THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **GRACE GLUECK (GG)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Well, Grace, I'll start the way I always do, and ask you to tell me where and when you were born, and something about your family background.

GG: I was born in New York City on July 24, 1926, at a place right where Lincoln Center is now. But my parents just came to New York to have me.

SZ: Was there a hospital there?

GG: There used to be a hospital called the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital. I've tried to look it up in old phone books, but I haven't really found it. Anyway, it was one of those lying-in hospitals, I guess.

SZ: You said they came just for . . .

GG: Yes. Because the doctor was in New York. So that's where I was born. But they lived in Rockville Centre, on Long Island.

SZ: Which at the time was a suburb.

GG: It still is a suburb.

SZ: But very populated?

GG: Well, on Long Island I would say the population was about 20,000; fifteen to 20,000. It's about twenty-five miles from New York. It's near the beach, and it had a very white, middle-class population. And still does, as far as I know. They had lived there since, I think, about 1921 or '22. I went to public school there, grew up there.

SZ: What did your father do?

GG: At the time I was born my father was a municipal bond person on Wall Street. He later became an insurance broker.

SZ: Did the crash have anything to do with that?

GG: The crash had a lot to do with it. He lost everything in the crash, and it took him some years to recuperate. And the Depression was pretty hard on him, on our family, but we stayed there. I think it took him until World War II, when he sort of recouped his fortunes, a long time.

SZ: Which was not untypical.

GG: Yes. He never really recouped what he originally had. He had been very depressed because of the Depression.

SZ: Because of his work, you mean.

GG: Well, because of losing all his money and having to look for work and his needs to support the family, etc.

SZ: So was it difficult for you economically? Do you remember?

GG: I can't say we were really poor. We never lacked for anything as children, but I got the

feeling that the times were very hard. We didn't have a car for a while, which was very difficult in the suburbs. Things like that. But my parents really, more or less, in some ways kept up their old life. My mother didn't have charge accounts anymore and things like that. Eventually, the bank came and took away our home--which I guess was mortgaged--and we moved somewhere else in the town. But the town was always a place of security for me. I remember as a child nobody had any fears about letting children go anywhere in the place. I remember when I was five I would go to the public library by myself, which was about a mile away. That sort of thing. Nobody worried about things like that at all. We never locked the doors. Anything. So it was, from that standpoint, a very pleasant childhood.

SZ: Did you have some of the standard kind of childhood kinds of lessons and things, or was that too tough? Music, ballet, whatever?

GG: Well, there was a woman who taught me French, but we never had a piano in the house. I never took music lessons. I really didn't take lessons of any kind, never went to camp because my mother said it was nice enough where we were--although I suspect we couldn't afford it. I never was burdened with piano lessons; as a result, I'm taking piano lessons now.

SZ: I noticed the piano. Just beginning, or have you been doing it for a while?

GG: A couple years. But I'm untalented. It's taken me all these years to discover I have no talent.

SZ: Well, what's important is whether you enjoy it or not.

GG: Yes, I pound away at it.

SZ: So none of that.

GG: No. In that sense it was not what you would call a privileged childhood.

SZ: Well, in terms of other things, like coming into New York.

GG: Yes. We came into New York. My parents were very interested in the theatre. My mother was interested in ballet. I remember her taking me to the early Sadlers Wells performances and things like that, with Alicia Markova, when I was fairly young. So they were interested in the arts, they were interested in reading. I was encouraged. I remember my mother took me to the library when I was very young and said, "Now this is your place. You can come here and get books," and stuff like that. So that was my home environment. So I didn't lack exposure to the arts. Not that they were interested in art--the visual arts--because they didn't know anything about that.

SZ: Therefore, you didn't have much exposure to the visual arts?

GG: No. We had a Maxfield Parish print in our dining room. I remember that… But they were interested, as I said, in reading and they played a great deal of bridge. They had a very active social life in the town.

SZ: So you went to local public school?

GG: I went to public school, which in those days were very good. Excellent public schools in the suburbs. I don't know how good they are anymore.

SZ: It depends where, I think.

GG: Well, we had all kinds of what they would call today enrichment courses. Like we studied music and art. It was taken for granted that that was part of the curriculum.

SZ: Those have all been taken away pretty much.

GG: I know.

SZ: Have they been taken away in the suburbs, too?

GG: I guess.

SZ: Well, maybe in some suburbs.

GG: I remember we had a music teacher come twice a week and we sang. All kinds of advantages like that. We were taught to draw. So the schools were very good, except they were very white, middle-class. There was a black population in town but they lived in a ghetto, which they later sued the town for. Many years later. There was one black kid in my class. I was the only Jewish child in my class, and the teacher . . . I won't say this. I'm saying this to show you how homogenous a group it was.

SZ: It was homogenous but, in fact, you were an outsider in it.

GG: I was really an outsider, yes, and in some ways treated like one.

SZ: I presume you're talking about high school now, when you're saying you were the only Jewish . . .

GG: No. I'm talking about elementary school. In high school there were maybe three or four Jewish kids in the class.

SZ: Was that one high school for the whole town?

GG: Yes.

SZ: So it was a white, middle-class town but not a Jewish suburb.

GG: We had moved, so I went to high school in a neighboring town called Oceanside, which was much more of a blue-collar town. In the high school there, there were still no blacks. In fact, there were no blacks at all.

SZ: There were no blacks, you said, in your . . .

GG: There was one black boy in my elementary school class. There were no blacks at all in the Oceanside school. In fact, when blacks tried to move into Oceanside the Klan actually burned a cross. So in the Rockville Centre high school there were more Jewish families, but in the Oceanside high school, again, there were maybe two or three Jewish kids.

SZ: Did you have a strong self-identity?

GG: Not at all.

SZ: Any training?

GG: Well, my parents were very unobservant. After Hitler came along they helped to found the Reformed Jewish Synagogue, and I was sent to classes there. I was, in fact, confirmed, but I never had any positive reinforcement at home about being Jewish. Very rarely. We didn't observe the Jewish holidays and things of that sort. Maybe later on my parents did go to temple on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, but their whole idea was that they were part of . . . The question is, why did they move to a town like that? I think my father would have said, "Well, Jews should live everywhere. They shouldn't be ghettoized." I think they actually moved there because my grandparents had moved there from Brooklyn.

SZ: Were your grandparents born in this country?

GG: No, but my parents were.

SZ: So it was part of an assimilationist . . .

GG: Yes. It was an assimilationist thrust. It was a real assimilationist thrust. Absolutely. And they felt that Jews should not be separated from the rest of the populace. I don't even know that they would have articulated that, but that's the way they felt. So I didn't have any positive reinforcement. In fact there was a lot of anti-Semitism in both those towns, and one just accepted it, went along with it. If the kids liked you they liked you in spite of your being Jewish, and they would tell you that. So you just went along with it.

SZ: Have you had any other incidents where you felt you were being discriminated against? For you personally, did you have any of that?

GG: Yes, I think I was personally discriminated against by some of my teachers, but I really can't be sure of that. I wasn't a wonderful student, on the other hand, in high school, so they may have been responding to that as well.

SZ: It just didn't catch your imagination?

GG: Some teachers were wonderful, others I felt different about. And I really can't say. I know there was anti-Semitism among the faculty of the school but how it was manifested to me I'm really not certain. I'm really not sure. I felt sometimes I wasn't chosen for certain things, like being a cheerleader, for example, because I was Jewish. Whatever. They didn't really try very hard to help me get into college. They were only too willing to accuse me of being a ring-leader of certain things. Once in French class, I remember, one of the kids brought in a pornographic book (I still remember the name of it) and it was really porn. We were goggle-eyed, and it was passed surreptitiously from person to person until finally the French teacher, a man, confiscated it, took it away from us. The faculty, I'm sure, read the book tremulously. But there was a huge stink about it, we were called in and the principal suspended,

oh, there must have been eight or ten of us, for reading it. She said, "You girls are the victims of a vice ring," or something. I think she suspected me, somehow. I wasn't the ring leader, I had nothing to do with it, but I think she suspected me of being the ring leader and the only reason I could think of was because I was Jewish and, therefore, had an interested in the pornographic trade. She said, "I won't let you back in until I get a note from your parents," so my mother wrote a note saying, "My daughter's free to read whatever she pleases." I was proud of her for doing that. It was incidents like that. I don't know if I want all this on record at the Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: Well, that's what I meant.

GG: I've often thought about writing about this experience, writing something about it, but I don't know whether it would do any good to do that. What would be the point? I don't know.

SZ: It's always interesting.

GG: I don't think it's true anymore. I don't think kids quite have to go through this.

SZ: I don't know.

GG: They go through other traumas. Black children might.

SZ: I was going to say, maybe it's not Jewish kids who go through it anymore, but they go through it.

GG: Right.

SZ: They do. And siblings. Did you have any siblings?

GG: I had and still have a brother, who was borderline mentally retarded. He was a

forceps baby and he was brain damaged at birth. He's five years older than I am. Although he reads and writes and has a dull normal IQ, he really isn't capable of functioning cognitively. I think he's more emotionally damaged than intellectually.

