gorky show after *Miller* and before this.

MS. LARSEN: Wow. Mm-hmm, so who knows, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I mean, there's some stuff in there.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, there is.

MR. NORDLAND: You know?

[Transcriber note: Both speakers step away from the microphone to discuss a painting.]

MS. LARSEN: That area there, no question. There and there. That little loop there. That – all that there. And these sort of inter-penetrating areas.

MR. NORDLAND: And then the drips go this way and the drips go that way, as they do in Gorky. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Yes, it's a great wonder you have here. I'm so glad to see you still have this, it's great.

MR. NORDLAND: It's funny, but I – I always remember this as a big painting.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: But, you know, it's really a small picture.

MS. LARSEN: Well, you know, not really. If you were to put it up in a museum space, it would still hold a big wall.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I've seen it hold a lot of big walls. I saw it at the Phillips Collection. I saw it – I used to show it at San Francisco from time to time when I was there, and – but I mean, I've seen it in – you know, it's been in all those shows.

MS. LARSEN: I love all the reds in it too. You have every kind of red from brown-red to blue-red to – it's really

wonderful.

MR. NORDLAND: I -

MS. LARSEN: It's a real -

MR. NORDLAND: At the fair I had to see a picture that those people in New Mexico wanted to show - wanted me to look at, and I told them it's not a Diebenkorn. I don't recognize anything about it. I don't recognize the material. I don't recognize the signature. Anyway, when I actually saw the picture, it was even worse.

MS. LARSEN: It wasn't the one that was on eBay, was it?

MR. NORDLAND: No, no, no. I didn't get involved with that unfortunately.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Okay. I saw it on eBay. I remember looking at it and saying I'm glad I don't have to be involved with it.

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: Smart girl.

MS. LARSEN: No, no, I - I never heard a peep, and I didn't expect to, but I was just glad I didn't have to figure that one out.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, yes.

MS. LARSEN: Okay. So there was a space and there was a collection, and did you know immediately what you wanted to do, or did - how long did it take you to kind of think what should this be?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, first of all, they weren't originating their shows, and they weren't publishing. And so I decided that I was going to get into the business of originating shows and publishing and then circulating shows, because at Washington my Diebenkorn show had gone to New York and Newport Harbor. I had been on the board of Newport Harbor, you know? I had been a guide and a counselor to them. And so I, you know, kind of supported them, and I wanted it to be in California, but I didn't want it to go to Frisco and I didn't want it to go to LA. I wanted it to go somewhere that didn't get a chance to see it, somewhere it would carry the colors. And so I started - I was also trying to save money by announcing four or five shows at a time on one card.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And I remember announcing like five wonderful shows - bing, bing, bing, bing, bing - that would be coming in the spring.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And that would have been - let's see, I went there in -

MS. LARSEN: '66 I have.

MR. NORDLAND: '66, yes. So that would have been in - and with the spring of '67 would be a big plan. I found a family - a man named Hunter Land and his wife Susan - who were - they wanted to help, and I got him on the board, and he gave me, I think, \$10,000 or \$20,000. And I took a gallery - one, two, three - this gallery back here on the far corner just across from -

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B.]

MR. NORDLAND: - And I started experimenting with it, I put in new floors, I put in new walls and I put in new fabrics and I discovered what I wanted to do in terms of renovation.

MS. LARSEN: A little like having like a test case or - and you did it - sort of - little by little -

MR. NORDLAND: I did this just as a test case, yes. Yes, I just retired that room for a while, and then I would put things up in it. And then I kind of came to the idea that I wanted very thick plywood walls, very deep so that I could hold hundreds of pounds of hanging material without - with impunity, you know? And I decided I wanted light floors, wood - light wood floors that were easy to walk on and would give me a lot of bounced reflection from my skylights. And I put in all new lights and filtered lights in the corridors where I had my drawings and my photographs. And as we moved along, people started to feel that there was need for us to move to another

building. Pasadena had just built its new building. It cost \$7 million., while studies in San Francisco said that we could probably raise three [million dollars]. I didn't have any endowment.

MS. LARSEN: Really.

MR. NORDLAND: Forty thousand dollars, I think.

MS. LARSEN: My goodness.

MR. NORDLAND: We were operating very thin. Twenty-eight people, including guards.

MS. LARSEN: Did you have a curator?

MR. NORDLAND: I had two curators. I had Anneliese Hoyer, who - Dr. Anneliese Hoyer was a German PhD in art history. She - I - the first year I asked her to do - "I want you to do four shows; I want you to do a local etcher. I'll give you four names, and you choose the one you want. I want you to do Ynez Johnston, Leonard Edmondson, and Sam Francis." And she didn't know any of them, but she had a wonderful time.

MS. LARSEN: Good.

MR. NORDLAND: She was ready to retire, and I said, "I want you to stay for a year and do these things, and I'm going to bring in somebody to be the first professional registrar." Because my registrar, a wonderful black guy [Hayward King], went to Richmond to run the Richmond Museum, and he did a Dick Diebenkorn drawing show.

MS. LARSEN: Good.

MR. NORDLAND: And - he's dead now. She said, okay, she would do it, and she did the Ynez Johnston, and she chose not to write about her. But she forced Ynez to write something.

MS. LARSEN: Huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And at the talk in - at the Norton Simon the other day I read about a half of what Ynez had written because, you know, she just - she's very bright, very. She's an impressive woman. She's capable of doing unusual writing, but she doesn't think she is.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] So, happily, someone got her to apply herself to it.

MR. NORDLAND: And I was - and so she got her to do that. And I was so proud of that. And I saluted Dr. Hoyer and Ynez at the same time in my reading this piece and said, "Nobody's ever gotten her to do that ever before." Ynez wrote me the nicest letter I think I've ever received saying how thrilled she was and how the research and the care that I had used - and how I got just the right slides, and you know, I had 200 -

MS. LARSEN: Well, that's good.

MR. NORDLAND: - and I got it down to about 68. But I also showed her influences: Picasso, Matisse, Braque -

MS. LARSEN: Klee maybe?

MR. NORDLAND: Klee. Two Klees. Miró. And who was the last one? I don't know. Sometimes my mind is a blur.

MS. LARSEN: Well - [unintelligible] -

MR. NORDLAND: But everybody was really kind of full of consternation: "What is all this about?" You know? But the thing - they were her influences, but she transformed them so that you never would know. I mean, she so uniquely and personally herself that - but - except for the color, the wonderful color. You know, she gets better as she grows older. She's 84 now, just a couple of days ago. And the color is fabulous.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, color is great. Color is -

MR. NORDLAND: And you know she worked with so many different materials. It wasn't just watercolor and oil and etching. She worked with so-called "liquid steel." She worked - kind of something that you'd think Dubuffet would have played with and then carved into it.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, those I've seen.

MR. NORDLAND: And then the silks and the -

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, fabrics.

MR. NORDLAND: All of these – all these strange chemical dyes on silk, and the color! My gawd, Mark would have loved it. They knew each other.

MS. LARSEN: Did they?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, they met in Colorado when she was teaching for Jimmy Byrnes at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center. Mark was teaching a summer at Boulder, and they met. And she said he was very generous, very generous, and told her some things about her painting that she didn't recognize at the time.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, which helps you a lot. It helps you move ahead faster sometimes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And that was when you'd see Emerson smoking with Mark. It was when he was in Colorado. Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Well, that doesn't fit the history books, I must say.

MR. NORDLAND: No, no. And you know Bob Motherwell was there teaching one semester, one summer semester, with Ynez. And that was how he first met Emerson and how that – because that was really a companionship. The rest of their lives they were really close.

MS. LARSEN: Those are gifts you can't – beyond measure. So your one curator was Dr. Anneliese Hoyer.

MR. NORDLAND: Anneliese Hoyer.

MS. LARSEN: And the other one –

MR. NORDLAND: And the other one was John Humphrey, and John was capable of doing anything. He was a trained painter, but he had a particular bent for photography. And he was a person who had been around from the Clyfford Still days on, so he knew a lot about art history. So whenever we did a survey of Bay Area painting, John always did it.

MS. LARSEN: Aha, so he –

MR. NORDLAND: And he was ardent in the photography area, but he never was – never had any money to buy anything. So I got him some money to buy things, and we had a show – as long as I was in the museum, we had a photography show on at all times.

MS. LARSEN: That's great. And – but who were the – just for the record, who were the photographers that you felt were important? Was it the whole Carmel area group?

MR. NORDLAND: We'd start off, first of all, with Edward.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, Edward Weston.

MR. NORDLAND: Ansel [Adams].

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Imogen [Cunningham].

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Wynn Bullock.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Minor White?

MR. NORDLAND: We didn't – we had a Minor White or two, but Minor was in the East, you know?

MS. LARSEN: Right, in Boston.

MR. NORDLAND: So he was like out of mind. We showed [Henri] Cartier-Bresson. We showed the international people. We showed [Aaron] Siskind. We showed Fred Sommer. We showed – I mean, we were doing an international kind of program, but we didn't ignore our f/64s and the locals, and we kept collecting.

MS. LARSEN: That's great. Was there at all a photography collection before you came?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, there was just a few things that people gave to John and he put in – not much. Not much. We had some successes, you know? And we did – like our Wynn Bullock catalogue went into a second edition. That's unusual.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: When I renovated the building –

MS. LARSEN: Now, when did that begin?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, gosh –

MS. LARSEN: It was finished in '72, right?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. It was finished – we opened, I think, in October '72. We were never closed.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: You know?

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: But we were partially closed, and we did a lot of foolishness. We had four shows: Richard Diebenkorn, Ocean Park Pictures – about 13, and he sent us 14, and we bought the fourteenth that my board – a group of people, the Lands, bought it. Well, they wouldn't let me buy it.

MS. LARSEN: Was this the Friends of Gerald Nordland painting?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: That – I wrote down the title of it, which is – it looks like a wonderful thing.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, it's as good as there is.

MS. LARSEN: It's *Ocean Park No. 54*. 1972.

MR. NORDLAND: This is the one I had in –

MS. LARSEN: Oh, I love that one.

MR. NORDLAND: – Milwaukee, and of course, it's on the cover.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I love that one.

MR. NORDLAND: Much better reproduction here. This is the old reproduction. This is the new one. There it is.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's about as good as you get. You've got it all. Beautiful.

MR. NORDLAND: I hadn't chosen this picture. I had chosen the show and I said I'm going to reproduce everything. Some of them are black and white, but I'm going to reproduce, like, six in color. He sent this along, and it ended up being the best picture in the show.

MS. LARSEN: Well, he –

MR. NORDLAND: I had a \$10,000 grant, and I matched the \$10,000, and my acquisition committee wouldn't let me buy this picture because they'd already decided to buy it. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: What did you think – did they try to – was it a surprise then?

MR. NORDLAND: It was a surprise.

MS. LARSEN: It was a surprise.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: That's nice.

MR. NORDLAND: It was a surprise. And I don't even know if they spent - what they did with the 20 grand that I had, because I not only got the grant, but I got a matching grant.

MS. LARSEN: Wow. So that was a very nice time -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, it was good.

MS. LARSEN: - around '72, you know, and -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, yes.

MS. LARSEN: So the building -

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I was - you know, I was also out the door. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: Well, yes, I noticed - that's the old cliché, that a person builds or renovates a museum and then shortly thereafter it somehow is like everyone takes a breath and they're on to the next thing.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: But it happens all the time.

MR. NORDLAND: James Johnson Sweeney of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, on and on and on - even your successor, John Lane.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, but he told me that Roth had decided that I had to go, and he told me I should be looking for a job.

MS. LARSEN: Why?

MR. NORDLAND: He thought there ought to be turnover, there ought not to be - people shouldn't rest, and he said, "I need people with fresh ideas."

MS. LARSEN: But you were only there six years or so.

MR. NORDLAND: Six or seven years, yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, which - and there was a lot to do over there.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it - back to the what did I do, I did the Diebenkorn show.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: And I had the biggest bronze that has ever been made, the Peter Voulkos. It had to be taken apart and re-welded on my new floors.

MS. LARSEN: That's a portent of things to come in contemporary art, you know, that like the -

MR. NORDLAND: And I also bought *Hiro II* [Peter Voulkos, 1967, 8' x 27' x 8'] a wonderful smaller piece - a better piece - at the same time, and I had it on view in the new -front entrance, where we had the two elevators, the bookstore and new floors -

MS. LARSEN: That's the museum I know.

MR. NORDLAND: - we had new lights. So we had Dick and Peter. Then we had an Ansel Adams show of photography. And then we had the Joseph Mosen Collection of Ceramics from Seattle, and he was an economist who had decided that, if he put together a really definitive collection of this material, it would be worth much better than any other investment he could make.

MS. LARSEN: Now, which - was it American ceramics?

MR. NORDLAND: American ceramics coming out of Voulkos and coming out of everybody that had worked with him at Otis and worked with him at Berkeley and the just widening circles, and that included Kottler - the white one there that we saw that was next -

MS. LARSEN: How do you spell Kottler?

MR. NORDLAND: K-O-T-T-L-E-R or C-O-T-T-L-E-R. C-O-T-T-L-E-R. [Transcriber note: The actual spelling is Kottler.]

MS. LARSEN: And first name?

MR. NORDLAND: I think it's Howard, but I'm not sure.

MS. LARSEN: All right, I'll look it up.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: So, and it was a good investment, I would think?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes, yes, yes. But that's a funny kind of collecting. John Mason, [Paul] Soldner. It was a good show, and – but then I had hired an associate curator or an assistant curator from the Walker Art Center, Suzanne Foley, who came in to be registrar and set up a registration, and then when Anneliese Hoyer retired, Suzanne moved over and took that job.

MS. LARSEN: Who was that?

MR. NORDLAND: You know, right now I can't think of her name. She later directed the gallery at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. I can get her name to you.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm, boy, it's a ringing a bell here. It isn't Karen Tsujimoto. She was later.

[Transcriber note: Mr. Nordland walks away from the mike, speaking from a distance.]

MR. NORDLAND: No, no, not her. Karen worked for me.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, Karen worked for me, but she didn't have – [unintelligible].

[Transcriber note: Mr. Nordland returns after a long pause.]