SZ: And he lived at home with you while you were growing up?

GG: Yes. All the time I was growing up. He lived at home until he was about twenty-seven.

SZ: So did he go to a special school?

GG: No, he went to regular school. My parents pushed him through regular school until eighth grade, then it became apparent that he really shouldn't go to school anymore. But it was very damaging to him. It took them many years to acknowledge that there was anything wrong with him.

SZ: Well, that's part of what was so damaging.

GG: Yes, very damaging. Damaging not only to him but to me. No, he was definitely a part of my childhood.

SZ: Not easy.

GG: No, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy for him either. No, in their thrust to be like normal suburban people they suppressed not only their Jewishness, but their parentage of a mentally retarded son. But in all fairness there was not much you could do in those days. There were no places where you could send children like this. Very few. Whatever there were, they didn't look into it. They didn't want to send him away, and I guess schools for special children were expensive. He was humiliated and teased by the kids because of his lagging intelligence, but there was not much to do about it in those days. They didn't have parent groups, the state didn't help with funding, etc. All that's changed a great deal.

SZ: All that really started right after the Second World War.

GG: Yes.

SZ: Did you feel that you were in some way--I don't know--ostracized or made fun of because of him? Was that an added issue for you?

GG: Well, not quite. That made fun of him and ostracized him but I accepted it. I didn't let it affect me. I didn't really pay much attention. My brother was totally isolated. Whatever he did, he did alone. The kids would say something like, "Oh, Charlie is your brother?" But that was about the extent of it. I mean, at home I saw the problems he had relating to other children. But no, I don't think I was particularly ostracized because of him. Although people knew he was my brother; that I was different. I had a fair number of friends when I was a child.

SZ: I was just going to ask you.

GG: I don't feel that I lacked for friendship.

SZ: In high school did you participate in extra-curricular studies?

GG: I was editor of the yearbook. I wasn't very good at sports but I did sports. I did field hockey and stuff like that. No, I didn't have any problems with extra-curricular activities.

SZ: Did you have fun in high school?

GG: I did, actually. A lot of the time I did have fun. I had a circle of friends, and although they made it very clear that they understood I was Jewish, I got along with most of the kids. As a matter of fact, I still see some of them, and that's a long time ago.

SZ: Well, let's see. You must have graduated in 1944?

GG: That's right. We had our fiftieth reunion what? Two or three years ago. And I still see some of those people.

SZ: So you went to your fiftieth reunion.

GG: I did. It was very traumatic.

SZ: Had you been to any other reunions before?

GG: We hadn't had another. That was the first.

SZ: Where was it?

GG: It was out on the Island. Actually, everybody but me, of course, looked very old. I keep in touch with a few of them.

SZ: That was the traumatic part? To sort of realize that it's really fifty years, for most people?

GG: Right.

SZ: So editor of the yearbook, you did field hockey and whatever. You graduated, I guess, right in the middle of the war. Anything about the war?

GG: Well, some of the boys in my class were killed in the war. I remember two of them. Or they died in the war. And they were very young. They must have been seventeen. I remember two of them who were killed overseas. Actually, one of them was killed in combat and one of them died of some viral thing he'd gotten while he was on an army

base. I remember those two very vividly, so the war did have an impact. They did go from class. I can't believe this; that they took boys that young. But they did.

SZ: Well, they may have gone and enlisted.

GG: Maybe they did enlist. They probably did enlist. Could you enlist at seventeen? I guess they did.

SZ: You can if you have parental permission.

GG: Yes, some of them did go off from school to the army. But I didn't feel the impact of the war until I got to college. By that time, my first year at college veterans were starting to come back. One guy in my class was Joe Heller, who was a veteran. He came back from Europe. It was a very funny story. He had written a story about being in an army hospital and screwing all the nurses, and I was this proper little thing from Rockville Centre. He talked in taxi-driver accents, asking, "You want to read my story?" I read it and I was very shocked but of course I didn't say so. I said, "Oh, it's all right."

SZ: And that was your opinion.

GG: That was my opinion. Still is. Then he went on to write *Catch 22* and other things. But he had just come back from the war.

SZ: In fact, I think that changed the character of education in lots and lots of places, because classes were just full of these guys who had had life experience.

GG: And all us other naive little virgins, you know, were up against this. It's true.

SZ: The decision to go to college. Was that a non-decision?

GG: Oh, I think it was taken for granted that I would go to college. My father had gone to college. My father actually graduated from NYU. I think they sort of expected it, particularly because they knew nothing would be forthcoming from my brother. They never urged me to get married. That was never mentioned. It was always, "When you go to college," and "When you find yourself a career." That was very much emphasized.

SZ: Well, would you say that was somewhat unusual for that time?

GG: I'm not sure, in that milieu. I think it was taken for granted.

SZ: Well, going to college is one thing, but to really think about . . .

GG: Oh, right. It was unusual. Yes. Most of the kids I know, their parents urged them to get married, the girls, to get married as soon as they possibly could. That was considered the absolute modus operandi.

SZ: So in your house there was discussion of finding something you could do.

GG: My mother was pushing for me to be a writer. She herself had been sort of a newspaper writer, for local newspaper. She even worked for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, and she was an aspiring writer, not that she ever did very much with it. My father was more practical. I wanted to be an actress and he said, "Nothing doing." Haven't we all had that conversation?

SZ: Right.

GG: I was very glad that he said that. That's one thing I'm pleased that he did; that he kept me from wasting my time. I studied acting for a time, with a very famous drama coach, Frances Robinson Duff.

SZ: Which was where?

GG: In New York. In the city.

SZ: You did that while you were in college.

GG: While I was in high school.

SZ: In high school. Hmmn.

GG: So you were saying?

SZ: I was just going to ask you if you thought that the thinking about having a career had also something to do with the fact that your father had had some bad times economically.

GG: Possibly, possibly not. I think it was in their heads that my brother was certainly not going to amount to anything; therefore, I had better replace him as kind of an upholder of the family fortune. Well, I can't say fortunes. But since he was not going to do anything, it was up to me to provide some success for them.

SZ: Well, did you feel that at that time?

GG: I was very motivated. Yes, I felt I should go to college and should be something. I always felt that; that I should have some kind of a "career." I guess I was motivated to feel that by my mother, driven to feel it. No, I felt I was not . . . In fact, I was engaged to a guy and I decided, no, I'm not going to marry him and become a servant. So I didn't. I saw the case of my mother. For all her aspirations, and she was a very dynamic woman--she belonged to clubs and was very active in the public school, the PTA and stuff… she was kept back by the necessity of having to stay home and take care of children, which my father pushed on her. I remember she used to go off every

morning to this newspaper job and he finally put a stop to that. He said her place was at home with her kids. I was very keenly aware that she'd been held back by him. So I was aware of that when I was very young and yes, I saw it all around me. These women would be housewives and they didn't do much of anything else. So I think from very early on I knew that was not what I wanted to do. So I didn't really have to be pushed to go to college.

SZ: Were you a big reader when you were young?

GG: Yes, I was. First of all, my parents read to me before I could read. I was anxious to read. I think I learned to read when I was four or five. But yes, I devoured books. They had a lot of books around the house and I read them. As I told you, she wrote this note to the principal saying I should be able to read whatever I wanted to. So they were good about that. They were progressive about things like that.

SZ: Well, anyway. So you went off to NYU.

GG: Yes.

SZ: How did you decide on that?

GG: Well, I didn't have the marks to get into a better school. At that time I really didn't. I had ambitions of going to Wellesley or Smith or something like that. I actually didn't try very hard to get into one of those schools. Besides, I think NYU was mostly what my parents could afford. At that time it was not a prestige operation, the prestige operation that it is today, NYU. It didn't have, for example, anything to do with art history. You couldn't study art history in Washington Square College. But it was a very good school for the humanities. They had an excellent English department, an excellent history department, a very good economics department. The education was good, but the art history thing, as I said, only came after I left. Then it became a big thing. At that time I wasn't interested in art history. I was interested in English

literature, which I majored in.

SZ: So did you live on campus?

GG: No. I lived at home. They really didn't have facilities.

SZ: Well, they had the uptown campus, right? Also.

GG: At Fordham, in the Bronx.

SZ: The university campus, I guess it was called then.

GG: That was a dormitory campus. Downtown it was a pretty small operation, compared in terms of what it is today.

SZ: So what was your college life like? You had to get on a train and come in?

GG: Yes. It was a commuting college life, but it was fun. I had a lot of friends at college. We did see each other. I'm trying to think. Sometimes I would stay overnight with some friend in New York. But that's what it was. Our campus was Washington Square Park. That's where we talked. It took about an hour to get there and an hour to get home, every day. So it was a long commute. It wasn't very much of a collegial life. But that was it.

SZ: But you had New York.

GG: I was in New York, and in Greenwich Village, which at that time was still fairly exciting. We had a wonderful teacher named Eda Lou Walton, who was a poet. She was an absolutely marvelous teacher, and she was I think at the time living with Leadbelly. You remember Leadbelly?

SZ: Sure.