MR. NORDLAND: Suzanne Foley.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, yes. Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: And she was from Virginia, I think, or she was, you know, down somewhere around Washington. And she had this job at Walker, and she came to work for me. And this is the catalogue.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it's –

MR. NORDLAND: And John did – John Humphrey did the Ansel Adams catalogue. I did the Diebenkorn catalogue and the Voukos.

MS. LARSEN: And this was all on at the same time?

MR. NORDLAND: This was the opening.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, wow.

MR. NORDLAND: Now, in addition, we had masterpieces from our drawings and photographs in the hallways. And –

MS. LARSEN: What was the –

MR. NORDLAND: – permanent collection, mind you, starting in the far corner – permanent collection of paintings and sculpture all the way down here. It was a museum finally.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. What was the public reaction? It was probably astonishment.

MR. NORDLAND: I don't even know that I noticed. After all, I was leaving.

MS. LARSEN: You knew you were leaving when that opened?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes, sure, sure.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, no.

MR. NORDLAND: I had known for six months.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, no, what a heartbreak.

MR. NORDLAND: They let me open and then go.

MS. LARSEN: What a heartbreak. Oh, my gawd.

MR. NORDLAND: So I hooked up with UCLA. It was either that or try to run the NEA, and I thought the – as much as I loved Washington, I thought maybe I wouldn't be good at that.

MS. LARSEN: It's too vague and diffuse. It's not –

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know. I guess I feared it. And I was more familiar with a museum. And so I went to – I took UCLA, and I wrote to the head of the Lachaise Foundation and said I'd like to do a really major Gaston Lachaise show early at UCLA and I think it's going to take me a couple of years to write a book so I need to have a little help to spend a couple of months refreshing myself on the stuff that I left – I put down so many years ago. And he said, good, take two or three months. So after I left the museum I had two or three months.

MS. LARSEN: And where did you go? Back to –

MR. NORDLAND: No, I stayed –

MS. LARSEN: Stayed?

MR. NORDLAND: I still had a lease on my apartment in – my wife and I had separated about two years before and were divorced about a year before. I think that was something that Bill Roth was – found offensive, too.

MS. LARSEN: What a bunch of calamities all together.

MR. NORDLAND: Anyway, I refreshed myself on the Lachaise stuff, and I visited Yale and reviewed the archive that I had not thoroughly understood before that I kind of got a better perspective on. Incidentally, I had done a Lachaise show at San Francisco which traveled more than any show in museum history.

MS. LARSEN: Goodness, what did –

MR. NORDLAND: It had 200 –

MS. LARSEN: Oh!

MR. NORDLAND: – installations in something like 40 states, Mexico, and Canada.

MS. LARSEN: How did it travel all that way?

MR. NORDLAND: The Lachaise Foundation supported it.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, okay, they did it. Okay. Because, I mean, that takes – that's an enterprise in itself.

MR. NORDLAND: And Mitzi Landau of LA –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – was the kind of point person on it. And I spoke at many of those venues.

MS. LARSEN: And what years would that have encompassed about?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I think I probably started it in '65 or '66, and it went into the '90s. And it's only when Salander O'Reilly has taken over that it doesn't go anymore, though I think they have a show abroad right now.

MS. LARSEN: Well, let's switch, and we'll start with you saying that, okay?

[Break in audio.]

MS. LARSEN: I'm here with Gerald Nordland. It is May 26th, 2004. We're in Chicago, Illinois. And this is disk number 4.

So you, in a way, came back to your first love –

MR. NORDLAND: Mm-hmm.

MS. LARSEN: – which is the Lachaise project, which must have been sort of –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it's the kind of thing you do when you're shattered, is you go to something that you're confident of and you know you can handle. When I was fired at Milwaukee, I did the same thing. I went to Diebenkorn. He didn't want me to do it.

MS. LARSEN: He who?

MR. NORDLAND: He didn't want to spend the time, and –

MS. LARSEN: Who? Richard Diebenkorn?

MR. NORDLAND: Dick. Oh, he didn't want to do it. He just couldn't say no.

MS. LARSEN: Good. [Laughs.] I'm glad. To you. And –

MR. NORDLAND: He couldn't say no to you either, could he?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he could. He could.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I don't know. I think it was Larry and –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. Well, I think that you're right. He did –

MR. NORDLAND: He said that he thought he could.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Well, you know, the thing is that – about our – I'll just digress for a minute about our taping. You know, the – I didn't know that it was a problem for him, so when I came to LA in '75 – and I had not a great background in California art. I grew up in Chicago. But the Art Institute had those California things that I also grew up with.

MR. NORDLAND: You mentioned Moses and –

MS. LARSEN: And I, you know, always thought – I mean, it's amazing how museum collections create a pattern in your brain. I always thought that American art was about all of America, from west to east and in between, and that an American art museum should show American art, including the West Coast and the Midwest and the East Coast. So Richard Diebenkorn was a very important person to me, as were many of these people. I went and – I interviewed Ed Moses. I interviewed George Herms and Vija Celmins. I did articles for the LAICA Journal [Journal of the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art], much like you. It was just a – it was on newsprint, and Robbert Flick –

MR. NORDLAND: I have some of them.

MS. LARSEN: And Robbert Flick, who's a, you know, wonderful photographer, was my colleague at school, and he went with me and took photographs of Diebenkorn in the studio. But I had done a lot of interviews for my dissertation of artists from the '30s, so I was used to doing it. I didn't see it as an adversarial situation or a problem. I saw it as –

MR. NORDLAND: And you just took it.

MS. LARSEN: And I called him up, and I said, "I'm doing this series of articles and I'd like to interview you." And I think we had met briefly at an opening or something. And I think he saw I was serious. I think that's all that it amounted to, that he just saw that I was serious.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And so I just went and did it, and I didn't know that it – that he didn't usually do that. But he took it very seriously, and –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you knew that he would not be photographed painting?

MS. LARSEN: I guess we knew that, and –

MR. NORDLAND: That he wouldn't be photographed etching, he wouldn't be photographed drawing.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: He wouldn't mind sitting in his chair and being photographed in his studio, but, you know, he was not a performer.

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: And he was afraid that this required performance.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And he wouldn't do it. But he knew me well enough that he just - we'd worked together, as you know -

MS. LARSEN: How many times?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, WGMA. We worked on the San Francisco twice. We worked for the Marlborough once. We did - at UCLA we did the monotypes thing. He worked with me on the print book.

MS. LARSEN: So you're old, good friends.

MR. NORDLAND: And he helped me with the Albright-Knox. See, I wrote the middle part -

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: - the part that the other kids didn't want to do.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: I remember that. And Maurice Tuchman wrote the first part on the early work, which I was -

MR. NORDLAND: Sure.

MS. LARSEN: I was amazed that he sat down and actually wrote that.

MR. NORDLAND: He did a lot of research.

MS. LARSEN: He was very respectful about doing that, and it was so unlike him.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it was the first time, I saw, that he was - he had something on the ball.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. I mean, I was really impressed. I remember saying to him, "I'm impressed." Because he seemed like such a playboy person. But he was very impressive with that.

MR. NORDLAND: He's a [Chaim] Soutine expert.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I know. Yes. But, anyhow, you worked with Richard Diebenkorn over and over and over again, so -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: - I mean, it was like he - you must have trusted each other on how to work together.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, I said, "Somebody's going to do a book on you, and it's kind of silly not to take advantage of me, because you can depend on me."

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: "If there's anything you don't want done, it will not get done." And so I wrote a lot of stuff that was - that he excised.

MS. LARSEN: Really? Now, what was the nature of -

MR. NORDLAND: Well, like the politics at UCLA.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh. Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: About why he quit.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And the – I wrote about the Army – about the Marines, I mean. And he took all that out. I thought it was insightful.

MS. LARSEN: Have you saved this material?

MR. NORDLAND: Probably not. Probably not. It's just –

MS. LARSEN: Do you think –

MR. NORDLAND: We did trust each – or I think he trusted me.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Of course I trusted him. How would I not?

MS. LARSEN: Well, he was very much in charge of himself, I think – more than hardly any person – I think Wayne Thiebaud strikes me that way too. He's very much in charge of himself – and in a nice way and in a very polite way, but definitely in charge of himself. And that's – that really came across, and it is impressive. But do you think he wanted to project a – how to put it? To not dwell on the inevitable stressful and difficult things of life, but to focus on the good things and the things that progress?

MR. NORDLAND: I think he just wanted to focus on art. He wanted to focus on why you make art, how you make art, and where you find your themes and your new inspirations. I think that was what he was concerned about. And when I got away from that, he said that's got to go. I don't think it was – well, he was liberal.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He was concerned about the state of the world, but he didn't – I mean, other than giving, say, art to projects or maybe giving money – I don't know – but I know he gave art to schools and he gave art to candidates that were –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – who were running of offices where he thought they would have an important impact. He would – he wanted to see it to be a better place.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. He was very generous about going to people's openings, younger people's.

MR. NORDLAND: If he could, he always did.

MS. LARSEN: I was just floored –

MR. NORDLAND: Unless he had some kind of a – conflict, he tried to show up for an ex-student. He had a lifelong responsible to them. He didn't like to go openings. He didn't even like to go to his own openings. But he went because he felt it was a kind of support that a gentleman gave.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Often one would enter a room in LA, you know, and you'd look at a crowd, and I would just look at the top of the heads and I could tell if he was there. [Laughs.] You could always look up and scan and you'd know, you know, if he happened to be there. Or you'd spot him, you know, just – and then you'd try not to notice him or bother him and you would just note that he was there and that that was very nice that he would come. He never seemed to call attention to himself at an opening the way many people do.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, no. No, he was very – I – you know, I had the chancellor give a dinner for him after the monotype show. Oh, he didn't want to go.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: I had to force him to go.

MS. LARSEN: It's like it's enough to do the work –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, like de Kooning. You know, he had the show at the Guggenheim, and he didn't go. He never went at all. He never even went in to take a look.

MS. LARSEN: Really? He was a great party guy, though. He loved parties – at home.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I don't know. Sometimes it – a whole museum devoted to your work, it's a little awesome.

MS. LARSEN: It must be.

MR. NORDLAND: I think Dick would have – he just felt – I mean, he was proud of the monotypes, and it was a beautiful show. And even though we did it on a shoestring – you know, I had to – for everyone. And even though the catalogue is plain black and white it – these things end up being more expensive than your exchequer will permit.

MS. LARSEN: Sure. And where were the monotypes? Were they from one period or were they all of survey –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, they were the monotypes that he did with Nathan Oliveira and then the monotypes he did with George Page, who was Sam Francis' master printer. And at that time he hadn't done the late monotypes, which were done with the experimental printer [Garner Tullis] in San Francisco whose wife [Pamela Auchincloss] showed them at her gallery in New York. And there were 20, and she got 10 to sell and Dick got 10 to keep. And I have always said to Dick and Phyllis that they shouldn't sell individual monotypes, that they ought to be sold as a day's work or a week's work, that they ought to be seen so you could see A, B, C, D, and reflections that are held within work from work to work to work as the evolution goes. And to my knowledge, though they've exhibited them from time to time separately, I don't believe they've sold them.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. That would be a great thing for a museum to have, would be a suite like that.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it's the kind of thing that the Museum of Modern Art or the Gruenwald Collection at UCLA or the Achenbach or – you know? The Morgan Library. You know, it's really –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – really something.

MS. LARSEN: It's serious looking, yes. It's not –

MR. NORDLAND: And that's why I wanted – that's why I did the book the way I did it: everything reproduced and, you know, you really could – you could follow from A, B, C, and of course I wrote a lot about what he did and why he did it and why he changed it and how you could follow things. But, of course, he took that out, too.

MS. LARSEN: A lot of these things sound very valuable that he took out.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, they're the kind of thing that people like us do, and to him it looks all just fusty.

MS. LARSEN: If you have to put it in words – you know, it's something you can just see and –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, I can't tell you what to look for, but I can help you to get into a new artist and then you're on your own. That's what I thought I was doing. I was helping people to get into this new medium, and –

MS. LARSEN: Sure, sure.

MR. NORDLAND: – to see what he was up to. Much more interesting than, say, Nate's. Nate's a wonderful craftsman, but you don't see this kind of wit –

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: – and this turning a thing inside out.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. He almost seems to do like these somersaults where he's going to fall off the edge or, you know, just do something really whacky.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he'll start working with numbers, and then he'll end up with Roman numerals or he'll end up with Arabic numerals or – you know, he just constantly kind of finds another way to kind of catch you by surprise. And he always wanted to surprise himself.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. There was a quote – if I can find my – there was something – there was a quote I wrote down somewhere in my scattered notes about surprises, you know, that it was important to – and – well, anyway, so here we were and you left San Francisco, and you moved down to LA. Now, Richard Diebenkorn had moved down to LA just as you went to San Francisco.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Now, you're back to LA and he's there -

MR. NORDLAND: And he quits UCLA.

MS. LARSEN: Was it right about the same time?

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.] Actually he didn't like me.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] He kept trying to avoid you.

MR. NORDLAND: He tried to avoid me.

MS. LARSEN: You were just too persuasive -

MR. NORDLAND: [Laughs.] I was. I was. But, yes, he -

MS. LARSEN: But was he there when you arrived or had he just left?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, he was there.

MS. LARSEN: He was there?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. Oh, he didn't go to Healdsburg right away.

MS. LARSEN: No, no, but I mean was he at UCLA when you arrived at UCLA?

MR. NORDLAND: I think he was just leaving.

MS. LARSEN: He was just leaving.

MR. NORDLAND: I think he - again, it was one of those things like I called him up in Berkeley and I said, "Well, I've arrived here," and he said, "Well, you know, it's a funny thing; I'm going to LA." [Laughter.]

MS. LARSEN: So you started in the fall - what? Fall of '73?

MR. NORDLAND: Let me see. I started in late spring, I think.

MS. LARSEN: Spring? Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Of '73.

MR. NORDLAND: And we were into a building program, and that was why I was able to take a day off every week. So I spent three days a week on my book. I think I told you that.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And I got that done in - well enough. I was to - I had this arrangement with Cornell -

MS. LARSEN: Cornell University?

MR. NORDLAND: Cornell University. Tom Leavitt was there, and Tom and I were old friends. I'd been his docent at the Pasadena Art Museum when he was the director. He - just whenever he couldn't do a talk, he would get me to do the talk. And so I did the talk on Dick Diebenkorn when he did that show and various ones. Anyway, he was interested in the Lachaise show. I was interested in the Lachaise show. I thought, well, I will have it at UCLA. It also went to the MCA [Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago], to Steve Prokopoff.

MS. LARSEN: Aha, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

MR. NORDLAND: Who was at that time - he was married to my present wife, Paula.

MS. LARSEN: I probably saw that show.

MR. NORDLAND: Where else did we go? I think maybe that was it. Oh, no, we went to Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Yes, that was the itinerary. And I had a lot of trouble with the show. Rockefeller didn't want to lend because it would have messed up his flower plantings.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, from the sculpture garden?

MR. NORDLAND: From his sculpture garden in Terrytown.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, I see. Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: I shamed him into lending. I couldn't get a floating woman, so I got Ray Stark's floating woman. And I had - you know, there were problems, but I ended up with a good show.

MS. LARSEN: Sculpture is expensive to move around, too, isn't it?

MR. NORDLAND: You betcha.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: You betcha.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, really difficult, and the whole budget goes way up. Of course, you don't need as many usually, but -

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I did a big show, and I did the - I did it in a different way. Instead of - I didn't do it chronologically. I did it in families - the standing women, the floating women, the - you know, I tried to have you look at the animals, I tried - and I had very few animals, because he didn't like those, and he thought animals were kind of cheap.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I don't think I've seen so many of those.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, there's a penguin that - he and E.E. Cummings were crazy about Penguins, and they used to go to the Brooklyn Zoo and see the penguins. And so - and he talked about it, and he would say "Deez little" - Cummings would talk in Lachaise Pidjin English -

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. [Laughs.]

MR. NORDLAND: - about what he said. He really deified him. You know, he was the first artist he ever knew.

MS. LARSEN: Where were they together?

MR. NORDLAND: In New York.

MS. LARSEN: In New York, mm-hmm, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: In the '20s. Cummings had been a classmate of Nagel, Edward Nagel, who was Lachaise's stepson. And I think Edward felt closer to Gaston than he did to his father. His father was a successful businessman. And he was a painter, a craftsman, poet.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He wrote for *The Broom*- and, you know, those obscure magazines.

MS. LARSEN: No, they're not anymore.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, they're not obscure? [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: No, they're not obscure. People are doing dissertations and long books on -

MR. NORDLAND: Are they now in bigger editions than 90? [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: I think so. Well, at least the scholarship on all of those people is very, very thick now. It's an area that was -

MR. NORDLAND: We did an E.E. Cummings show here in - Chicago.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: For his centenary.

MS. LARSEN: Here where?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know where we did it. There was a girl who was crazy about his poetry, and she got me

to present his drawing and painting and -

MS. LARSEN: Here in Chicago?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Not at the -

MR. NORDLAND: Maybe -

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know where it was. I probably have a file on it somewhere. But I had two meetings with Cummings when I was working on Lachaise, and it was wonderful because I probably felt about him the way he felt about Lachaise.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I have all of Cummings' books. I was just nuts about him.

MS. LARSEN: How old was he then?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, let's see. I would have been meeting him in '53, '51, '50 - '51, '52 - probably '52, Patchen Place. I would guess he would be about 60. He was probably born in the middle '90s. And he graduated from Harvard about 1915, and then he went, you know, in the Ambulance Corps and he did *The Enormous Room*, and Slater Brown was his companion. He ran through a lot of very pretty girls. Edward Estlin Cummings.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Sounds like quite a charming fellow.

MR. NORDLAND: He didn't answer the telephone.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: His wife did. And he hated the idea of radio. You know, noise?

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. He wouldn't, like, listen to it? It was just chatter? Is that -

MR. NORDLAND: It wasn't - he didn't - I don't know whether he had a radio in his house. Maybe he did. But it was somebody else's radio next door that got to be such a problem, because, you know - and he was in a secluded little enclave.

MS. LARSEN: We've all accustomed ourselves to another world where not everything that we see or hear is nature's work, so -

MR. NORDLAND: Ain't it though?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it's true.

MR. NORDLAND: Until we had this street repaved, when the buses - and there are a lot of buses on this street. This is a state street.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: It goes to Ft. Sheridan. Now, Ft. Sheridan is no longer active. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But because it's a state street -

MS. LARSEN: Kept open.

MR. NORDLAND: - it's got to be kept open, and it's the first thing plowed.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, good! That's a -

MR. NORDLAND: Anyway, our whole house rattles from these terrible things.

MS. LARSEN: Does the pavement cushion things so that -

MR. NORDLAND: They put in new – something or other – underpinnings. I don't know if it's improved it enormously.

MS. LARSEN: How long have you lived in this house?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, it's moving toward 20 years.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, I'll get to that. So there you are. You're installing yourself at the Wight gallery. Now, being not a UCLA person I don't know all these things. It's named after Frederick Wight?

MR. NORDLAND: He was the first director. He was my predecessor. He was a very good friend. He was also a friend of Mitch Wilder's. He was also a friend of Emerson's and of Gifford Phillips'. He had recruited me before I was fired, and I wasn't interested in UCLA.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Because he knew he was going to retire, and he was looking for –

MS. LARSEN: Sure.

MR. NORDLAND: – a person that he thought would love the place the way I did. And – the way he did. Anyway, he and the chancellor came to see me in San Francisco.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, that's a good sign.

MR. NORDLAND: And then I went down to UCLA, and the prior chancellor, who is now with *The Times-Mirror* – what was his name?

MS. LARSEN: I don't know.

MR. NORDLAND: Murphy.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, Franklin Murphy? Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: Franklin Murphy was the head of the committee that chose me.

MS. LARSEN: That's heavy-duty.

MR. NORDLAND: But the chancellor was an athlete, you know? Art wasn't his sphere. Fred said I was the one. Franklin Murphy convened the meeting, and it was automatic. And I was not welcomed on the faculty. The faculty didn't want me at all. First of all, I had a law degree. What the hell does that mean? It didn't matter that –

MS. LARSEN: That you loved art, you had a whole life in art –

MR. NORDLAND: – that I had a life in art. I had produced a lot of work that –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, right. Let them show you the equivalent number of publications, thank you very much.

MR. NORDLAND: True.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: True. One of the people on the committee was a – I can't remember his name now. He was an Asian artist history scholar. He had been at Pomona when I gave a talk on abstract expressionism. Have I told you this story? I was talking about abstract expressionism, and it was about as early – it almost didn't have a name. I mean, the Robert Coates article in *The New Yorker* had just been published. It wasn't –

MS. LARSEN: It was just New York painting –

MR. NORDLAND: It was New York school or something like that. And I was extolling Gorky and showing the slides and saying this was the beginning. And I hadn't even shown a Pollock slide, but I was just raving about – this man said – stood up, you know, and asked a question – this guy would – how could it possibly be that he was such a world master. He had known him.

MS. LARSEN: Hmm, he had met him and known him?

MR. NORDLAND: He knew him in New York when he was a young scholar.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: It was the most ignorant -

MS. LARSEN: Yes, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: - unbelievable question. How could I be right -

MS. LARSEN: How could you take this guy seriously, huh -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: - when he knew him?

MR. NORDLAND: When he was just a guy on the street. Well, you know, Michelangelo was just a guy on the street once. So was Leonardo.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Some of them were even infants. [Laughs.] He was just - anyway, he was hired by UCLA to do the same teaching, and he was one of the people that particularly disapproved of me.

MS. LARSEN: Now, how long a time had passed between the lecture that you gave and -

MR. NORDLAND: Twenty years.

MS. LARSEN: - the time you showed up at UCLA? But he hadn't changed his opinion? No, he hadn't bothered to -

MR. NORDLAND: It was a little like somebody you told me about yesterday.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, Mr. Pennell? [Laughs.] Yes, right. He hadn't bothered to inform himself of the intervening 20 years or so it wasn't real art.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, he just saw it as completely derivative.

MS. LARSEN: But there were people like Lee Mullican on the faculty, and -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, Lee was -

MS. LARSEN: He's a nice man.

MR. NORDLAND: I saw Luchita [Mullican] the other day in LA, and she came to an Emerson Woelffer opening at Toby Moss', and it was so nice to see her. I told her - I had written to her before, but I told her again, you know, the only person that I felt really understood anything about what was being done at UCLA was Lee.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he was such a sunny spirit, wasn't he?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, just a beautiful guy.

MS. LARSEN: Just a wonderfully warm, nice person that you just always felt good around.

MR. NORDLAND: I did a show for Utah, just lately.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: It's the Eccles Collection.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And Eccles is a big name in Utah. I think it's oil. But I think it's also farming and something else. You know, it's conglomerate-like.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But they have been giving stuff to the [Utah] State University at Logan [Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah].

MS. LARSEN: And also they're helping the Archives. They're funding some interviews and some collecting projects -

MR. NORDLAND: How about that?

MS. LARSEN: – through Susan Roebuck. Yes, she just told me about that.

MR. NORDLAND: And I did a new bio – well, I did biographies of everybody in the collection.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Woo!

MR. NORDLAND: So it was a big – well, no, not everybody in the collection. Everybody that I chose to show in the collection –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: – including some maverick people like Forrest Bess –

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: – and, you know, people that didn't fit, like George Herms and Bruce Connor, and – it was an abstract expressionist kind of thing, except that I had these little rag-tags that came along that I felt –

MS. LARSEN: Were –

MR. NORDLAND: I felt that I ought to be in there. So I went out and spent three or four days choosing what I would do, and then I set up that I was going to do biographies – not just an essay, but I was going to do a biography of each person. And I did a new one for Lee, because, you know, it'd been a long time. Do you know the name Bowman, Dick Bowman? He was a great –

MS. LARSEN: I can't place him.

MR. NORDLAND: – personal friend of Gordon Onslow Ford and Lee Mullican –

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: – at San Francisco when Lee lived up there, long – before he met Luchita. And, anyway, she was happy to get that. I sent her a copy.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. I did a very brief essay of – the Artists Space in New York had an exchange with Los Angeles. This was a long time ago, early '80s. And they took a kind of California surrealist group. There were only like – one was Gordon Onslow Ford, one was Lee Mullican, and they assigned me to write on Lee Mullican, so I went to visit him. And I just found him enchanting. You know, I really did.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And I always went over to the County Museum and thought – you know, those paintings that have a lot of, like, dots and linear patterns and –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it's the lines. He took the line up and put it on with his spatula.

MS. LARSEN: I loved those paintings, and I thought the County Museum should have one at – you know, have them at front and center, and they – a major one of those should be [up at the counter?]. And I thought, wow, I mean, just here is sitting there right in their midst, a major body of work.

MR. NORDLAND: They're doing a show now.

MS. LARSEN: Good. That's great.

MR. NORDLAND: They're doing a show now.

MS. LARSEN: Glad to hear it.

MR. NORDLAND: A woman is – I never – I don't know that I've even heard her name, but a woman is doing the show, and –

MS. LARSEN: Good.

MR. NORDLAND: – and Luchita seems to be confident that it's going to go ahead.

MS. LARSEN: Finally.

MR. NORDLAND: And I'm hopeful, because he was a wonderful artist.

MS. LARSEN: He was.

MR. NORDLAND: I once had a day with him at Paul Kantor's, probably about '53. We installed his show together. We decided what to put in the window, and try it this way, try it that way, try it another way.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, yes, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He was a lot of fun. He did sculptures out of pick-up sticks.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Those are nice, too. He had a lot of those in his office at UCLA. He had a quite a surprising amount of -

MR. NORDLAND: I was never in his office.

MS. LARSEN: He had a lot of his stuff in the office, which was - I met him at his office.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh.

MS. LARSEN: You saw quite a bit just in the office.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, well, he was a benevolent force.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But he was not a person that got into correcting errors and whatever, you know? He let the weight of the group go, you see? He - I'm sure he defended Dick to some extent, but not to the extent of creating turbulent waters for himself.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he was there a long time, I'm sure. So do you remember whether, when you arrived, Richard Diebenkorn was still on faculty?

MR. NORDLAND: I think he was just leaving.

MS. LARSEN: He was just leaving, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Here's some things that I did.

[Transcriber note: Telephone rings and the tape recorder is paused.]

MS. LARSEN: Record is on. Here we are on track two of disk number four. Thank you for the coffee. Okay. So there you are the Frederick Wight Art Gallery at UCLA, and I was thinking in terms of at that time the LA County Museum was putting on a press to do more with contemporary art it seemed. Did you have a sense of your institution and the LA County modern department working in tandem at all or were you kind of not relating especially or -

MR. NORDLAND: No, I didn't feel that our obligation was particularly to be a modern. I thought it was a facility on campus that should expand the experience of the citizenry. And so I showed one or two important Gruenwald shows every year. And the Gruenwald Collection is really distinguished. There's a lot of very good material there. I got a grant to develop a collection of photography, and I got Franklin Murphy to match the grant from one of the foundations that he sat on. And this catalogue represents the founding of that collection, which I then deposited at the Gruenwald in Solander boxes so that students could become acquainted with great figures of contemporary photography. I didn't have a lot of money. I think 20,000 was - I built that whole collection with \$20,000, which would be worth many - much more than that now. Some of the prints themselves would be worth that. But, you know, it was very hard to get some of those artists - Walker Evans and such.

MS. LARSEN: Ansel Adams, Minor White, Edmund Teske.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, Edmund, of course. Anyway, that was a collection that became a study collection. It was a show. Bob Heinecken was at the school, and Heinecken was a big help.

MS. LARSEN: Good.

MR. NORDLAND: And Heinecken was thrilled that the institution would take, you know, a response that would be so supportive to his student body. So that was a reward. I felt the same about doing the Diebenkorn monotype show. There was a woman's board that helped me with a show each year. Sometimes they wanted to do the show.