GG: She was very involved in Greenwich Village bohemics. She kind of introduced me to that whole life, of the local intelligentsia. That was fun, because the Village was very, very nice in those days. That was really our campus. We used to have lunch in a place called the Jumble Shop. There were wonderful bookstores around. The Village was still viable in those days.

SZ: What was the social life like?

GG: The social life was fine. One met people in class, dated them; went to concerts, plays--which is something that most college kids on campuses in Michigan or Iowa or wherever didn't see much of. So that was good. I went to concerts. I remember going to concerts at Lewisohn Stadium, and in the summer I had jobs. I worked at various New York offices.

SZ: Which you got yourself?

GG: Well, I think I got one or two of them, but sometimes through friends of mine. I think I got a job at CBS through friends of my parents, then I got a job at Young & Rubicam one summer. I worked for advertising agencies, CBS and a couple places like that, just to get experience. And money, such as it was. I think maybe I got $20 a week at some of those jobs, for typing and things like that. So it actually was not bad. It was not a bad life, except that I still had to spend too much time with my family.

SZ: Well, you majored in English literature. What else did you take?

GG: Oh, psychology, whatever. Let’s see, what else did I take? They were just beginning their film school at NYU, which I wish I'd gone to. They also had good radio courses. In those days radio was a very big thing--script writing--I did some of that. I was co-editor of the literary magazine, called *Apprentice*, with another woman who was an

avid communist. I guess I did know it at the time, I just didn't bother. I was apolitical in school. Although at the time there was a big Left-wing contingent, not only in New York but at NYU, and there were people all around me who were very involved in left-wing politics. I remained aloof. I was too virginal. I wasn't somehow touched.

SZ: Politics wasn't a big thing at home?

GG: No. Oh, no, not at all. My parents were ardent Democrats. They were Roosevelt Democrats. At least my father was, and it's true they did argue politics with some of their Republican friends. But it was very mainstream. They would have been horrified at the thought of my joining some Marxist group. I was still at that time very much under their sway, so I didn't think much about that. We had some very interesting students. Paul Blackburn was in my class. Cynthia Ozick. As I said, Joe Heller. Alfred Chester. I don't know if you know him. He is now dead. He was the editor of a magazine later, a literary magazine called *Botteghe Oscure.* People like that.

SZ: How big was the class?

GG: Oh, it must have been 400 or 500 students, I think.

SZ: So that's not really that big. You could get to know a lot of them.

GG: No, it's not. This was the Washington Square College, which was the Arts & Humanities division. Then there was the School of Commerce and the School of Education.

SZ: But I meant the Arts.

GG: Yes. I don't think there were more kids than that in my class. No. I'm quite sure.

SZ: And the intellectual atmosphere?

GG: I'll tell you. It was a much more challenging intellectual atmosphere than I had expected. My high school was not intellectual. It was very sports oriented and cheer-leadery. Compared to what goes down today, Oceanside High was an excellent school. But I felt infinitely more challenged at NYU than I had in high school. Because it was intellectual. Those kids were New York kids. They were much more sophisticated than I was. Their interests were more sophisticated. So in a way it was a good thing for me to be plunged into that. I became much more aware of my own shortcomings, my own deficiencies. On the whole it was a positive experience, I think. I was disappointed at not going away to school, but I think in the long run this was probably a much more intellectual and sophisticated environment than I would have found outside.

SZ: Did you use the city?

GG: Yes.

SZ: I know you said you went to concerts.

GG: Yes. We went to plays. Yes, we did use the city. All the time.

SZ: Museums?

GG: Well, not so often, because at that time that was not a particular interest of mine. No, I was much more interested in the theatre.

SZ: Well, had you given up your acting lessons by that time?

GG: Yes, I had. I studied acting when I was about sixteen. Then my father put a damper on it.

SZ: Well, how did you do in college. Were you more engaged?

GG: You mean intellectually? Well, yes. I always did well in courses like English and literature than I did anything else. I'm not good in languages. I'm very poor at math. What I really liked most was history and psychology and English lit. But I can't say I was an outstanding student. Let's see. I was invited to join the honors course in English literature but something happened. I think my other marks prevented it. It was known then as reading for honors, but I think I didn't get to do that because the rest of my record didn't come up to it. So I was not a very good student, and I was very diverted by outside activities, too.

SZ: Such as?

GG: Oh, friends and editing the literary magazine, working for the college newspaper and doing things like that.

SZ: Were you thinking about what you were going to do?

GG: Well, I knew I wanted to get some kind of a writing job, or publishing. I really wanted to work in book publishing but that was not easy to do in those days. It was very hard to get a job in publishing, unless you started out as a typist. So I started writing copy for a very small advertising firm. Oh, I went to Denver after college and stayed with my aunt and her children, my mother's sister, for a while. Then I went to Hollywood.

SZ: Just to get away, you mean?

GG: Yes. Actually, after school I wasn't feeling well so my mother said, "Well, why don't you go out and stay with my sister?" I stayed there for about six months. I got a job with an advertising agency, then I went to Hollywood where, through friends of my parents I got a job at MGM, just as a gofer, but it was a lot of fun. It was the era of the big stars--Katharine Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor and all those people were there.

Elizabeth Taylor was just beginning her career. That was fun.

SZ: So when was that? You graduated in '48.

GG: That would have been '48 or '49, and it was just when the studios were being invaded by television. They were beginning to size down their operations. I had a boyfriend back in New York and my mother kept writing to me that I should come home. I was away for a year. She was writing me to come home, that she missed me, etc. I eventually left and went back. I got laid off at MGM, in one of their downsizing operations.

SZ: Where did you live when you were out there?

GG: I lived, again, with sort of a pseudo relative. I boarded with this couple, on Wilshire Boulevard, near the May Company. Do you know Los Angeles?

SZ: A little, tiny bit.

GG: I would take the bus every day to Culver City, where MGM had this big operation.

SZ: Had you traveled before?

GG: No.

SZ: This was big.

GG: This was my first big move away from home. My mother, incidentally, when she was a young woman, had gone out to Montana for a year and taught public school there. She had taught in a one-room schoolhouse. So then I came back, to my boyfriend and my family, an anti-climax. Actually, California in those days, Los Angeles in those days, wasn't by any means what it is today. It was much smaller, much less

populated. There were still big orange groves around the city. It was fun. It had a much more movie atmosphere than it does today.

SZ: But you didn't feel pulled to stay?

GG: Well, I would have liked to have stayed, but as I said, I was laid off at MGM, I didn't have any money, and my parents weren't about to send me money until I came home. So I went back.

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

GG: Maybe I should have stayed. So I came back to New York and got a series of jobs. I worked for Street & Smith and *Mademoiselle*, writing promotional copy. I worked for a travel magazine. Then I went to the *Times*.

SZ: Were those hard jobs to get at the time?

GG: Yes, the Street & Smith job was difficult. I got it on my own. You had to write an essay, I did and I won. The prize was a job, and I stayed with them. I left there and went to work for a travel magazine.

SZ: Were you living at home still?

GG: I was still living at home. In those days young women didn't so readily move off to live by themselves--at least in my parents' view. They didn't think women should live by themselves unless and until they were married. I don't know what they expected me to do later, but I think I was some kind of compensation to them for my brother.

SZ: So they wanted to keep you.

GG: They really clutched. They wanted to keep me home. So it took me a long while to get away from them. Anyway, when I was about twenty-five, I think, I went to the *Times*.

SZ: How did that happen?

GG: Well, I was just fed up with the jobs I was doing. I didn't want to write advertising copy, I didn't want to write promotional copy, so I thought maybe if I get a job with the paper, doing anything, I can in some way work my way into the reporting end of it. Mind you, I had no interest in reporting. At that time I still considered myself a high-brow. I was interested in writing for *Partisan Review*, and I did write a few book reviews for them. I thought that reporting was kind of cheap stuff, easy. So I was hired to work for the men's fashion section, again as a clerk typist.

SZ: But what's that like, Grace? Did you go in cold, or did you have . . . ?

GG: I went in cold, to the personnel department.

SZ: You just walked in off the street.

GG: I was interviewed, and I told them I wanted a job. They said, "Well, we don't have anything right now but we'll call you." This was very interesting. The woman who interviewed me first was a woman by the name of Mabel Phalon, who was very nice, but brusque. She called me about two days later and said, "There's this job in the men's fashion department."

SZ: Did she ask you to write anything?

GG: No. They said, "We can't give you a job as a reporter. You haven't had any experience, blah, blah, blah, but if we do have anything it would be in the clerk

typist/secretarial area." So she called me about two days later saying they had this job open; that it was temporary, but would I be interested? I said I would, so I went in.

SZ: It was with what?

GG: The men's fashion section, which they still publish. We did it twice a year. I went in there, I had to be interviewed by her superior, a guy named Burrett, who was the personnel manager. This is very interesting because apparently he wrote on my application, "attractive brunette," which was one of the key pieces of evidence in the women's case we brought against them, which turned out later to be the way they had sized people up, etc. It was still there. Our lawyers delved into the records and found that. It was very amusing. Anyway, I got the job and I worked there. Then they decided they wanted to keep me on, even though this men's fashion thing was temporary, twice a year. Then they put me on the *Magazine*, doing odds and ends. Then I worked for the "Review of the Week." The thing that struck me is that the men of my age--Tony Lewis, Joe Kraft and people like that--who worked on the "Review of the Week," were full-fledged reporters but the women . . . There was only one woman on the staff. I was not allowed to train as a reporter because I was a woman. There's no doubt about it. So that struck me very hard.

SZ: Was that out in the open?

GG: Pretty much. They would say things to you, like, "It's bad luck to have women in the newsroom." It was amazing. Amazing. And there was one woman who worked on the "Review of the Week" whose husband had drag with the Sulzbergers, so that's why she was there.

SZ: So what were your positions? You were writing features?

GG: No, I didn't do any writing. I was a copy girl. I took copy around, I helped. Lots of clerical stuff. I did typing, things like that. I filed. But I got to know everybody and

made myself useful, as they say. Then there was an opening on the "Book Review" after about two years. At that time the "Book Review" used illustrations that matched the reviews. They would get work by artists. They would go around to the galleries and find work that sort of would match the subject of a book, of a review. So that was my first acquaintance with the art world.

SZ: Because you were given that job.

GG: Yes. I was a picture researcher for the "Book Review," and I did that for about eleven years. That's how I got familiar with art. I began to go to museums, look at art shows, that kind of thing. Met artists, etc., so that was really my first experience with the art world.

SZ: So you taught yourself how to look at things?

GG: I taught myself. It just sort of happened. It would happen to anybody who went around, looking at enough stuff. I became very conversant with artists and photographers and people like that. I don't know if you remember when Nabakov's *Lolita* came out. Well, that was reviewed in the *Times*, and I had to find a picture for it. I found a painting by Balthus which seemed exactly right, and it created a sensation, the use of this picture. At that time the head of the entire Sunday department was a formidable guy by the name of Lester Markel. So Markel said to the book review editor, "Who picked this?" And he said, "Oh, this young woman who works here, Grace Glueck." "Well, I'd like to see her," he said. So I went in and I was introduced to Markel, who said to me . . . Oh, how old was I? Maybe I was thirty. He said to me, the first thing he said when he looked at me--and can you imagine what it would be if someone did that today? I walked into his enormous, Mussolini-like office, he gets up from his desk, he brushes his hands over my lips and said, "You have too much lipstick on." Can you imagine what a sexual harassment case that would make? Later, Dwight MacDonald wrote a series of pieces for *Esquire* about the *Times*, and I had shortly before that written a piece for "Times Talk," the company

magazine. Everybody wrote pieces about their job and how they went about it, how they did it. So for some reason MacDonald picked my piece as a typical bootlicking servile piece of literature about working for the company. He featured it very prominently in his lead for this piece in *Esquire*. So Markel said, "Are you the same young lady who picked the picture for that book?" Yes, I said. I guess he hated Dwight MacDonald and what he'd done. At any rate, it turned out that they needed somebody--and I had been writing short pieces for the "Magazine" by this time, I was writing little pieces, features, for what they call the back of the book--and Sy Peck, who was an editor. They wanted somebody to write an art gossip column. It was in the early '60s and Markel was very much aware that art was becoming news; that pop art had happened, and Jackson Pollock's works were selling for a lot of money. He wanted a column like the Broadway column, which was done by a guy named Lou Funke, called "News of the Rialto." He wanted a column like that, about art and its personalities. So because I had done this light stuff for the "Magazine," and because he knew me and I had had this experience on the "Book Review," I was asked if I would try my hand at it. So I did, and it worked.

SZ: Maybe that's where we should stop. But let me ask you one thing. In those earlier years, and the years you've just described--I guess your twenties until about this time--how would you describe your persona?

GG: When I was in my twenties?

SZ: Yes, and in your thirties.

GG: I was very shy. I would say I was unassuming and didn't really believe very much in myself. That's how I would describe my persona.

SZ: Yet you could walk in off the street.

GG: Yes, I had had a certain amount of success at writing. I was editor, as I said, of the

yearbook in high school and I had worked on the college literary magazine and I had gotten this job at Street & Smith by writing an essay. So I had a certain feeling that I had some talent at writing. I had been told I had writing talent. But I had no sense of pushing myself or that I should get a job that someone else had, or anything like that. I was totally non-competitive. I think the world was much more like that in those days, too. Nobody admired people who were pushy, who bragged about themselves or whatever. It was a style. I think it was a whole cultural style of being laid back and low profile.

SZ: You're talking now for women in general.

GG: I'm talking about women, yes. So that's how I comported myself, and my parents brought me up that way. Never talk about yourself, never boast, never discuss your own work. That kind of thing. So they were partly responsible for that. So it took me a long time to get, as they say, a foot in the door. I worked for the "Book Review" for eleven years. Now today it would be unheard of for a young, somewhat talented person to come onto the paper and do that.

SZ: You mean to stay that long.

GG: Stay that long, yes. But it was a secure berth. The pay was okay, and it was even fun. I had a job on the *New York Times*.

SZ: Fun in what sense?

GG: Oh, I enjoyed the work. I liked the people I worked with, I liked going out and meeting people. We were given one day a week to go out to the galleries and fool around. So it was nice.

SZ: Did you ever take an art history course?

GG: No, I studied architectural history at Columbia.

SZ: Later.

GG: Yes. While I was working on the "Book Review." I took a two-year course in architectural history. But I learned an amazing amount in that job. It was better than going to an art history course, because I was actually dealing with the stuff.

SZ: Right. Okay. Until next time.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**GRACE GLUECK (GG)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**91 CENTRAL PARK WEST, NEW YORK CITY**
DATE:	**15 OCTOBER 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: So last time we left off, I think, at the point . . .

GG: At the Broadway side.

SZ: Meaning what?

GG: Well, at that time . . .

SZ: The gossip column you're talking about now?

GG: Yes. At that time the paper had a column called "News of the Rialto," which was about Broadway, gossip about Broadway. Markel wanted to duplicate that in the art section. In effect, he wanted a "news of the art world" column, which was to be chatty and gossipy. It was really anything I wanted to make it.

SZ: There had been nothing like that before.

GG: Not in the *Times*. I don't think there was anything like that anywhere. I don't think anybody was writing a chatty gossip column on the art world. It was much looked down on by what you might call serious artists and critics, but in the end I think they found it a source of news.

SZ: Well, first of all, you hadn't really done any criticism before.

GG: No.

SZ: And how familiar were you with the people about whom you were going to be chatting?

GG: Not at all. But you see, I explained to you I think, at that time the *Times* had a theory that any newspaper person could write about anything. In fact, it was the obligation of

a journalist to come to something fresh, immediately acquaint him or herself with it, and be able to have enough of an acquaintance to write about it in a manner that would appeal to the public. The whole idea of journalism is to popularize, boil down ideas and concepts. So they were not fazed by that. I wasn't fazed by that. They thought I would bring a fresh point of view to it. I don't think it entered their heads. They knew I had some acquaintance with the art world, but I think probably if I had known these people all my life, if I had been overimpressed with them, in awe of them, felt reverential about people like de Kooning I wouldn't have been given the job. Not that I ever interviewed people like Pollock (he was dead by the time I got to my job), but I might not have been able to have taken the same breezy view of them that I did.

SZ: So your acquaintance with the art world at that point. How would you describe it?

GG: Minimal. I mean with the "art world" it was minimal. I had seen a great deal of art and I had been to a lot of galleries, but was far as the persona of the art world was concerned I had never hung out in it. I didn't really know the players. I had to learn.

SZ: So the prospect of it was interesting.

GG: Well, also a little daunting. It worried me. But it didn't seem to worry them. And I had guidance. People like Canaday were there, Brian O'Doherty, Stuart Preston. I wasn't entirely on my own.

SZ: Let's talk about that. So the column was going to come out of the art department?

GG: But they had asked both Canaday and Brian to try their hands at it and they weren't satisfied.

SZ: So this was what year? Remind me.

GG: 1964.

SZ: So tell me first a little bit about the other players in the art department at that time. John Canaday.

GG: John Canaday at that time was the chief critic. He had a reputation for baiting the Museum of Modern Art and the entire Abstract/Expressionist movement. By the time I came down there Dore Ashton, who had been in the department, was gone. She was accused of favoring her husband, an artist, and his pals in her reviews. Also, they said her reviews were incomprehensible and too "inside." So she was gone and they hired Brian O'Doherty as a reviewer. You know Brian don't you? You don't know him?

SZ: No.

GG: Well, he later became an artist. He was a doctor, an Irish doctor, who had gravitated into the art world. He had gotten a medical degree in Ireland. He was a very personable, charming young fellow. The third person in the department was Stuart Preston, who was an oldtimer, a very snooty, what shall I say? well-acquainted, wealthy guy who knew all the right people. He was a very graceful writer except I don't think he bothered much to look at the art. Those three were the department. Then I came along. I was wished or foisted on them by Markel's Sunday department, and at first they didn't like it a bit. I think I asked Canaday something once and he said to me, "Well, you don't have to worry about that. You won't be here for very long." Anyway, later he and I became good friends. So that was the beginning of it.