MS. LARSEN: Themselves as curators?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, yes. There was [Sydney] "Francie" Brody, who was a particularly nasty piece of work, that was – she had a museum, and her husband had a museum. He had the LA County, and she had the UCLA.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: And so they had their his-and-hers museums and they were like bookends. They – I did this show with their money [Fourteen Abstract Painters, UCLA, 1975], but the head of the committee was not Francie but Joanne Philips. There's Steve Sloman.

MS. LARSEN: Aha, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He was an interesting painter. He was then showing with Poindexter.

MS. LARSEN: Interesting.

MR. NORDLAND: I bought my drawing from Poindexter.

MS. LARSEN: These are familiar. Robert Ryman. Interesting.

MR. NORDLAND: And I had him come out and give a talk.

MS. LARSEN: Good.

MR. NORDLAND: He was incoherent. He couldn't talk.

MS. LARSEN: Well, that's –

MR. NORDLAND: This man just died – [Harvey] Quaytman [1937-2002]. Do you know him?

MS. LARSEN: I've seen his work around.

MR. NORDLAND: He showed at the David McKee.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I didn't know him.

MR. NORDLAND: David McKee or – David McKee?

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Harvey Quaytman.

MR. NORDLAND: He shows with McKee, and he's – I thought he was a wonderful, warm, smart fellow. And he didn't have a very good life. Doug Ohlson was married to Susan Caldwell, the –

MS. LARSEN: Oh, the dealer, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: The dealer, yes. And he was a close friend of Ray Parker's and – I thought he was an interesting painter.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I think he is.

MR. NORDLAND: And this guy –

MS. LARSEN: Alden Mason –

MR. NORDLAND: I was just nuts about him. Now he got to the point where he couldn't work with those materials. He had to change.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm

MR. NORDLAND: And – he's working with an entirely different set of materials and the work is entirely different, more like Jean Dubuffet. But this was so lyrical and I thought it was so high spirited and rewarding, that I was quite thrilled with him and with his progress.

MS. LARSEN: Lives in Seattle. And look at this Brice Marden – look at this classic Brice Marden. Somebody smart should have purchased that one.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, well what's the year of that show? '68?

MS. LARSEN: '75? But this is a - very nice.

MR. NORDLAND: '75? So it's almost thirty years ago. Anyway I had - I made a plastic frame- plastic fence around the Ryman and the Marden to keep people away because after all I had sent the "surrealist object" back to Reinhardt and I wasn't going to have that happen.

MS. LARSEN: It worked out, huh?

MR. Nordland: They would have kicked it and down and the guards would have taken them to jail. [Laughs] But you know -

MS. LARSEN: Sure. After a while you can predict what might happen, and it's better to prevent it.

MR. NORDLAND: I did a huge Japanese show, with the Freer. And it was called "Birds, Beasts, Blossoms and Bugs." It was a wonderful show.

MS. LARSEN: It was gorgeous.

MR. NORDLAND: And it was about eight million dollars worth of art at the time. And of course, the only thing newspaper people care about is "What is it worth?" And I thought, "Well, I've got to do something about being burglar proof." - I mean this is - something. These are national treasures.

MS. LARSEN: And it wasn't? It wasn't at the time? The gallery wasn't? No?

MR. NORDLAND: I had the LA police and the Santa Monica police and the campus police come in and I had a little seminar. And they told me "We can come in from the library this way, we can come in from a roof in this way, we can come in through the back door this way. We just cut a hole in the back door and walk in."

MS. LARSEN: They did a diagnosis for you of your situation. Wasn't good, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: So the answer was hire a guy with a shotgun and a dog. Have him sleep here. I did it. Nobody even tried. Though I, you see, I had had - you remember the Matisse drawing? The Matisse decoupage? Someone had tried to break in, they broke a window, and there was a plastic cover on it, they actually scarred the piece. But they couldn't get it. So that was why I was so pathologically defensive about protecting. So when you have something like that - it was very sensible for the guys to come up with this - the guy with a shotgun. You let him in at night and then you let him out in the morning.

MS. LARSEN: It's a - it's very simple, clear -and probably the least expensive thing you could do.

MR. NORDLAND: That's why I did it. I didn't have a lot of money. Anyway that - but we did things with the - let's see, there was no facility for the ethnographic exhibition material. So we would do ethnographic shows. We did a wonderful show from Guatemala - fabrics - we did things like this. Burri. We talked about Burri yesterday. I did the Burri show.

MS. LARSEN: I'm sure I saw this.

MR. NORDLAND: It went to the Guggenheim. It went to the Marion Kugler McNay in Texas. And I took it at the Milwaukee Art Museum, when I became director. I had planned it to go to Minneapolis, but Minneapolis finked out, and I squeezed it in at Milwaukee. And we've already talked about Bernard Kester and Vasa, suggesting here was an internationally famous artist who has roots, or connections at least with Los Angeles, we ought to do the show, this was something that Nunes and Stussi and a lot of the others thought was just a terribly stupid thing to do. Dick wrote me a letter about it.

MS. LARSEN: About the Burri show?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, he said he was leery of it, he didn't really want to go see it, but he did go to see it towards the end of the show. And he said "It really is an important work, I was very impressed."

MS. LARSEN: Isn't that nice? Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: I didn't even keep all the letters. But that was just a volunteer letter that I was very grateful for.

MS. LARSEN: I bet you were. Well the -

MR. NORDLAND: And you know that out of that, I got a major Burri for the garden.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, which is still there.

MR. NORDLAND: The great wall [?]. There's only two in the world. One is in Naples, Italy. They're not the same, because they're made with a technology – they're not made but permitted to form, like his cracqueleurs.

[MR. NORDLAND walks away from microphone then comes back]

MS. LARSEN: So it's acrylic, earth and glue, on cellotex. Cellotex?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. Building material like wall board.

MS. LARSEN: Oh my, that's a nice material. Very fleshy feeling. Nice

MR. NORDLAND: He induces it then stops it. You know, he wants it to crack. But – this is the first one I bought [Richard DeVore pot].

MS. LARSEN: It almost feels organic. It doesn't feel –

MR. NORDLAND: Voluptuous [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: They are. They're very nice. I like this –

MR. NORDLAND: Like mud cracking in the river bed.

[Phone rings. Audio break.]

MS. LARSEN: So the period of time that – you were comfortable in L.A and did you think you were going to stay on at the Wight? Or were you already looking around.

MR. NORDLAND: No. I wasn't looking.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, and you did the – did you do a building project there? Yes? And you remodeled what they had? Yes?

MR. NORDLAND: We had – we extended the building and improved it considerably with facilities people wouldn't ordinarily see. And I think it was a minimal – minimalist kind of extension. It was not a huge thing but it gave us a lot more space.

MS. LARSEN: And it really was the place to go – for shows. I mean it was a – even I figured that out pretty quickly that that was a major venue in Los Angeles and you went there when you wanted –

MR. NORDLAND: Well Fred had done a wonderful job, Fred had done a great job. He showed Arthur Dove, John Marin, Morris Graves. He did things that America had to know about, and he did them in L.A. And it was a big contribution and he added a good deal to the cocktail of what was going in L.A. He did Hans Hofmann. Unfortunately he had a guy named Jack Carter working with him. And Jack Carter was a bad installer, and he used color inappropriately.

MS. LARSEN: Too much, you mean?

MR. NORDLAND: Too much color and with Hans Hofmann you need to keep it simple. He would paint a red wall and put a red painting on it.

MS. LARSEN: Just make it look tacky.

MR. NORDLAND: I was able to tame him a little.

MS. LARSEN: And Fred Wight was also a painter wasn't he?

MR. NORDLAND: Fred was a painter, and his mother was a painter. And he was a very gifted writer. And he was a CIA – before CIA, OSS in World War II – then he'd gone back and got a quick Master's at Harvard – that program – and then he knew the Boston area –

MS. LARSEN: Was it the Paul Sacks museum class? At Harvard?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I guess so. There was a program and what everybody called the "quick" Master's. That's not clear to me. I've done research at Cambridge but I'm not an intimate of anybody there. A lot of those people are just names to me. Because I would dip in on a weekend, and get my work done then I would have to get back to Winchester Repeating Arms on Monday. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs]. That's funny. Okay so how did that transition happen in '77 where you went from UCLA

to the Milwaukee Art Museum.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, we didn't talk about the sculpture garden. And I think we ought to.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: Because I added a piece every six months to the sculpture garden, and I didn't have any money.

MS. LARSEN: Now who was the patron of the sculpture garden? Did you have a patron?

MR. NORDLAND: Well the original patron was - let me see - the original thing was a gift from David Bright collection to Murphy when Murphy was chancellor and he said to the donor - the best sculpture was retained and the paintings sold. The choice was made to concentrate on sculpture and the garden.

MS. LARSEN: Kantor?

MR. NORDLAND: No, no. If I had my old *ArtForums*, I could look it up because I did pictures of the major collectors and he's one of them, and he wanted to give the collection to UCLA. See I was - I hadn't gone to a museum yet, I was still an art school administrator. So - he said it would be better for us to accept your sculpture and use the gift of the paintings to add sculpture to the collection and we could build a great collection here - Bright, David Bright. It's not five letters, six letters. So they started out with some stuff, they started out with - let's see - I can't do it in seriatim, what were their first gifts were. When I got there, they had maybe fifteen sculptures.

MS. LARSEN: There was a great David Smith that I remember.

MR. NORDLAND: And the David Smith was not in that gift, it was later. I got a Maillol, There was a Maillol but we got a second one and that was from one of the Fords - it had been outside in Deerborn, Michigan for years and it was a torso for one of the three Graces. They stand next to each other, linking hands and all - it was just a torso. I got that figurative sculptor, begins with a B - is currently married to -

MS. LARSEN: Botero?

MS. LARSEN: No. Southern California. Who is married to a movie star.

MS. LARSEN: Oh I know who you mean. Bobby Graham.

MR. NORDLAND: Bob Graham. I got him to repatinate it. Let's see. We got a Hadzi. We had a Hadzi, we got a new Hadzi. There had been a Voukos, I got a [second] great Voukos, the greatest of all the outdoor ceramic pieces, and I think I installed it in an uncanny place, just as good as it could be. The same group of women that funded annual shows, funded the Miró purchase.

MS. LARSEN: Oh really?

MR. NORDLAND: The Fletcher Benton I got through a donor and Fletcher. The Nakian came from Weisman. That's the -

MS. LARSEN: Frederick Weisman?

MR. NORDLAND: Pardon?

MS. LARSEN: I'm sorry, you're talking about the Weisman family in Beverly Hills.

MR. NORDLAND: Fred Weisman and Marsha. They were still together then, they hadn't split up. I guess they're both dead now. I'm trying to go around the garden and I can't -

MS. LARSEN: But that's -

MR. NORDLAND: I did two catalogues of the collection: a cheap one and one a little more expensive with better photographs. The first one was coordinated by the photographer, who was giving the photographs, and the second one was really my work. [Laughs.] If somebody wants to get his own photographs, it becomes -

MS. LARSEN: His interpretation, perhaps?

MR. NORDLAND: It services him rather than the garden. Anyway, I was rather proud of the garden and I felt that we did a lot of good things there. But they - Fred did - Fred and Murphy did some wonderful things. I don't think the Caro was a particularly important one to get. I had done the first museum show of Caro in America at the

Washington Gallery of Modern art. You know who installed that show?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, there was – my janitor. Me.

MS. LARSEN: The Caro show?

MR. NORDLAND: Tony. David Smith.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: Ken Noland.

MS. LARSEN: Now. How did David Smith get in there? Noland was in Washington, I figured yes?

MR. NORDLAND: Noland was in Washington. And David was just visiting. And David had been a huge influence on Caro. He – this was his first museum show.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, isn't that something.

MR. NORDLAND: I told – when I was still an art critic – well before that, I Met David through Charlie Egan. They were both pretty good drinkers and they used to go to a place called Shrafft's on 54th st –

MS. LARSEN: Shrafft's cafeteria? Or restaurant?

MR. NORDLAND: Shrafft's restaurant, I guess it was. Anyway, they served scotch in weighty glasses. And it was an opening night that he had a show at Valentin and [Marian] Willard. He had a show at both.

MS. LARSEN: David Smith had – wow.

MR. NORDLAND: In the same night.

MS. LARSEN: Was one drawings and paintings? Or were they both - ?

MR. NORDLAND: Both sculpture. I think there were a few drawings but it was basically sculpture. Anyway, I ran into him later, and he said – when I was an art critic – “Could you have any influence with Kantor?” and I said, “Well, you know, he's followed my suggestions many times.” And he said “Well, he did a show for Gottlieb of his works on paper, and I'd like to have a show of my drawings.” So I took it to Paul and I don't know what happened, but – because I think I was gone before it actually occurred. But David was very gemütlich friend.

MS. LARSEN: Who was Charles Egan like? I have always been fascinated by the uncanny –

MR. NORDLAND: My first Guggenheim application was to do a book on Charlie Egan and his gallery –

MS. LARSEN: Well, you know, he had an uncanny taste.

MR. NORDLAND: Uncanny.

MS. LARSEN: Just – I've always – just, in passing, thought, “I would like to know more about this person.” Now that's very interesting that you–

MR. NORDLAND: He was a close friend of J.B. Neuman. You know JB?

MS. LARSEN: Mmm-hmm. Of the New Art Circle, in New York, it showed a lot of Modernist artists.

MR. NORDLAND: I think he worked for JB for a while. He worked for other people. And finally he started his own place.

MS. LARSEN: But he put together shows that had such clarity of impact.

MR. NORDLAND: And when you think he was showing Aaron Siskind before people thought photography was art. And he was showing Fred Sommer. And he was showing Reuben Nakian and saying “This is one of the best artist's in America.” Way in ahead of everybody, he was showing Raoul Hague, he did the first show for Bill de Kooning, he did the first show – the breakthrough show for Guston. He showed Tworikov before Peridot or any of those places did.

MS. LARSEN: And how did he come to be a dealer? Who was he? He's just a name to me but I look at the track of

what he did –

MR. NORDLAND: well I said, he worked for other people and other galleries to earn a living, but he spent – for example, when you look at the charter members of the club, he was about the third, fourth member. So he knew [Philip] Pavia and [Earl Kerkam] and [Constantino] Nivola and de Kooning and – the whole mob. He knew them all as drinking buddies and he was in and out of their studios long before he had a gallery. So he had done his homework, he'd prepared himself. He was a really – when you think about it – Sam Kootz very bright, and Betty Parsons very intuitive, but he was –

MS. LARSEN: Egan came the first.