SZ: I read something and I didn't get the timing of it, but I think his original brouhaha with the Modern was in the early '60s, and then . . .

GG: It was before I came down there.

SZ: But you knew about that when you went?

GG: Yes. I knew about the letter that had been sent to the paper by all these artists, complaining about Canaday. Of course, the *Times* loved that. They liked the critics to be "controversial," so if the artists thought they were going to get rid of Canaday by complaining about him, they had another thing coming. Then, what else? No, I knew about that but I was so naive and innocent in the whole ways of the art world that I didn't think much about it.

SZ: Oh, but the other thing I was going to ask you about that was then I read that then he refused to go to the Modern for a while, but Lester Markel made him go back?

GG: That I don't know about.

SZ: That may or may not be true.

GG: He had a love/hate relationship with Alfred Barr. He admired Barr, secretly, because Barr was a puritanical, dedicated, devoted art connoisseur. On the other hand, he always accused Barr of being in the fashion business, initiating trends and making MoMA the sort of, what shall I say? The fashion salon of the art world.

SZ: I think also all of it, anything that was being sold there he didn't approve of.

GG: Anything what?

SZ: The fact that there was any kind of retail—

GG: --operation? Yes. Barr, I think, had contempt for him.

SZ: For Canaday.

GG: Or so it would seem, from the letters he wrote. I don't think Barr ever took him very

seriously. And I think that rankled Canaday, too.

SZ: Before we go on, did you have any opinion at all? Did you read his criticism? Or Preston's or O'Doherty's?

GG: Oh, yes.

SZ: Did you have opinions about their criticism?

GG: Not at that time. I wasn't really able to have opinions. I thought Canaday was a good writer. I realized his opinions were often shallow but it took me a while. At that time the only way I evaluated people was whether they could write well or not, not about their ideas. Actually, they never influenced me one way or another, although if Canaday wrote a blast about somebody, obviously I wasn't going to go out and do an interview with them.

SZ: [Laughing] Because you valued your own life.

GG: Right. On the other hand, they then took to giving me items they thought would be good for the column; that I should interview so-and-so, who was an interesting character, etc. Yes, they were valuable to me.

SZ: So it was going to be whatever you made of it.

GG: Well, it was very much what I saw and interpreted. I'm sure I made some terrible gaffes. I'd have some dumb approaches, but people seemed to like it.

SZ: Yes.

GG: Oh, I should mention Sy Peck. Have I mentioned him before?

SZ: Just briefly.

GG: Do you know who he was?

SZ: Yes.

GG: He was the Sunday editor in charge of my work, and a fantastic editor and a very nurturing sort of person. Very encouraging. He didn't know that much about the art world himself, but he liked far-out, off-beat, wild stuff, and the more I did of that, the more I wrote about the crazy things that were going on in the art world the better he liked it. So I sort of aimed in the beginning for crazy things.

SZ: Give me an example of what that would be.

GG: Oh, I wrote about Happenings, for instance. I was drawn, willy-nilly, to the avant garde, and all sorts of events that were going on at that time. If someone took off their clothes in Macy's window, I would be right there, on the spot. After a while I began to sift out the differences in these things. I began to see what was . . .

SZ: Meaningful? What was meaningful and what wasn't?

GG: Yes, in a way. And I began to find out who the better players were. I stopped doing a lot of that junk stuff. For example, Ralph Ortiz. Do you know Ralph Ortiz?

SZ: I remember.

GG: He used to kill chickens ceremonially. So I would write about things like that, and Sy would be in seventh heaven.

SZ: But that's one of the things you're referring to as less than meaningful?

GG: I won't say it was less than meaningful but it was far out, and it was something I really didn't have a handle on. I knew it was wild stuff and could be written about amusingly. So that was the kind of thing I went for. Then after a while I began to do more serious interviews with people. Their whole idea about the column, upstairs in the Sunday department, was to keep it light, keep it amusing, because that's the way they thought about art. And don't get too heavy, don't start to indulge. For heaven's sake don't get into any kind of critical paranoia or anything like that. So I did. I avoided criticism, and wrote about these things very straight on. Of course, whether I included it or not in the column was itself a form of critique, or became a form of critique. So I went on that way happily, or some years.

SZ: Did you find people wanting to . . .

GG: People would start calling me up, yes. After a while it began to write itself because people would call me up and say, "Listen, I'm having an event in front of a street lamp at 4:00 in the morning on Duane Street." Things like that, and I began to learn to sift all that stuff out. So, yes, people wanted in. They wanted their names mentioned. It was a very valuable source of publicity for the art world, which didn't at that time have much outlet in mainstream newspapers. There were the critics, but there wasn't anyone covering news stuff. Then they began to assign me to do news stories, regular news stories on the front page, feature stories about the art world--interviews and that kind of thing--so I became very, very busy. I remember the first day I went down there I produced several sample columns, which they had okayed, and then I went down to the newsroom. I thought I was just going to turn out this one piece every Sunday, and suddenly it turned out that I was going to cover the art world, from a news point of view. I had never written a news story in my life. As one helper, I did have Charlotte Curtis, who really was very good about that. She was an old pro, and she started to tell me how to do it. People of that sort.

SZ: So this was in addition to the column?

GG: Yes. I had to do these things. The column took me an enormous amount of time, but in the way of newspaper people, everything was supposed to be done in ten minutes; then you had time to do a full-fledged, investigative story. So it was tough.

SZ: So during the time you were doing the column--and I guess afterwards, too, at the Modern--you were dealing with anybody specific?

GG: I dealt with Liz Shaw a lot of the time, who was an absolute, closed information bag. She did what every public relations person is paid to do: She kept information from the press--that was largely her function--except the information the Modern wanted to get into the paper. So that was her function, and she did that very well. Later, when Luisa Kreisberg took over that job, she was much more open and scathing and funny about the whole thing. So I dealt mostly with Liz. Once in a while I would talk with Barr. I was supposed to write a major piece about him and I never did it until he died. Then it was his obit. I would talk with the curators once in a while, but the main source of information at that time was Liz, and she was the person you had to work through.

SZ: So you had some sort of relationship?

GG: I had a relationship with Barr. He knew who I was, and we got along. I think he sort of enjoyed the column, and I think what amused him was that I would do these things in the face of Canaday. Canaday thought the column was funny. Even when I wrote about all this wild stuff he didn't pay much attention to it. He sort of shrugged his shoulders. People would say, "Oh, well, that's her." So I think Barr sort of enjoyed that opposition. Not that it was set up as an opposition. Canaday was always very cordial to me; I never had any problems with him. Let's see. Liz I always had a cordial relationship with, except that she was so difficult to get things out of. And who else did I deal with? Mostly them. Oh. Bill Lieberman I got to know.

SZ: I was going to ask you--Dorothy Miller?

GG: Dorothy I interviewed several times. She was very cautious, a very cautious woman about giving out information.

SZ: Well, what could have been the kind of information that you were looking for that they had to be so cautious about?

GG: I don't know. They just treated everything . . . They didn't want the Modern attacked in any way, shape or form. I guess they were wary.

SZ: Because they had had that experience with Canaday?

GG: I guess they were wary of my relationship to Canaday, too. They didn't want me, I suppose, to say things to him that would lead to some other kind of event. I never thought about that.

SZ: It was her show he really went after, originally, with the sixteen Americans, I think.

GG: Yes, the Dorothy Miller setup. I think he accused her of being Barr's accomplice in trying to set the fashion mode of the art world. He even referred to her as something like a fashion expert, I think. I think she was very shaken by that because she was a very gentle woman, not much exposed to the outside world, and she really didn't understand that kind of criticism. So they tried to protect her. Liz tried to protect her, Barr tried to protect her.

SZ: Do you want to say something about Réne d'Harnoncourt?

GG: I talked with him several times but I can't really say I knew him well. I didn't have a real sense of him as I did of the others.

SZ: I'm just trying to think in those days what potential stories there could have been.

GG: Well, there were stories about openings, and I would cover some openings. Later on, when the Museum built its new wing . . .

SZ: Oh, yes, but that's down the line.

GG: And there were certain exhibitions over there, certain far-out shows I would go over and have fun with, as we say. And what else? What other stories? Well, I can't remember the stories right now but there were things that would occur that should have been written up as news events from time to time, and I'm trying to think. I once interviewed Paley about his collection. And if Liz had something she wanted to plant, she would call me and more than likely I would do it. But I can't remember. Oh, there was a strike.

SZ: I have all that. A lot of that you did as news stories, anyway.

GG: It was really what?

SZ: Well, certainly the Expressionist stuff you would do as news stories.

GG: Yes, right. Oh, sure.

SZ: Well, let me ask you this. Did you have similar relations with the other museums?

GG: No. Well, maybe with the Metropolitan I developed a relationship, with the public relations person, and I got to know some of the people over there. I certainly covered Tom Hoving to a fare-thee-well, because he was big news in that era. Although that was in the '70s, wasn't it? Yes.

SZ: In '67.

GG: In '67 he came to the Museum. I remember I did a big magazine piece on him.

SZ: When he first took over?