MR. NORDLAND: He was the – he was the one. Now Krasner used to say “Egan, Kootz and Parsons are the establishment.” I mean – that was the ‘old boys club’ kind of thing. And she always had to show at other places. Because she was thrown out – Parsons tossed her out. So she always had to find some other place to go. And of course, Parsons showed Jackson – and you know, Sam went bankrupt – Sam Kootz went bankrupt – once and it should have been twice. He was showing kinds of people like Browne.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, Byron Browne?

MR. NORDLAND: Byron Browne. And – oh, I'm trying to think – maybe [Karl] Knaths.

MS. LARSEN: Didn't he have some shown at a department store?

MR. NORDLAND: He did, he did, exactly, that was one of the things he should have been bankrupt on, but he didn't have to. He went bankrupt, I think, on the Picasso deal. He bought a whole bunch of Picasso's and went way into debt. But then he settled down where he was showing Gottlieb, Hofmann, David Hare, Robert Motherwell, Baziotes. We forget, Baziotes was maybe the hottest one of them all at that time. Because he'd shown with Peggy and he had a kind of a surrealist acceptance that other guys didn't have.

MS. LARSEN: It looked like European art that was already established.

MR. NORDLAND: And it was beautifully painted.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. Gorgeous color.

MR. NORDLAND: It was beautifully painted. And he used colors that nobody else dared to use. It would be sweet, it would be feminine. And it would be all the things you can't do.

MS. LARSEN: And very pleasant to have in your environment and very pleasant to look at.

MR. NORDLAND: Did I show you – in one of these things did I bring you a 1951 catalogue?

MS. LARSEN: I don't think so.

MR. NORDLAND: Did I edit it out? What's the matter with me? Because there was something you ought to know about, because chances are you don't know about it.

MS. LARSEN: It was in the Diebenkorn.

MR. NORDLAND: It was kind of a pink catalogue.

MS. LARSEN: I don't recall. There was a brochure.

MR. NORDLAND: No, no. This is a catalogue of a special show.

MS. LARSEN: No, nothing here.

MR. NORDLAND: Just a second.

[Mr. Nordland walks away from the microphone.]

MR. NORDLAND: This was a great show that Jimmy Byrnes did at LA County. And I don't exactly – I can't remember exactly how he did it, but this was done – it was organized around the same time that the Museum of Modern Art was doing its first American abstract show, which showed the first generation around World War I and the '20s and the second generation, the '30s and '40s. And it was about '51.

MS. LARSEN: So they were right up to snuff here.

MR. NORDLAND: And Andrew Carnduff Ritchie wrote that text. Now Andrew had been out to jury a show. In fact, I think he juried one of these shows.

MS. LARSEN: Here's a Baziotes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, that was purchased.

MS. LARSEN: Here's a Mullican too. And here's a Jules Engle, also.

MR. NORDLAND: Yup. And isn't that a [Yves] Tanguy down at the bottom?

MS. LARSEN: Yes. There's Tanguy. And here's Rothko and [Theodoros] Stamos. And [Calvert] Coggeshall. Settled in Maine, this guy.

MR. NORDLAND: Coggeshall, isn't yes he's good, isn't he?

MS. LARSEN: His widow's in Maine, and nobody is interested in the work, there's no market for it, there's no dealer, there's nothing. It's sitting a barn, with a leaky roof. Not being taken care of at all. I'm not sure she's even still alive. I went to see her some years ago. She was a very interesting person; she was my first assignment for the Archives. I went to see her out of respect for her husband's work, looked around a little bit, and she said to me, "Well, when they send a man to see me, when the gentleman comes from the Archives, then I'll be glad to speak with him."

MR. NORDLAND: Couldn't speak to you because you're a woman and therefore couldn't be a version of authority.

MS. LARSEN: Oh my, nice Beckmann, look at that.

MR. NORDLAND: \$3800 dollars, you buy that for.

MS. LARSEN: The subject is San Francisco, too. Fascinating.

MR. NORDLAND: Now, he did Expressionist tendencies, Romantic tendencies and Classic tendencies.

MS. LARSEN: You could have a whole education out of this show. Couldn't you?

MR. NORDLAND: It was a fabulous show.

MS. LARSEN: If you just paid attention -

MR. NORDLAND: Now, it wasn't as pretentious as Andrew Carnduff Ritchie's. But, you know, it was a terrific show. And he selected all by himself, he had no foot soldiers. He didn't even have very much travel money. But somehow he put this together. And that was a - out of that show was the first time I saw Woelffer [*Day is Orange*, 1950, enamel on board, 24 x 18 in.]. And I bought it.

MS. LARSEN: There's a few Maine? things here too, Lee Gatch. You bought it?

MR. NORDLAND: Mmm-hmm.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, wow.

MR. NORDLAND: Now what's this. This - Forsythe Gallery brochure for a Jules Engel exhibition.

MS. LARSEN: Ah-ha . Oh. Ah-ha. I've met him a few times. He worked for - the WPA and taught at CalArt.

MR. NORDLAND: He just died.

MS. LARSEN: Did he just die? I'm not surprised.

MR. NORDLAND: When I gave my talk on Picasso ceramics in LA about a year ago, Toby Moss picked him up and brought him to see me. I was giving a talk at like 7 o'clock, he came at six, and we got to reminisce for a while.

MS. LARSEN: That's nice.

MR. NORDLAND: And - I hadn't seen - you know, he was a dear old friend. I must have had about a dozen of his paintings. I think my kids all have them now. But I thought the world of him. I think she thought maybe I would do a book on Jules. And then he died.

MS. LARSEN: Look at the Motherwell and the Gottlieb. That's a beautiful Gottlieb.

MR. NORDLAND: This is – *At Five in the Afternoon* [1950], the one that Josephine Kantor bought. This Gottlieb – let's look at the measurements – 54. It was the biggest Gottlieb I thought I had ever seen. And it was fabulous. Where the hell is this – oh there it is. No measurements.

MS. LARSEN: Oh. Well, that's the period of his work that's really good –

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, wait a moment, wait a moment, it'll be here. I was looking under biographies or something. 60 by 72 inches.

MS. LARSEN: Very nice.

MR. NORDLAND: Five feet tall by six feet wide.

MS. LARSEN: That's a beauty.

MR. NORDLAND: And colorful.

MS. LARSEN: Wonder where it went.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. Well, let's think about Gottlieb. The price – just to understand that. \$1500 dollars.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I was going to say two thousand. Wow. Course, the price of a house, was ten thousand dollars. Of a modest house.

MR. NORDLAND: '51, uh. Fourteen thousand. Fourteen thousand in a tract, twenty-five miles from town. The Motherwell was \$900. I helped to arrange the loan for Barbara Haskell for the "Art of the 20th century" at the Whitney Museum. Josephine [Morris] agreed. Did you see the show by any chance?

MS. LARSEN: No, I don't think so. No.

MR. NORDLAND: It should have been bigger. It was given a whole wall, and the wall was too big. And as great as that picture is – it didn't work just right. And Barbara's got good sense. Did you see her Nadelman show?

MS. LARSEN: I did not, no.

MR. NORDLAND: It was beautiful.

MS. LARSEN: No, I've seen the book but I haven't seen the show.

MR. NORDLAND: It's wonderful to be able to do what neat – there's the Woelffer. *Day is Orange*. I think Mary Nordland – Mary Nordland Bodo still owns it.

MS. LARSEN: I can't afford to go to New York as often as I'd like. I just plain can't afford it. You know, when you think about getting down from Maine and staying somewhere, it's – I go for work and occasionally I go visit friends but – it's just how it is. If you're not in a big city, it's a haul. So – I miss some things I would like to see.

MR. NORDLAND: I'm able to do it couple – three times a year for about six days. It's the two air tickets. Because we stay at Paula's sister's apartment. And you know, if you save \$1200 dollars, it makes it not so prohibitively expensive.

MS. LARSEN: I do have a friend I stay with. But it's – it's probably as or about or less expensive to fly from Chicago to New York, as it is to get from Maine down to New York even though ostensibly it's closer. But big city to big city is much better. You have to make different –

MR. NORDLAND: We go around \$200, round trip.

MS. LARSEN: See, my fair is more like five or six.

MR. NORDLAND: \$412 or something for two of us – of course you have taxes. And this time it's going to be more difficult, we're going out on the first. Paula's sister has had a knee operation, so we're going to be doing taxis all the time. And I'm going to have to get a – a wheelchair, that I can put in the trunk.

MS. LARSEN: That's good though, because of the public access.

[Audio break.]

MR. NORDLAND: She works in the publishing business. She used to be at Viking.

MS. LARSEN: That was his wife. Teresa Egan.

MR. NORDLAND: Egan. Yes – She – yes his wife, I'm sorry I thought you said Theresa White. There's an obit in the New York Times on Charlie.

MS. LARSEN: When did he die?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, ten years ago. I've got it somewhere, it's probably hidden in my Nakian stuff. I'd written a Nakian book, which Paul Nakian is free to do with what he will. He's a lawyer. He's been dealing with his father's work for a long time. We got a deal with Marlboro for a wonderful show, I did the catalogue. And he was selling out of the office, without Reubens knowing it. Well, they dumped him. Now he's been with Kouros [Gallery].

MS. LARSEN: Yes, which is a –

MR. NORDLAND: And Kouros is – you know.

MS. LARSEN: I know. Yes, that guy is weird.

MR. NORDLAND: He's not that aggressive. Though he does have taste and some good people in the stable.

MS. LARSEN: He had some good people but the enterprise was sort of schlocky.

MR. NORDLAND: And I don't think his wife was a help. I think she's a difficulty. I'm ruining your time.

MS. LARSEN: Okay, here we go. So here we are – so '77 came along and things suddenly weren't good at UCLA or at the Wight gallery – a

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I don't think I was unhappy at UCLA. I felt that it was an unfriendly climate. I got a wonderful response from the students. And I didn't think that I was serving the art department, I thought I was serving the campus.

MS. LARSEN: And the city, too.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I didn't feel that so much. You can't go to UCLA unless you take a bus. You can't park at UCLA, you can't park within miles of UCLA. You have to take a cab. Go to Westwood and take a cab.

MS. LARSEN: Or walk.

MR. NORDLAND: Or walk. I did a show to open the new museum "African Art in Motion" with Robert Farris Thompson. And it was a terrific show. It used three film stations and five video stations – and you could see the work that was in the show danced in Africa, paraded in Africa. It was a –

MS. LARSEN: I saw that show.

MR. NORDLAND: It was a bang of a show. It went to the National Gallery after we had it. Now, you know the National Gallery always says "We do it first." I said "Well, if you've got Hollywood with you, go ahead. But I think it would be a lot smarter if we did it first and worked out all the difficulties and then we'd come back and install it for you."

MS. LARSEN: And you did.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, we didn't exactly, because they had that guy who mercifully died, begins with an R, who was their installation man. And he turned my black show into a white show. They spent more money on the floor coverings for the show than they did for rental of the show.

MS. LARSEN: Now, by "turning your black show into a white show," what do you mean?

MR. NORDLAND: It was a mysterious show with lights coming up, and lights on pieces and then video. Dark interior. He made it all the reverse of that. And I think it was a mistake. But Carter Brown is – you know. Carter Brown had been on my committee in – when I was in Washington. I invited a representative of each museum to meet every three months, have lunch, talk about what we were doing and see if one of us was doing a Stuart Davis show or one of us was planning on doing an Arthur Dove show – because we could step on each other's toes.

MS. LARSEN: Sure, and waste time and resources.

MR. NORDLAND: Anyway, Carter was very condescending, always, with his great interest in Modern art, like Roy Lichtenstein. And he just let this guy go, he just didn't know how to deal with him. And he was the director.

MS. LARSEN: But maybe – did he not know better? Maybe he didn't know better.

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know, I don't know. I think it – it's something about being a head of the National Gallery, you think "I've got a heady team."

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I know the current director. He used to be at the LA County.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh yes, sure, Earl Powell.

MS. LARSEN: So did Milwaukee call you?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, they called me. And –

MS. LARSEN: Now that's a big switch – Milwaukee from California and all the things you've done. How did that happen?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, my father was born in Milwaukee, my mother was born in Superior, Wisconsin, and I've been there a few times. I had been there a few times and I met Dr. Morley, I really met her for the first time there. I had seen her at the San Francisco museum, but she was just a gray eminence – you know, going back to an office somewhere. And – they asked me to come back and see the place, and I did. They put me up at the club across the street, the University Club. It was very pleasant. I had a cousin in the town and I saw him and his wife and children. And – I told them "No." Then one of the vice presidents had some business in LA, so he called me and said he was going to be in LA and he wondered if we could arrange to have dinner. I said "Sure," and so I had him visit me on the campus and I showed him the museum and I showed him the garden. And then he and his wife and I – went to dinner. And he said he didn't think I had got it, didn't see the opportunity when I visited, and he urged me to look at it again.

MS. LARSEN: That's a nice way of putting it – in a strange way.

MR. NORDLAND: Anyway, I – I guess I felt a little discomfort from everybody except [Lee] Mullican on the Fine Arts faculty. I – It didn't rub me that I had difficulty with some of the art historians. But I had them on my committee and when they wanted to do an art historical show, I was ready and willing. But I didn't consider it a Modernist outlook, I considered it a service for the general education of the campus. And I was constantly saying that to the campus daily newspaper, and I was saying "How come you people from the south campus never come up here?" It isn't that far. It's true, we got only the north campus people. Anyway – I had been divorced for five or six years and I was seeing a woman in San Francisco and – that kind of collapsed. And I thought "Well, what the hell, I might as well look into that." And I did. But you know, the garden was a pretty good thing, and I felt quite proud of it, quite connected with it.

MS. LARSEN: There's none better in southern California. Really. There are other ones, but they do not have the beauty and the –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, we also had the garden.

MS. LARSEN: And the space, you had a good space.

MR. NORDLAND: And it was well planned. It was thoughtfully worked out. And you know, there are a number of other gardens on the campus. There's a eucalyptus garden with something like five hundred different types of eucalyptus trees. There's a Japanese garden. There's a cactus garden.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I never saw any of those.

MR. NORDLAND: It's a resource. But, anyway, yes I did.

MS. LARSEN: So Milwaukee is a much smaller city.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, oh it's a tiny city.

MS. LARSEN: It's a working – sort of a working class reputation, kind of town. And – what did they have there to work with?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, they had the Bradley collection. They had a new building. Tracy Atkinson had just built a new building and was fired. And – I admired Tracy and liked him very much and we tried several times to collaborate. I thought he did a wonderful job. It was the state of Georgia O'Keeffe, it was the state of Frank Lloyd

Wright, and of Mark Tobey. Three of the great American artists. And of the three, of course I placed Frank Lloyd Wright first. And – so when they asked me – they had a collection of materials – prairie school collection, architecture collection, which had come through a furniture designer [George M. Niedecken, who] had worked for Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright in the first decade, maybe first fifteen years of the twentieth century. The collection is named after him. And it came from his design office. So we did some Frank Lloyd Wright shows or we did some Prairie School shows. And I kept acquiring Sullivan and Wright things. I got a window from the Darwin Martin house in Buffalo. It's a *Tree of Life Window* [c. 1903-5]. It's the greatest single window, of course there were hundred of them in the building, but I did get one. There was a committee going out of business and they said "We have a little money, we'd like to buy something important by a Wisconsin artist." I said "well, you can't afford an O'Keeffe, and we've got six or seven, you can't afford a Tobey. But you can get probably the very best piece of stained glass by Frank Lloyd Wright and it's the most for the money." And I think we got it for \$7500 and it's since gone for a hundred thousand.

MS. LARSEN: Sure, it was – at that – right around that time people just started thinking of those things as collectibles. It wasn't – when people started tearing down these buildings at the turn of the century suddenly, like business with the Louis Sullivan, Art Institute and all of that – people started to wake up, I think –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, Chicago was the most asleep out of all the – they tore down many places, many, many places. And Nickel, you know the story of Nickel?

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: Photographer –

MS. LARSEN: Richard Nickel? Yes I knew – he photographed a lot of the great buildings in Chicago –

MR. NORDLAND: He died in one of them.

MS. LARSEN: Which one? Was it the auditorium?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know. I don't know.

MS. LARSEN: That was about the time I was in school.

MR. NORDLAND: He wrote a book. I have it. He was a star.

MS. LARSEN: One of my professors at Northwestern, Carl Condit was a great historian of commercial architecture and J. Carson Webster taught at Northwestern and he wrote one of the first books on the Prairie School. And they spoke of Richard Nickel. And I remember them –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he was a saint. He did it because it needed to be done and there was nobody else that understood. And so he kept doing it and he had a pick up truck and he did what he needed to do, and he died doing it.

MS. LARSEN: Gosh.

MR. NORDLAND: And only later, people started coming out of the woodwork and saying that they sympathized with him. You know, at the time he couldn't even get money for gas.

MS. LARSEN: And those are the record shots of all those –

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, I mean he was a genius. But how motivated, how – you know, self starting. That's something.

MS. LARSEN: And no grant –

MR. NORDLAND: No grant.

MS. LARSEN: – and no support. No nothing. And maybe even in contravention of the building code committees or the police, or whoever was in charge of these things. "You may not cross this line."

MR. NORDLAND: There's a black and yellow tape that says "Don't –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, Carl Condit told us about that. He was – anyway, long forgotten. Were you there when they did the Michael Hall folk art collection acquisition?

MR. NORDLAND: No. I was there when we did the Herbert Wade Hemphill, Jr. collection. And we circulated it for

two years and we made money on it. I have a few pieces of folk art, I admire folk art. I don't really collect it. I did a survey and I found that Milwaukee does not like folk art. It was overwhelming; it was like 95% against folk art. I would not have done it.

MS. LARSEN: You would not have done the Hall acquisition?

MR. NORDLAND: I would not have done that, no. And - they made an installation of it, my successor.

MS. LARSEN: I think they paid a million dollars for it, too.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, well. Michael Hall is a very smart guy. He's building a new collection now about the industrial Midwest; the painting of the industrial Midwest of the rivers and towns. He's buying up stuff wholesale and he'll have another collection to sell for another million dollars somewhere along the line, to someplace like Flint that didn't have the sense to keep [Richard] Wattenmaker.

MS. LARSEN: Well, he found a good spot and I'm the beneficiary of it. So, so then Milwaukee - in Milwaukee, did you find that you made a life there for yourself or was it pretty much the job?

MR. NORDLAND: Well - I - when I came to southern California from San Francisco, I had bought my mother a house in a town about fifty miles north. And after my wife and I split, I used to spend every Sunday with my mother at this little town.

MS. LARSEN: This is in Wisconsin?

MR. NORDLAND: Santa Rose, California, a town of fifty thousand, fifty miles north of San Francisco. When I moved to UCLA, I sold the house and gave half the money to my ex-wife. And I bought a house in Brentwood. And I moved my mother into the master bedroom, and I had one of the - there were three bedrooms. One of them was big enough for Brady and Todd to come in stay - twin beds - and I had the other bedroom. And - as I say, I was seeing a lady in San Francisco. And when that started to collapse, why I felt like I might as well go to Milwaukee.

MS. LARSEN: And did your mother pass away?

MR. NORDLAND: No, I - I moved her here and I bought a little place in Brookfield, which is a suburb of Milwaukee. I was focusing very much on the museum but I was also getting around the - I would get to Chicago occasionally. I got a letter from Paula Prokopoff - Paula Giannini Prokopoff, now Nordland - and she said "Would you write me a letter?" She had called UCLA and found out I was in Milwaukee. And so I said "Course I'll write a letter." And I did -

MS. LARSEN: A letter for what?

MR. NORDLAND: I can't remember, some kind of a recommendation.

MS. LARSEN: How did you know - did you know her before? You must have -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, I knew her from - when Steve [Stephen Prokopoff] would come - Steve was born in California and his parents - his mother lived in Berkeley, his father lived in Sacramento, and he would come out every summer and he would always come and see me. And he usually rented a show from me. And he rented my Fritz Glarner show from San Francisco.

MS. LARSEN: He did a Fritz Glarner show? My goodness.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I'm nuts about that work.

MS. LARSEN: I am too. I like it very much

MR. NORDLAND: He's a great artist. Great, great artist. He was already debilitated when I worked with him. I didn't do the essay, Natalie Edgar, Philip Pavia's wife, wrote the piece for me. She did it in New York and I didn't have the time to do that. But we did the best show that's ever been done for Fritz Glarner. And it went to the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Arts] at Philadelphia. I think it went one other place, maybe University of Iowa at Iowa City because a colleague of mine was there: Ulfert Wilke.

MS. LARSEN: So Paula had written to you for a recommendation.

MR. NORDLAND: Paula - again I - Steve had taken my Gaston Lachaise show at the MCA in Chicago and we had gone to dinner afterwards and - you know, I knew her. And she'd come - with Steve to visit me at the San Francisco Museum and - I didn't necessarily always remember people, but - I remembered Steve. Anyway, I

came down to see her and pretty soon we were courting, and then we got married.

MS. LARSEN: And you were still in Milwaukee and she was here in Chicago?

MR. NORDLAND: I – uh – we got married at the Unity Temple of Mr. Wright.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, how nice.

MR. NORDLAND: And – one fellow read E.E. Cummings and we went in to J.S. Bach and we went out to Sydney Bechet and the New Orleans foot warmers.

MS. LARSEN: And what year was that?

MR. NORDLAND: '81.

MS. LARSEN: That's a good long time now. I was married in '82.

MR. NORDLAND: So it's getting to be toward twenty five years. And I came down here in '86. I was fired in '85 and I came down here in '86 in May. And we took a little tiny apartment, laughably small. And half of the furniture that they brought down wouldn't go in. So they had to take it back.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, no! And what had happened with your mother?

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, she died. She died in '82. And I thought that I would be going to another museum. I was offered two or three jobs – Georgia, Florida, Laguna Art Museum in California –

MS. LARSEN: Oh boy, then we would have met each other again.

MR. NORDLAND: Some job in Seattle – but I – you know they were offering such crummy salaries and they – they would entertain you in marble halls and they would have all the benefits and you would have to live thirty five miles away and commute. I just couldn't take it. I couldn't do it. I don't like the South, so Georgia was not –

MS. LARSEN: Not appealing.

MR. NORDLAND: Not likely. I don't really like Florida but Florida had more to recommend – it had more money and had more contacts. There are a lot of contacts for Modern art in Florida. Gainesville, I think offered me a job. Anyway, I didn't do that. I wrote my Diebenkorn book and I did my Frank Lloyd Wright book. And I've done about six more, and I've been doing periodic catalogues, like one or two or year, and an occasional lecture gig.

MS. LARSEN: You're very busy. You really are.

MR. NORDLAND: I always have something ahead. I'm fussing now with doing a Diebenkorn in New Mexico's show.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, how nice.

MR. NORDLAND: For – uh, Taos.

MS. LARSEN: How nice, that would be beautiful.

MR. NORDLAND: As I said, I just did this thing for Logan – Utah – and – I did the Jack Jefferson show for Hackett-Freedman. Did you know Jack?

MS. LARSEN: I looked it up – I didn't know Jack, no.

MR. NORDLAND: He was Mr. Still's favorite student.

MS. LARSEN: Yup. There was some –

MR. NORDLAND: He was a close buddy of [Frank] Lobdell and a very close buddy of Jerry Hatofsky. And – it was fun –

MS. LARSEN: This was on the internet [Showing a printed document].

MR. NORDLAND: Oh yes? No kidding. I'll be damned. Oh yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, these were online.

MR. NORDLAND: Very nice.

MS. LARSEN: See? I found all these there.

MR. NORDLAND: This is very early. That was done on Chestnut Street. Does it say Chestnut Street?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it does.

MR. NORDLAND: Why is it on Chestnut Street? That's the address of the school. He had -

MS. LARSEN: Oh, is it? Oh, okay.

MR. NORDLAND: He had a place - he had a little apartment. He and Zena stayed in this little apartment on Chestnut Street, and he also had to lock up the place three nights a week. And if there was any kind of a problem he should bring it to Doug[las] MacAgy's attention.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. So he was like the night watchman in a way.

MR. NORDLAND: Kind of.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Kind of. It was a little more professional than that. But - because he didn't stay up all night.

MS. LARSEN: No.

MR. NORDLAND: But he did lock it up when school hours were over -

MS. LARSEN: Sure, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: - and, you know, see if any lights were out or this was wrong or -

MS. LARSEN: Did people stay on late to paint into the - beyond -

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

MS. LARSEN: They probably did. The studios were open, and -

MR. NORDLAND: Sure, sure.

MS. LARSEN: Sure. And you - and the last kid might walk out the door and wouldn't lock it, so -

MR. NORDLAND: That's exactly right. Exactly right. So he did that. And so he got free rent. And that's a Chestnut picture. And then he had a series of studios, but he always painted at home too. He did little pictures at home, and he did the big paintings - he was not a very productive artist, but I think he was a good one.

MS. LARSEN: And that's part of the deal, is to be productive, to have a body of work. That's really - real important.

MR. NORDLAND: There were some years he only did four or five pictures.

MS. LARSEN: What else did he do?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he did works on paper.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He did some prints.

MS. LARSEN: I just meant -

MR. NORDLAND: And he was a teacher. He was one of the old-line abstract expressionist teachers at the campus. But he didn't get that job to start with. It was - Mr. Still had been gone for 10 years before he was given a job to teach. And they tried him - he had gotten a grant that took him to New Mexico, and he got a letter from the dean, Gurdon Woods, who was a sculptor. Later on he taught at UC Santa Cruz.

MS. LARSEN: Not Corbett or -

MR. NORDLAND: No, no, Corbett would have never taken an administrative job.

MS. LARSEN: I don't know.

MR. NORDLAND: And anyway, Ed [Corbett] was in Washington then. That's where I made contact with Ed, was in Washington. I owned a Corbett. I bought a Corbett from Grace Borgenicht right after the "Fifteen Americans" show, but I didn't really meet Ed until I was in Washington. And - I'm digressing too much.

MS. LARSEN: No, no, that's okay. That's all right. It's - I was just reflecting on how, you know, working at the Whitney in the '80s, these artists would be in the collection but nobody wanted to see them, and if you brought them out and put them out, you'd be politely told, "No, no, that won't do." You know? That there are only certain things that people wanted to see. That's - it's -

MR. NORDLAND: And what about [A.E.] Gallatin and George LK Morris and Suzy [Frelinghuysen Morris]?

MS. LARSEN: Well, they graduated into the historical section -

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I see.

MS. LARSEN: - where it didn't matter. Now, you were going to tell me about Gallatin and Lachaise, which was something we mentioned yesterday and we -

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Have you seen the book?

MS. LARSEN: Yes. Long ago.

MR. NORDLAND: You know there was -

MS. LARSEN: Long ago I looked at the book. I wrote on Gallatin for my dissertation, so I read - the Art Institute had a copy.

MR. NORDLAND: Did you ever meet him?

MS. LARSEN: Never, no.

MR. NORDLAND: Uh-huh.

MS. LARSEN: He died in '53 or '7 or -

MR. NORDLAND: He died shortly after I met him.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, I saw him about '51 or early '52. I didn't think I was getting *The Times* daily then, so I often missed obituaries. Now I try not to, but, you know, I probably still miss them.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He was, you know, a real what would you say? Blue-blood American. His grandfather been -

MS. LARSEN: Secretary of the Treasury.

MR. NORDLAND: - the first Secretary of the Treasury. You know, he was of a different kind of patrician person. He -

MS. LARSEN: Where did you meet him?

MR. NORDLAND: I met him at his house in Manhattan. He didn't have me come to his club. He was a gentleman.

MS. LARSEN: What did he have in his house? I heard he had cigar store Indians and other unusual things besides what you'd expect to see. No?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't remember a cigar store Indian. I love the idea.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's what I was told.