GG: Yes. That was fun. I had a lot of fun with that. So then I knew some of the other people over there. Dietrich von Bothmer was always good for a sharp comment. He was head of their Greek and Roman department. So, he was always good for a sharp remark or quote.

SZ: Right.

GG: He considered himself a little, independent fief outside the Museum's jurisdiction. When I came, Rorimer was there and I knew Rorimer.

SZ: You did know Rorimer.

GG: Yes. I had met him through my job. I interviewed him, talked with him on many occasions, and he was not above slipping things to the press. For example, somebody discovered a head in the Museum's basement that I think they claimed was by Donatello. I think it turned out not to be; it was quietly restored to the basement. Then there was the whole discovery of the Greek, you know, the Etruscan things that weren't Etruscan, etc. So I knew Rorimer. Did I write his obituary? No, I didn't write his obituary. I think Canaday probably did. And, let's see, at the Whitney I knew fewer people. The Whitney, in those days, was not very active. It was kind of a backwater, and the Guggenheim was also something of a backwater, with Tom Messer, whom I got to know later. Then at Brooklyn--Who did I know at Brooklyn? When I first came to the job, who was it? I can't even remember.

SZ: And I don't know.

GG: Oh, it was Jack Bauer. But I didn't have much of a relationship with him, either. Well, I

think the Modern was the most newsworthy, until the Met came along with Hoving. Of the museums.

SZ: Okay. They had that 1964 opening of the then new . . .

GG: Was that 1964? When Mrs. Johnson spoke?

SZ: Yes.

GG: Yes, I covered that.

SZ: You did do that. What was that like?

GG: It was a very gala affair, but I remember distinctly standing behind a woman at this opening, when Ladybird was making her speech, and she divided a word into two syllables, in her Texas fashion, that shouldn't have been, and it was like . . . I can't remember what the word was. Anyway, this woman in front of me said, "Oh, God!" when she heard that. As if this provincial person came to New York and . . . It was pretty gala, there were a lot of people, and everyone thought that would be the Modern's last expansion. We were naive enough to think so. I remember vividly one occasion when I went to the Museum to cover a show celebrating the Picasso gifts that had been given to the Museum. Bill Rubin had just been brought in as the curator, and Rubin was very much on hand, more or less taking credit for these gifts, and poor old Barr came into the gallery--and the thing was to honor him for his recruiting of these Picasso gifts from these various people, including Picasso, I think--and I didn't realize it at the time . . . He got off the elevator, he looked at me, and his wife was with him, and she said to him, "You know Grace, darling." He looked at me and I realized . . . I mean, he knew me very well and I was surprised she had to say this to him. I suddenly realized things were not . . . He seemed enfeebled. Here was Rubin running all over the place, taking kudos that should have gone to Barr. So that was really kind of a very disturbing event. I forget what year that was. Maybe '70, '72.

SZ: I don't know. I can look it up. There was a photograph that was taken.

GG: I realized, suddenly, that something was wrong there. So, the question was what?

SZ: I was asking you about the opening in '64. Then you sort of digressed.

GG: Okay. I don't remember a lot about it except there was a very big and very gala crowd, and Ladybird spoke.

SZ: You must not have known very many people at that time. You were just starting, right?

GG: I was just starting, but I think I already had an idea who the major players were. Who was the head of the board at that time? Rockefeller? Nelson? I think he was.

SZ: Yes.

GG: I knew him quite well.

SZ: From this?

GG: From what?

SZ: The column?

GG: From doing news stories about him. Because he at that time was governor. Wasn't he?

SZ: No. Later.

GG: Later. Okay. Later. When was he the governor? Early.

SZ: No, he was the governor then. That's right. He was the governor. Then he wasn't chairman. I looked it up; I've forgotten. That part of it anyway. I'm just trying to think of other things.

GG: Vis à vis the Modern?

SZ: Well, then, Monroe Wheeler, he retired, I think.

GG: What was Monroe Wheeler's job?

SZ: Well, it was publications.

GG: That's right. And then Dick Oldenburg took over.

SZ: Right. Well, no, they had somebody else first, and then . . .

GG: Oh, that's right.

SZ: They had that guy, Grey.

GG: That's right. I was going to say Grey. And then Claes Oldenburg, whom I knew, said his brother was considering this job at the Modern and what did I think of his taking it? I sort of made a face and said I didn't think it was a job for . . . "I'm sure it doesn't pay very well," I said. Famous last words. I'm sure it never did, but I sort of frowned on the idea.

SZ: Why?

GG: Oh, I don't know. I had a dim idea of what publications people did, and I thought the

Modern was a very closed, insular, backbiting institution--which I think it was at that time, probably still is, like all museums--and all the things I had heard about the place and what went on there--the infighting and the warring among the curators, etc.--made me very distrustful of it as a place to work. I think the only way to work in a place like that is to be perfectly square, and not to get involved in any . . . Arthur Drexler, I think, was a difficult person. I think Liz, who had a great friendship with Arthur, enjoyed all the intrigues and gossip. Barr, himself, of course, was a man not without intrigue, although he seemed very pure and above the battle. I think he encouraged a certain partisanship on the part of the staff members. I think he sort of liked to set people against each other. Liz, of course, adored him. I thought the Museum was an unhealthy kind of a nest to work at.

SZ: But Oldenburg didn't take your advice.

GG: He didn't take my advice, obviously. He famously did not take my advice. I don't know if Claes ever transmitted it to him.

SZ: Then Réne retired, and then he was killed.

GG: He retired, and he was killed by a drunk woman driver. Canaday used to tell me stories about him. Faintly unsavory; that is to say, he was very educated in Mexican art, central American, etc., and there was a woman--I can't think--she's very famous in Mexico City as a dealer, as a general promoter of Mexican art. Canaday said in his younger days Réne was down there and enjoyed this woman and her company and all the friends they had. She was Jewish. Anita Something-or-other. He said later on he asked Réne about that period of life, and Réne just said, "Oh, I never knew her," and disclaimed all responsibility, all knowledge of this woman. Well Canaday, of course, considered Réne a great snob, too, as he did Alfred. But I don't think that the Museum would have run without Réne d'Harnoncourt. And he kept a steady hand over Alfred, and he just was very smooth, a very smart man. Did you know his daughter?

SZ: I know of her.

GG: She's just like him.

SZ: I was going to say, that was a big, transitional time.

GG: Yes, and I didn't pay enough attention to it. I should have paid more attention. I had too many other things on my plate. But I knew it was going on, and I did what I was required to do, about reporting it. But it was a very interesting period in the Museum's history, yes. Because at that time it was still a small institution and very responsive to its curators, and very driven from within by Alfred's vision. I knew it at that time, and it got, suddenly, it seems to me, very big and very corporate. It changed completely. I'm trying to think exactly when that was. Of course, it was when Alfred left. Who did they bring in after that?

SZ: Well, we can go through that, because that's when you certainly were on that.

GG: But as I say, when I first knew the Museum it was still an intimate place that was run, as I said, more or less, on Barr's inner vision and everyone had a sense of dedication it seemed to me. They weren't paid very much but they were all very involved in "the" Museum. The Museum was the only place in the world for them. Anything the Museum did was holy, and that disappeared in the whole corporate shift of the structure of, what shall I say? The '70s, of museums generally, and of non-profit institutions generally. Despite everything it was a very intimate place. Everybody knew each other, they all had opinions about each other, they took in each other's washing, so to speak. By the time Liz left, I think that was gone. When did she leave?

SZ: In '77.

GG: Did she leave that late?

SZ: Yes. In '76, '77. And then Luisa Kreisberg came in.

GG: By the time Barr retired, or was forcibly retired . . .

SZ: Well, that was the end of the '60s.

GG: At the end of the '60s it had already begun. Who did they bring in? It wasn't Hightower at that time, was it?

SZ: Well, it was Bates Lowry.

GG: Oh, that's right. Bates Lowry. Then after Bates was it John Hightower?

SZ: Well, first they had sort of a peacekeeping troika for a year, and it was Walter Bareiss and Wilder Green and Dick Koch.

GG: That's right. I had forgotten that.

SZ: But the Bates Lowry story was one that you did do.

GG: Yes. But I've totally forgotten it. Why was he ousted?

SZ: Well, there are a lot of opinions on that. He was not popular. I think people felt he was very high-handed in the demands he made on the Museum. I guess he was not a good administrator.

GG: Maybe I would also say to you that the Museum was a totally WASP enclave. I mean, it sort of ran by the rules of WASP-dom, of high-minded WASP-dom. I guess that came from the junior Rockefellers. You know. Everybody should starve, but should turn out a good, dedicated job.

SZ: Those were the days when almost everybody who chose to work at a place like that were people who . . .

GG: . . . were independently wealthy; had an income.

SZ: . . . didn't do it for the income.

GG: Yes. That's right.

SZ: So you could feel that there.

GG: Yes. But don't forget also, Barr was the son of a Protestant minister and I think Canaday had written this, actually, perceptively, that he ran the Museum the way a minister would run his church in a sense. The Museum was his flock and he had those same ideals, the same Christian ideals for it. I mean, advanced, enlightened Christian ideals, but one never forgot that Barr was the son of a minister. One never forgot that. He was rigorous and ascetic and all that kind of stuff, and believed that everyone should be totally dedicated. So it was that influence that left and that changed the Museum.