MR. NORDLAND: Isn't that fabulous?

MS. LARSEN: Along with his Picassos and other things.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, but what a collection. You know his collection?

MS. LARSEN: I know what went to Philadelphia and what he had at –

MR. NORDLAND: Did you ever see that collection, the Gallatin Collection, that was published with a canvas cover?

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: It had an influence on Dick Diebenkorn. He owned a copy of that book.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. And he – in addition to Picasso and Braque and Léger and Gris and all of that, there were some people he'd never heard of, like [Julio] Gonzalez and [Kurt] Schwitters. And he really liked it, yes.

MS. LARSEN: There was a Matisse in that Gallatin Collection he talked about too. I think *Woman on a Chair*.

MR. NORDLAND: 1923 or something?

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: A woman at a window with crossed legs or something?

MS. LARSEN: Right. That one rang a bell when I thought of, you know, an influence.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, yes. He saw it in Philadelphia. He didn't see it in New York. And he saw the Modern's collection, you know? And he saw the Mirós. And of course he went to the Phillips all the time. And –

MS. LARSEN: So –

MR. NORDLAND: What do I know about Gallatin?

MS. LARSEN: Well, he had written on Lachaise when?

MR. NORDLAND: '24 I think.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-uh, yes, I think you're right. I think that's exactly right.

[Transcriber note: Long pause as Mr. Nordland goes to look for something.]

MR. NORDLAND: I had to get a ladder because it was – the Gallatin was up too high.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, oh, I –

MR. NORDLAND: Lachaise, of course, is within easy reach. But, see, he did the things that Lachaise would not have wished to do.

MS. LARSEN: The animals?

MR. NORDLAND: He didn't find – this.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: But he thought the pretty little fishes are no bloody good. And he thought that these are attractive stuff for Long Island people but not really art.

MS. LARSEN: That's what Lachaise thought?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. *This* is important. *That's* very important.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: This is important.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: This was the – this is Chestnut, and it is for a marble that goes around an elevator core in the second wing of the American Telephone and Telegraph Building downtown in Manhattan.

MS. LARSEN: Really, is it –

MR. NORDLAND: Now, this is okay, but too sweet.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: This is commercial art. [Laughs.]

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: So this he liked. He was very proud of this. In 1917. This was a portrait of Hartman's wife.

MS. LARSEN: Which was done for hire?

MR. NORDLAND: No, he loved her.

MS. LARSEN: He loved her? Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: He thought she was wonderful. And, of course, that's his wife. And this –

MS. LARSEN: That's beautiful.

MR. NORDLAND: This is Kraushaar's daughter.

MS. LARSEN: Really? Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: The lady who just died.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, Antoinette?

MR. NORDLAND: Antoinette. Now, this is owned by Cleveland, and it's heroic. It's enormous pink marble.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And, of course, this is the short next, it's wonderful –

MS. LARSEN: That's beautiful.

MR. NORDLAND: This – what I'm saying is A.E. Gallatin was a traditionalist, and he was trying to show Lachaise's traditionalist background, and he hardly showed the power and magnitude of what the man had to give. He made it cosmetic, and I don't – I never heard what Lachaise said about it, but –

MS. LARSEN: What did Gallatin say at the time about Lachaise? That he –

MR. NORDLAND: He talked about all the pieces. He talked about what he owned. Now, this is the part that I find interesting about his work: the photographs he took of these people and the pictures that he painted from these people and their pictures afterwards. I think that that's –

MS. LARSEN: He was an ardent student.

MR. NORDLAND: He was a student. He was a student.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And he looked, and he was a very penetrating fellow, a handsome fellow.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he was. Just like a movie star, wasn't he?

MR. NORDLAND: Like a movie star. Like a movie star.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, yes, Arp. Yes, that's – pictures of Arp are always just wonderful. But –

MR. NORDLAND: But, see, Dick saw this.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's Torres Garcia.

MR. NORDLAND: Of course. He had never heard of these people.

MS. LARSEN: Well, Torres Garcia would have been an unusual choice for Gallatin, and Schwitters. I mean, that's –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he was a student.

MS. LARSEN: And he –

MR. NORDLAND: And he put them into the category, but he realized that they were pushing borders that –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, they were the next generation.

MR. NORDLAND: They were the next generation.

MS. LARSEN: And he saw himself as part of that generation, as a kind of fellow traveler as an artist, which I don't think he thought he was a great artist, but that he even made art at all and put it out in public –

MR. NORDLAND: [Whispering.] He bought that. [Louder.] That was a daring thing to do.

MS. LARSEN: It was. And a lot of Gallatin's –

MR. NORDLAND: And look at what's against it.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, beautiful.

MR. NORDLAND: Is that something?

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, that guy had an eye.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And look at those. He bought the first Mondrian to ever be shown in New York. It was the *Composition with Blue and Yellow* [1925]. It was never shown in a public place. And that was the – it was – it's the *Composition with Blue and Yellow*. It appeared –

MR. NORDLAND: This one?

MS. LARSEN: – in 1932 at the Gallery of Living Art.

MR. NORDLAND: And it's dated 1918.

MS. LARSEN: And he bought that in Paris and brought it to New York and hung it on the wall, and you know who saw it? Burgoyne Diller and Harry Holtzman. Both were students of Hofmann's.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I would – I knew Harry.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And I knew Burgoyne. Oh, gawd, I didn't know that.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And Harry Holtzman and Burgoyne Diller both were very puzzled by that painting, very taken with it and upset by it. And they had different reactions to it. Diller was already looking at Russian constructivism, so he could kind of put it in a context and see what it was doing. Holtzman was shocked by it, although he was hanging around with Diller so his mind was open to these ideas.

MR. NORDLAND: Sure. And they were all at the Art Students League.

MS. LARSEN: They were studying with Hofmann. And Holtzman was –

MR. NORDLAND: Hofmann was at the Arts Student League?

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And Hofmann – Holtzman was –

MR. NORDLAND: This would be '32, '33?

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And Harry Holtzman was the studio monitor for Hofmann. So he got out of – he went around to all his friends and raised money and booked a ship to Paris to find Mondrian.

MR. NORDLAND: To see Mondrian?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. And that's how their relationship began. But it was that painting that provoked –

MR. NORDLAND: I had forgotten that. I knew that had happened. And, of course, I learned about what Diller did

in the mural program. But I –

MS. LARSEN: What was he like when you met him?

MR. NORDLAND: I met him –

MS. LARSEN: I never met him.

MR. NORDLAND: – when he was at Rose Fried and he had a show, and I asked – I said, “I understand you do sculpture; I wonder if I could see a couple.” And he brought a couple in from New Jersey. And, as I said, I’d just bought the Diebenkorn, and I’d just bought the first – I bought the Motherwell No.1 Grenada of the Elegy to the Spanish Republic from Sam Kootz the first day I was in New York. And he wanted \$300 for this little thing, and I didn’t buy it.

MS. LARSEN: What was – did you have any impression of him?

MR. NORDLAND: He was a little bit high. He was drinking.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: He was morose. I tried to engage him in conversation about where he thought he was going and where he thought the constructions fitted into his paintings. You know, I bought a great Diller from Milwaukee.

MS. LARSEN: You did? Great.

MR. NORDLAND: A great Diller. Construction. It’s a painted framework with latticework, lines, white, black, blue, red.

MS. LARSEN: Just the right thing to buy, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And one pick-up stick.

MS. LARSEN: Ah.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, it’s a dowel.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, a dowel, yes. But just the right thing to buy.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. The head of the committee there that raised the money had a crying fit.

MS. LARSEN: They hated it so or –

MR. NORDLAND: One of her successors had a crying fit when I bought the Agnes Martin.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, golly. But it went through?

MR. NORDLAND: Nobody complained about buying the *Red and Blue Chair* [1918] of Rietveld. They just didn’t understand it at all. When I got the Albers for free and I got the Glarner and now I had the Diller –

MS. LARSEN: They said, “They’re taking over.”

MR. NORDLAND: – all of a sudden they say, “My gawd, this is wonderful; this is a collection.”

MS. LARSEN: Wow. Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: Slowly, painfully.

MS. LARSEN: Well, that’s what –

MR. NORDLAND: One step at a time.

MS. LARSEN: Education.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. I did annual reports, and I showed my great acquisitions each year. And I documented them and thanked everybody and did all the diplomatic things, but it’s stunning – the great Nadelman marble, you know, the heroic woman of Gaston Lachaise. It adds up.

MS. LARSEN: Well, when an institution –

MR. NORDLAND: And a Glarner! Imagine, I got a Glarner.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: I got great Diller – not a Diller, a great Diller, and the kind that nobody – I mean, people are hardly aware of. Not late; you know, early.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. Well, you know, when a museum hires someone like you, what they acquire is a lifetime of consideration, just a lifetime of consideration and all the things that you've connected to and all the background knowledge you have. You know, you bring so much to it. Of course, the – now, that one influenced – I did – I was going to do a show at NYU of the Gallatin collection.

MR. NORDLAND: Wouldn't that have been great?

MS. LARSEN: And I wrote the text, and we had a date certain, and everything was going. And then their director changed and the show was cancelled.

MR. NORDLAND: Who was the director? Was it a woman?

MS. LARSEN: It became Robert Littman.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, yes.

MS. LARSEN: But it had been a woman. I forget her name.

MR. NORDLAND: Ruth?

MS. LARSEN: Yes, she was the one who engaged me to do this.

MR. NORDLAND: And she did a study of early American abstract painters too.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, you mean Ruth Bowman.

MR. NORDLAND: Ruth Bowman.

MS. LARSEN: No, it was Ruth Bowman.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, it wasn't Ruth Bowman? It wasn't.

MS. LARSEN: No, but it was another person. You've got Gonzalez. These are all the familiar things that I studied for years. But we did a – sent out some letters to people who had been around in the period of the middle '30s when the collection was in full swing, and we got responses from Philip Guston and Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner and a whole bunch of people about what in the collection they saw and what impact it had.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, what they learned. Wonderful.

MS. LARSEN: And *The City* [1919] was the single biggest influence on people, and they wrote at length about Leger's *The City*. That was the big revelation.

MR. NORDLAND: That's a truly great work of art.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes, it is.

MR. NORDLAND: It was in the pop show, the one that Varnedoe and the [Adam] Gopnik man who now writes for *The New Yorker*.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, "The High and Low Show"?

MR. NORDLAND: "The High and Low Show," yes.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. I like Gopnik's writing very much.

MR. NORDLAND: He's a smartass.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes, he is.

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, you know, he's too cute.

MS. LARSEN: I don't know him personally. I –

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know him. I don't know him. But I – naturally I read it. I mean, this –

MS. LARSEN: Yes, that's a beautiful piece.

MR. NORDLAND: The [Cesar] Domela, oh, gawd.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, it's a beautiful piece. But you can see how –

MR. NORDLAND: I've yet to do something important for the Neo-Plastic world, you know? I was a good friend – I mean, I was a friend of John McLaughlin, and I honored him and respected him, but I never did anything important for him. I always reviewed him. I never missed a show. But I never carried his colors the way I should have.

MS. LARSEN: Did you see the McLaughlin catalogue I did for Laguna?

MR. NORDLAND: No.

MS. LARSEN: I did a very substantial McLaughlin catalogue for Laguna –

MR. NORDLAND: Good for you.

MS. LARSEN: – and he's been my great love in LA art. And the – that was the story of that show, but it was about a 70-works show.

MR. NORDLAND: Seventy? Oh, wow!

MS. LARSEN: A big show.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And a good-sized catalogue, a beautiful production. Beautiful. It's not physically big, but it's chunky and beautiful. And it traveled to the Baltimore Museum, and it went –

MR. NORDLAND: Excellent.

MS. LARSEN: And it went to – where else did it go? The Sheldon in Nebraska.

MR. NORDLAND: In Nebraska, sure, sure, sure.

MS. LARSEN: And we were trying to hard to get a New York venue, and of course it didn't happen. And the show – I worked on it for a year and a half, through a change of director and all kinds of machinations. One great intern, who became like an associate or assistant curator there – and I was consulting. And this is when we were moving to Maine. So the show opened, I think, June 2nd or something. We moved to Maine May 20th. I didn't go to the opening.

MR. NORDLAND: Hmm, yes.

MS. LARSEN: And no one made an effort and said I should be there. I never saw the show I created.

MR. NORDLAND: Awww.

MS. LARSEN: And I never saw it in any venue. And I plotted it out through that rather big museum on paper with little diagrams, going over and over and over the space, and you know how McLaughlins are, some of which I had not laid eyes on. They are very touchy, and they're strong. Some are stronger than others. They're quirky. They have a personality. Each painting has a personality. And the rooms kind of move around. And so I put everything, you know, where – and left. And they put them up pretty faithfully. You know, I was told that, you know, 99 percent of it fit.

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

MS. LARSEN: And I got a letter from Ed Moses saying it was the most beautiful installation he'd ever seen, which was quite amazing, since he's not that given to great –

MR. NORDLAND: No, he's about as given to that as Dick is to writing me about Alberto Burri.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. I mean, that was really something.

MR. NORDLAND: That's very nice.

MS. LARSEN: And it had a big – Christopher Knight wrote it for the *LA Times*. It was just – you know, it was like a Valentine. It was reviewed in *The New York Times*. It was reviewed in *Art in America*. It made a big splash, and I'm real proud of it. It was just –

MR. NORDLAND: That's wonderful.

MS. LARSEN: – a great thing, and –

MR. NORDLAND: That's something to be proud of.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I was very, very proud of it.

MR. NORDLAND: Did you know I did an Ed Moses drawing show?

MS. LARSEN: No, but they're well worth doing.

MR. NORDLAND: A huge one.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I didn't know that.

MR. NORDLAND: With a big catalogue.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: And I got some *Art Forum* type person to write it. He was supposed to do the show. We were doing it as a – there's a group in Southern California called the Friends of Modern Art.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: They broke away from the Norton Simon.

MS. LARSEN: Right.

MR. NORDLAND: They broke away from the Pasadena when Norton Simon came in.