SZ: Well, a lot of things happened at one time. So the Bates Lowry, all that period, is something that Bates Lowry and this three-person . . .

GG: . . . troika.

SZ: Yes. And then Hightower was hired.

GG: Hightower, yes.

SZ: Did you know him?

GG: Yes. Very well. I knew the whole story. In fact, I wrote the story.

SZ: Do you remember anything about that whole thing?

GG: Yes. I remember he was brought in by Rockefeller, because he had served on the New York State Council for the Arts, which Rockefeller had invented. For some reason Rockefeller thought very highly of him, and Hightower was an out-and-out popularizer. He would say things like . . . I remember this famous line. At that time Hilton Kramer had come aboard the *Times* and there was this famous line of Hightower's, "You know, putting a turkey in the oven can be an act of art." He would say outrageous things like that, which he had no idea were outrageous, and Kramer would jump all over him. I think he just got too cocky. He was very cocky, and I think he tried to do too many "popularizing" things at the Museum. Anyway, people became rapidly disillusioned with him, and I think Rockefeller sold him down the river. Rockefeller finally turned against him. Rockefeller, who thought of himself as a popularizer, too. I think that's why he brought Hightower in; because originally he felt that Hightower's ideas were similar to his own.

SZ: Well, he actually had him at the New York State Council on the Arts.

GG: Yes. And he was his boy. I think he began to lose confidence in him, too. So, in the end, he sort of skunked him. I forget how that happened, but the next thing you knew, Hightower was out. He didn't last a year, I think. Was he there for more than a year?

SZ: Yes, he was there for little more than a year. Not much. But he got caught up in the whole political struggle of anti-Vietnam protests and other things.

GG: Oh, that's right. Now I remember. Yes, that's right. He started to make the Museum a forum for that kind of thing.

SZ: You must have loved this. This must have been great stuff.

GG: For me it was. It was great. That's right. And I think a lot of the trustees got very antsy about it. I think that was what finally did him in. He felt that he had to . . . I remember he said something at a meeting. He sort of reversed himself. I can't remember exactly what it was. I suppose I could look up my old clips. He sort of backtracked, after promising the moon to some wildly outrageous group. Everybody lost confidence in him. He seemed to be like a Clinton . . . He actually was a very Clinton-type personality, come to think of it. Whatever happened to him? Where is he now? I used to hear from him once in a while.

SZ: He went to the Seaport Museum, and now he's at . . . I can't remember exactly what it's called. I think it's just the Maritime Museum in Newport News, Virginia. I think that's right.

GG: Well, older and wiser, I would think. God, we're talking, what? Almost thirty years ago.

SZ: Does it seem like it?

GG: Well, he must be in his sixties, Hightower. I can't believe it. He was very buoyant.

SZ: Going back to Lowry, you don't recall much about him?

GG: I really don't. It's terrible. Refresh me a little bit about Lowry. I remember him.

SZ: Well, he had come from Rhode Island, I think.

GG: Yes. From the Rhode Island School of Design, or what?

SZ: No, he had had some important post. I thought it was Brown.

GG: Who brought him in?

SZ: I guess the same people.

GG: Rockefeller?

SZ: No.

GG: The troika?

SZ: No, I think it was Paley and Rockefeller.

GG: Oh, really?

SZ: As in David.

GG: Well, that's an impeccable name--Bates Lowry. Who could argue with that?

SZ: For a WASP kind, yes.

GG: For a WASP organization, it was him. Which, of course, had a Jewish president. Paley, the chairman, for a while. Let's see. No, I don't remember much about Bates, because he made very little impression on me. I think I had not too much contact with him. Was John de Menil on the board at that time?

SZ: Yes, he was involved. Yes.

GG: And I think he accused . . . I wrote a story about this, I remember. He accused somebody of selling Bates down the river. You know, I'm sorry. My recollection is very hazy about it.

SZ: That's all right.

GG: He didn't make much of an impression on me. How long was he there for? Not long.

SZ: He was there for, I think, a year, and I think Hightower was there for about a year and a half.

GG: Yes. For a while they had this turnover of directors.

SZ: It was kind of a wild time. And the last thing.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SZ: The last thing, for that time, which was all late '60s and early '70s, but I mean, we may want to leave that, but there was the whole strike and the formation of the union.

GG: And I had an interview . . . I don't know if this is relevant to you or not. At that time Nelson's mother was chairman, wasn't she? She was the chairman of the Board of Trustees. Blanchette.

SZ: Oh. That wasn't Nelson's mother.

GG: What am I saying? Nelson's mother . . .

SZ: I was thinking, "Nelson's mother?"

GG: Nelson's sister-in-law.

SZ: Right.

GG: But was Blanchette there . . . ? I think she wasn't there when the first strike happened, was she?

SZ: No, it was Mrs. Cobb, I think, and then Blanchette. I don't know how it went, but Blanchette was there, I know, when there was the big, long strike.

GG: And I remember I was sent to interview her, find out how she was coping . . .

SZ: This was a news story, I take it.

GG: This was a news story. Maybe I decided to go interview her. There were a lot of young women on the streets and they were parading up and down, and they had signs like, "Blanchette, you used to be a Hooker !" Which was her maiden name. I'm sure she hadn't the faintest idea what that meant. Anyway, I said to her, "What do you think about what's going on down there, with these kids on the street?" She said, "Oh, it's really upsetting to me. Most of these young women come from very good families and they've been to very good schools. They really ought to know better. They're behaving like coal miners." But, as it turns out, her son was then running for Governor of West Virginia, which is a big coal-mining state. When I got back to the office I thought, "Should I put this in the paper?" I thought, "Yes, she said it." She said it, and it's a public forum. So I wrote that in my story. So I didn't speak with her again for about a month or two, and then I saw her at some sort of a do at the Modern. She came over to me, very pleasantly. This was a real lady. She said, You know, Grace, I have no quarrel with your story. It was accurate in every respect. The only thing is, my son saw the comment I made about coal miners--which I made," she said, "and he was absolutely beside himself. He called up and said, 'Mother, how could you?'" But she was sport enough to acknowledge that I hadn't made the quote up; that she had said it, and she never took me to task for it beyond telling me, in a kind of amused, rueful way, later, how she felt about it. Anyway, she was still very much in the tradition of the Museum. She talked about these young women who came from

good families and had been to good schools and how could they talk like that, etc.? That was pretty much the attitude. So, actually, I think the Rockefellers used that Museum. I don't know if you should put this in, but I think some of them considered the Museum of Modern Art, the people who worked there, as sort of "the help," because Nelson Rockefeller gave a party for the 25th anniversary of the New York State Council on the Arts, at his place in Tarrytown, and it was a very gala event, and also to celebrate John Hightower's accession to the Museum, I think. So when I got there I distinctly remember Bill Lieberman came in at the same time we did. I came in with some people from the paper. I can remember Happy Rockefeller taking him aside and saying, "Did you remember to pick up Nelson's shirts?" That's the way they used those people; they were there for errands and small chores and stuff like that. Maybe I'm being unfair but I don't think so.

SZ: Well, this is something people say all the time: It was a Rockefeller institution.

GG: Well, it was a Rockefeller institution. Really. It was their benevolent charity. It was Nelson's mother who had founded it, with a couple other ladies.

SZ: That's right, but she died in 1949.

GG: She died in 1949. But they saw it as, more or less . . . They were very good women, and they were very well-intentioned.

SZ: That's not right, either.

GG: What?

SZ: That's not right, either. I'm sorry. She didn't die in 1949.

GG: I forget when she died. But they were all very well-intentioned, they were all very interested in art and that sort of thing. I don't question their motives, but at the same

time they knew they were dispensing charity. They were doing a charitable thing. They were doing a non-profit thing. And that attitude, believe me, persisted for a long time.

SZ: Well, by that time, did you have a sense for yourself of where you stood on, let's say, John Canaday's criticisms?

GG: Well, by that time yes, I did, because by that time Hilton Kramer had come on board, and Hilton, as you know, was extremely . . . What shall I say? Hilton had nothing but contempt for Canaday. I don't know if this should be . . .

SZ: Well, we'll go . . . decide.

GG: Hilton had a good deal of contempt for Canaday and his opinions. Although Hilton himself was very conservative, he felt Canaday didn't know enough about the enemy.

SZ: To make a reasonable attack?

GG: To make a reasonable attack. He had a lot of scorn for him. Anyway, I began listening to Hilton and I began to wise up. He did a great deal to wise me up, I must say, about the art world, although I never subscribed to his very conservative ideas, and I was upset when they gave him the job, because I thought he was too conservative. So I began to look at things in a different light, I think. When did he come aboard? I'm trying to think. Was it in the early '70s? I got a new perspective.

SZ: Well, Canaday didn't leave when Hilton came.