MS. LARSEN: Right, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: And it was, I think, a first or second show done by that team.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I saw a catalogue, just to glance at like this.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Ed showed it to me

MR. NORDLAND: Yes. It was quite a –

MS. LARSEN: He does – he did those early drawings that were derived from tablecloths with the Mexican oilcloth, roses and all.

MR. NORDLAND: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MS. LARSEN: Those are absolutely gorgeous.

MR. NORDLAND: They are great. They are terrific.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he really has a great – a gifted hand.

MR. NORDLAND: He does.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, he's not so cerebral, but he has a very gifted hand.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, he tried to be cerebral with those Malevich things.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But these others had a more visceral – like the hand knows more than the mind.

MS. LARSEN: Which is exactly right. [Laughter.] He's really very kind of an earthy person, and he's not an

intellectual.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, I haven't seen him in years.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes. Very early on in my time, we dated a little – he dated everybody, but he's a fun person, much too – you know, way older than me.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, now, where are we with –

MS. LARSEN: I think we're –

MR. NORDLAND: We talked about Gallatin.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I think we're pretty good.

MR. NORDLAND: Is there anything else to talk about –

MS. LARSEN: There are a couple of quotes of Richard Diebenkorn I wanted to ask you about, things that he said, to see if you had any –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, now, did we kill Milwaukee? Did we do everything we needed to do in Milwaukee?

MS. LARSEN: I don't know.

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know either. Did you see – what did I publish in Milwaukee besides those – did I tell you about the Controversial Public Art?

MS. LARSEN: That I meant to ask you. Thank you for reminding me.

MR. NORDLAND: Anything else in that area?

MS. LARSEN: That's very important.

MR. NORDLAND: Anything else in that area?

MS. LARSEN: The Controversial Public Art. That happened in Milwaukee? I don't have a date for that. Do you in fact know when?

[AUDIO BREAK.]

MS. LARSEN: This is track 2 of disk number 5. Okay, so how did this come about?

MR. NORDLAND: This came about because my then president, Lloyd Herrold, was so taken by the gross antipathy manifested by the local newspapers and radio and television people about the acquisition of the Mark di Suvero which had been done at the suggestion of the city planner to have a piece at the end of the main street of the city so people wouldn't drive off in a fog or a storm, that would be lighted and cared for. The di Suvero was a great triumph, a wonderful sculpture, but it had almost 100 percent disapproval.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: So he said, "Has this ever happened before?" I said, "Well, my gawd, it happens every time you turn around." He said, "Why don't you make a show of it?" And I said okay.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And so the people in the show include Auguste Rodin, Aristide Maillol, Diego Rivera, Thomas Hart Benton, Jacques Lipchitz, Louis Slobodkin, Anton Refregier, Pablo Picasso, Claes Oldenburg, Alexander Calder, Peter Voulkos, George Segal, Robert Arneson, and Mark di Suvero.

MR. NORDLAND: In chronological order.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: And the cities that those things occurred in include: Paris; the south of France; San Francisco; the Midwest; Paris; San Francisco; Chicago; New Haven, Connecticut; one of the main cities in the state of Michigan where the Calder was installed; Peter Voulkos in Highland Park, Illinois; George Segal at Kent State; Robert Arneson in San Francisco; Mark di Suvero in Milwaukee.

MS. LARSEN: And –

MR. NORDLAND: And that's the piece.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Wow! It's -

MR. NORDLAND: And it's painted -

MS. LARSEN: What color?

MR. NORDLAND: - the color of a major manufacturer in Wisconsin. It's a kind of a gold-yellow. Let's see, what does it say? Yellow-orange.

MS. LARSEN: Kind of a mustard color?

MR. NORDLAND: No, not - and it's called something like - oh, gawd, I can't - I can't think of the name of the company, but it's a typical industrial treatment of their gear. And so he chose it special. No other di Suvero has that color.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. Did he want it to evoke that sort of normalcy or -

MR. NORDLAND: He wanted - it was a kind of a salute to the industry of the state. And, of course -

MS. LARSEN: So what did -?

MR. NORDLAND: This was the Moscone portrait that was refused at San Francisco. This is the Kent State - it's Isaac.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, of George Segal.

MR. NORDLAND: Uh-huh. Abraham and Isaac. This is the great Voulkos that I showed - that was my one-piece show in the same room with the 13 Diebenkorns plus 1.

MS. LARSEN: Wow, that's a huge piece. Wow!

MR. NORDLAND: It's enormous.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. And what city refused that or -

MR. NORDLAND: Highland Park. Well, no, they didn't refuse it.

MS. LARSEN: It stayed there.

MR. NORDLAND: But they just hate it. It's 72 inches tall by 18 feet.

MS. LARSEN: Wow.

MR. NORDLAND: Bronze.

MS. LARSEN: Gosh.

MR. NORDLAND: And it had to be re-welded together. And we had to take it up on top of the elevator, freight elevator, and it had to be re-welded on my new floors.

MS. LARSEN: You're a risk-taker.

MR. NORDLAND: This Calder at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, which now looks so innocuously, you know, establishment.

MR. NORDLAND: Oh, it was put in by Senator Ford.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: And he took a lot of flack. And then there was the -

MS. LARSEN: Lipstick?

MR. NORDLAND: - the phallic lipstick of Oldenburg at Yale.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: Repudiated, distraught. There's the Picasso from Chicago.

MS. LARSEN: I've been through that one. People just – was it a bird or a dog or what was it? At the Civic Center.

MR. NORDLAND: The Rincon Annex Post Office murals of Anton Refregier –

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: – in San Francisco.

MS. LARSEN: San Francisco so far takes the prize for the most controversy.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, Slobodkin at the Lincoln of *The Rail Splitter*. [sic/should be *The Rail Joiner*, 1939]

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, where was that.

MR. NORDLAND: That was in Miami, Florida. This is the Lipchitz. Now, there were four or five of them. I have the drawing which was in that show too. But the one in Paris was so huge that you could see up in here a little human head.

MS. LARSEN: Goodness.

MR. NORDLAND: I mean, it was like –

MS. LARSEN: It was like a –

MR. NORDLAND: – 200 inches tall. He never got it finished the way he wanted it. You know, he did it finally for Brasilia, and they made it, I think, one-eighth the size that he wanted it to be. And it's like a little emblem on the building instead of being a monstrous thing. Thomas Hart Benton – the murals for the state of Missouri and the capital, Jefferson City.

MS. LARSEN: So as you put this show together, what did you –

MR. NORDLAND: And the Diego Rivera was for Detroit.

MS. LARSEN: What did you glean about public art and what makes it controversial? Is there anything about it –

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I think people have an idea that public art will be somehow complementary to the tastes of the community and it will reflect those tastes and somehow embellish and reinforce their closed-minded prejudices. And when an artist, even as decorative and ingratiating an artist as Alexander Calder, makes a piece, it's just Grand Rapids didn't know what to do with it, you know? It just was too much for them. And you had – it went through Chicago.

MS. LARSEN: I certainly did, as a kid. It was – I'll tell you the story about it later, but – so I think we have about 12 minutes left on the tape, so I could I ask you some of my saved-up Diebenkorn questions?

MR. NORDLAND: Okay. Here's another catalogue for you.

MS. LARSEN: Okay.

MR. NORDLAND: And here's another catalogue for you.

MS. LARSEN: Oh, goodness, wow. These were just some quotes that I pulled out of the book. There's one that kept intriguing me, and maybe it's just I'm thick and can't figure it. He says, "Keep thinking about Pollyanna." What do you think he meant about that?

MR. NORDLAND: It's one of the most puzzling things that I know of in his writing, in his statements. We think of Pollyanna as being a person who always smiles at the right thing and who is positive and hopeful. I think it's ironic. I think he's criticizing that position. But again, you see, as I say, I had those 100 days with him, but did I ever ask him? No.

MS. LARSEN: Well, I am in the same place you are. I could see going either way. I could –

MR. NORDLAND: I think it must be ironic.

MS. LARSEN: But I could also see him thinking that there's some – maybe a little wisdom in some of that, but not to be that. So you've puzzled over that too, huh?

MR. NORDLAND: A lot.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: A lot. I can't tell you. It's one of the most puzzling things that I can remember of his dicta.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Dicta. That's great. I like that. Okay, now another one that's much more mainstream: "Don't 'discover' a subject of any kind." And within his processes how would maybe that work?

MR. NORDLAND: Well, I think it means you lay bare the process of creation and you don't find something - you don't find a crutch there. You don't find a symbol, or you don't find an easy way out, but you leave it in its constructive, exposed process for the viewer to speculate on and try to understand.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm. I think that's very well said.

MR. NORDLAND: I - that's the way I interpret it.

MS. LARSEN: I think you're right. Another one is "Be careful in a perverse way."

MR. NORDLAND: Well, first of all, I don't think he was careful. I think you have to be alert, but I think he felt that being careful would limit him. He would sometimes plunge a picture that was finished into chaos again and have to fight two or three days to bring it back to order because he thought it was too easy. Don't be careful. So if you're careful, you have to be in a perverse way. You know, I'm just talking through my hat.

MS. LARSEN: No, no, everything you're saying seems exactly right on.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, you know, I haunted the poor man.

MS. LARSEN: Yes. But he haunts us still, doesn't he?

MR. NORDLAND: He sure does. You never - did you ever really look at that drawing I have in the hallway, in the shadows, in the dark.

MS. LARSEN: I'll have to go look at that.

MR. NORDLAND: It's pretty good.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, wonderful.

MR. NORDLAND: This watercolor is not so good. This watercolor owes something to Baziotes.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh.

MR. NORDLAND: He was enchanted with Baziotes and Motherwell, when he had never met either one of them. And he only knew them in black and white.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] Maybe that's good.

MR. NORDLAND: And - well, you know, black and white -

MS. LARSEN: Can make up -

MR. NORDLAND: - on something like this or this that's reproduced the size of a postage stamp, what can you learn?

MS. LARSEN: But maybe that's good because he could - he would pull out of himself what he thought it was, and he wasn't somebody who was much closer to -

MR. NORDLAND: That's painted on both sides - that watercolor.

MS. LARSEN: Oh.

MR. NORDLAND: There's - it's a vertical, yellow and green, on the other side.

MS. LARSEN: So you made the choice?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: Phil Lieder said that -

MR. NORDLAND: Do you know he's in Israel?

MS. LARSEN: Phil Lieder is in Israel? No, I didn't know that.

MR. NORDLAND: I might have a clipping that says where.

MS. LARSEN: Uh-huh, what's he doing there?

MR. NORDLAND: I don't know. He's doing something.

MS. LARSEN: Living?

MR. NORDLAND: Yes, he's living there.

MS. LARSEN: He said -

MR. NORDLAND: It was in *The New York Times*.

MS. LARSEN: Really?

MR. NORDLAND: I clipped it out thinking I would write to him, but I never did.

MS. LARSEN: I never met him. I mean, I was just a kid before - you know -

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: - just a starting-out kid. He wouldn't have wanted to talk to me. He mentioned what he thought was the "purposeful employment of subject matter towards ends expressive of completely different concerns." He was talking about - this is out of your book.

MR. NORDLAND: Yes.

MS. LARSEN: And then finally in your 1970s essay you say, "He has created a new art that has grown entirely out of his own life experience." And I kind of focused on "a new art," and was it new for everyone or new for him?

MR. NORDLAND: I guess I thought it was new for him. I told you about showing the Picassos and Matisse, the Braques, the Rouaults when I showed Ynez?

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: If I showed you Hopper, Matisse, Bonnard and then showed you an Ocean Park picture, you'd have to say that he took it from those people, but he took different aspects of everything from each one and he made it into a cocktail that's different than anybody ever made before. He doesn't look derivative at all.

MS. LARSEN: No, no. Well, he had - I remember seeing a postcard of -

MR. NORDLAND: And don't forget Mondrian.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, I was just going to say. And I remember seeing also a postcard of Piero della Francesca, you know, the Arezzo mural of Christ coming out of the tomb.

MR. NORDLAND: Of course I do.

MS. LARSEN: And I remember he had a postcard of that, you know, that was a reproduction. It wasn't like a postcard from a friend. It was turned around, and there it was on the wall. And I'm looking at that and thinking, "Oh." And, I mean, his whole sense of where you build - how you build structure, you know, how you make an architecture in painting, I think that - the grays, the color, the calligraphy, all of that was, I think, pretty natural to him, but that obligation to build it, you know, make it a built thing -

MR. NORDLAND: That's the only thing that he owes to Hopper.

MS. LARSEN: Yes.

MR. NORDLAND: But he saw such a recognition in Matisse and such a recognition in Bonnard and such a recognition in Mondrian that when he did some of those still lifes, they were taking us into depth, but at the same time they were snapping us back to a Mondrian grid. And then he put a coffee cup down right in the middle. I mean -

MS. LARSEN: They are great –

MR. NORDLAND: He was playing games. I mean, he was playing games. He was saying, “This is this, and this is that, and look: Whoops!”

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. NORDLAND: I was surprised myself at my nerve.

MS. LARSEN: [Laughs.] It’s an interesting thing to have an artist on the West Coast who’s so, in a way, learned about art without having it really trip him up.

MR. NORDLAND: You know, he didn’t seem to respond to Dove. I don’t think he really got it. I think he liked Schwitters better than he liked Dove.

MS. LARSEN: When you think of the artists he admired, they’re all very strong artists, real declarative, really emphatic, but things that were fragmentary like a poem. They are things that were very completely considered and thoroughly made. There’s nothing haphazard.

MR. NORDLAND: Well, another thing was that he liked to keep pictures around for a long time, and he didn’t look at everything in that studio every day, but he certainly looked at everything in the studio every week.

MS. LARSEN: Mm-hmm, that’s interesting.

MR. NORDLAND: Even the things that are stacked. He looked at everything.

MS. LARSEN: Even the things that were on the stretchers – the filing area?

MR. NORDLAND: Not deep storage in another building.

MS. LARSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. NORDLAND: Not downstairs in the Venice facility or – but everything that was –

MS. LARSEN: In the racks?

MR. NORDLAND: – that he – that was around that he considered in process or recently finished he would look at again. And the characteristic position of Diebenkorn as a painter is slouched in a crazy chair at a normal viewing distance –

[End of available audio.]

Last updated...July 16, 2015