GG: No. Hilton gradually . . . I must say Hilton worked very hard, gradually, to oust him. But again, this is not to be . . . I wasn't aware of it at the time but eventually Canaday began to complain that Hilton was taking on all the plum assignments, making it impossible for him. And Canaday, too, had a liking for going down at 4:00 to Sardis

and having a few drinks. I would go with him sometimes. He was a bon vivant, and he, I think, began to take--let's put it this way--a less dedicated view of his job, etc. It was kind of easy for Hilton. Hilton was very positive, arrogant, knew how to talk, made his points very clearly, ingratiated himself with the editors--who had enormous respect for his intellect--and they began to listen to him. He had a very sharp news sense, and I will certainly say for him--and I have a good deal of respect for him--even, for example, when the Art Workers Coalition and all these guerilla activists--he would say, "Now Grace, you have to cover this. That's part of this. You have to cover this. This is news." Even though I was disinclined to do it. So he pushed me in that direction, too, even though Hilton thinks the '60s are the worst thing that ever happened to American culture. But he was very much part of making sure that the activities got covered in the paper.

SZ: Why would you have been disinclined to cover the Art Workers Coalition?

GG: Because I didn't take them too seriously at the time. Then I became, myself, very involved with anti-Vietnam sentiment, so I took them more seriously. But some of those people were really very fringe people, and haven't been heard from since. So I think I was probably very busy, I wanted to do interviews and I didn't want to get involved with all these. Hilton pushed me to do it, to his credit.

SZ: So we can leave it here, early '70s, I guess, where you were still doing your column and doing art news as well. Right.

GG: Oh, yes. Well, I always covered art news.

SZ: I know, but you were saying news features, when you were writing that way.

GG: Yes.

SZ: You didn't tell me what the first one was that they took you down from. The art world

from a news point of view, was what you were saying, right? When you were doing features, as well as the column?

GG: Yes. I covered news events and the art world. Features, interviews, magazine articles, that kind of stuff. Book reviews. I did all that stuff, gradually, as well as the column. So when I think back on it I can't imagine how I did it. Lots of times by not going to bed at night. I developed a lifelong habit of not going to bed. Or at least going to bed at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Which I still can't shake. So, at any rate, Canaday was gradually eased out and finally he took to writing about food. It was very sad in a way, but on the other hand he didn't move along with the world. In a way it was his own fault. Stuart Preston, I think, had by that time long been eased out and been replaced by, well, Hilton. No, Hilton replaced who? He replaced Brian O'Doherty?

SZ: I was going to ask you what happened to Brian O'Doherty.

GG: Yes. Brian left and then he had a longtime job with the National Endowment for the Arts among other pursuits.

SZ: Do you want to stop?

GG: In a minute or two. A few minutes. I'm just afraid that was the office asking me where the rest of my copy is.

SZ: Well, we can just leave it until next time. I'm just trying to think of what we've talked about.

GG: Anything useful coming out of this?

SZ: I think so, yes.

GG: Okay.

SZ: You did talk a little bit about it was around the time that Bill Rubin showed up, in the late '60s, actually, full-time. And there was stuff going on with that. Were you aware of any of that?

GG: About his coming in?

SZ: With Rubin and Lieberman and . . . ?

GG: Oh, I certainly was aware that they were at each other's throats. I think each had been promised the moon. I think Lieberman thought eventually he would get the directorship. Don't forget he had more or less been a protégé of Barr's, and Rubin later was supposedly picked by Barr, too, but from the minute he came there it was very obvious he was going to upstage . . . Do you know Rubin?

SZ: Yes.

GG: A very arrogant bully. And, of course, very intelligent and very scholarly but a complete and total bully. I think it became very obvious he was out to take away whatever power Lieberman had. He wanted to be named the chief curator. He is still emeritus, isn't he?

SZ: Emeritus.

GG: Yes. And I think he still has an office there. But he was the Hilton of the Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: Someone told me . . .

GG: Someone told you what?

SZ: That he's really gone now.

GG: Is he? Okay. And I think he did some good things in many ways. And I think he was certainly a very respected scholar. In the beginning he more or less claimed to have gotten these Picasso gifts that Alfred had worked all his life to get from Mrs. So-and-So and Mrs. So-and-So, and he was there taking kudos for these. I think he had persuaded Picasso to give one thing--Rubin--that small sculpture of the ice cream spoon, or whatever it was. I've forgotten. Anyway, Rubin made it very clear from the outset that he was going to assert himself in a big way. So, of course, it was only inevitable that the two of them would hate each other. And the funny thing is that years later, when Bill Lieberman went to the Met, and I said to Rubin, whom I liked to tease, and I liked to dig at, I said, "I understand he's taken several of his most prominent donors with him." Rubin said excitedly, "Who told you that? What are you talking about? That's not true." And sure enough it did turn out to be true, when what's-her-name died. Louise Smith. She left a lot of her stuff to the Modern. So did . . . Who was this woman?

SZ: You mean to the Met.

GG: To the Met. Who was this woman? They recently had a show of her work.

SZ: Just now, actually, I think.

GG: No, about a year ago. I can't think of her name. Anyway, she was one of Bill Lieberman's cultivees.

SZ: The thing now is . . .

GG: Oh, Dannheisser. Well, I don't know whose baby she was. I'm sure she wasn't Rubin's baby. Dannheisser. Surely she wasn't cultivated by Rubin. Probably Marron

or somebody got onto her.

SZ: In any event, this is one thing. But going back to what you were saying: There were these changes, also, in your department. But what was happening for you? You were working very hard, you said. Were you wanting or thinking about anything else?

GG: No, there was no time. You mean going anywhere else or doing anything else?

SZ: Yes.

GG: No, there was no time. And, actually, I liked working that hard, and it was my whole life. It became my whole life, the paper, as it did for a lot of people. I couldn't imagine an existence apart from it, which is unfortunate. So I didn't complain. Or, if I complained nobody took it seriously, including me. So no, I was very content. Because the paper did a lot of things for me. I should say, for one, to the people working there, it gave instant prestige. Everybody knew you were from the New York *Times* and doors opened magically. So that was very, very gratifying. It really provided a life, and the work was interesting. I did love the work. I loved to go out and talk to people, and in my whole life I can't ever remember looking at the clock and saying, "Thank God, it's time to go home," or, "I wish I were home." So from that standpoint it was very rewarding, and I didn't really have to think of it. And people would say, "Are you crazy? You're thinking of another job? Why, you're at the top of the profession, blah, blah, blah. What else would you do?" When I think it over, if I had had the money, or if I had felt I could do it, I would probably have liked to have stopped working at the paper and start writing books on my own. But I never felt able to do that. I was too attached to the mother lode, I think, so I never saw myself as someone who could . . . A lot of people walked out of the paper and made careers on their own, wrote their own books, like David Halberstam and people like that. I never did it. So it had that effect.

SZ: Okay. Let's stop, and I'll tell you what I have next.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **GRACE GLUECK (GG)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **91 CENTRAL PARK WEST, NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: **23 OCTOBER 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: Grace, just for the record--because I was a little hazy last time--but remember you were slightly confused about who was president and chairman when. But in '64, at the time of the opening--the re-opening--Mrs. Rockefeller was president and David Rockefeller was chairman.

GG: Yes, I thought I said that.

SZ: Then the following year it changed. Mrs. Parkinson became president, David Rockefeller stayed chairman, and then in '68 Paley became president, while David Rockefeller was still chairman. Then it changed in '72. So, anyhow, that was that part of it. And Glenn Lowry became director of the Museum, he became director of painting and sculpture in January of '68, director of the Museum in July of '68, and was gone by, I think it was, May of '69.

GG: Glenn Lowry?

SZ: Not Glenn Lowry, Bates Lowry. Sorry. And was out by May of '69.

GG: Really?

SZ: Yes. So he didn't . . .

GG: I was putting him in the '70s.

SZ: No. Then that troika was '69 to '70, and Hightower was '70 until the end of '71, at which time Dick Oldenburg became acting director, and then finally director. So that's that part of it. So that's kind of where we left off. We were talking about some of the confusion, and we were telling me the story about the first strike. I guess I wanted to talk about the expansion but, the first strike was under Hightower, the second strike was after Dick became director.

GG: I think this might have been the second strike that she said this to me. Because was she chairman during the second strike?

SZ: Yes. Well . . .

GG: Well, it seems to me it was the second strike, Sharon.

SZ: She was president during the second strike, that's right.

GG: She would have had an office in the Museum, because I remember . . .

SZ: Yes, so that's when it must have been. The first strike took place . . .

GG: That's right. She was president. The first strike took place when?

SZ: While Hightower was there, and that was also in the midst of all the stuff we started to talk a little bit about. All the art work was coalitioned . . .

GG: Yes, the Guerilla Girls and everything. It must have been the second strike and I remember seeing, it was mostly women. Mostly women were employed there, because they accepted low wages. So anyway.

SZ: Oh, and the last thing was, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller died in 1948.

GG: She died in '48. What did I say?

SZ: I don't know, but then I said '49, but I was a year off. Anyhow.

GG: I certainly never met her. Okay.

SZ: So I just sort of want to go back to the '70s, still.

GG: Well, you know, it all came out of the Vietnam War protests, and then people like the Art Workers Coalition were very concerned about the composition of museum boards and the fact that they reflected a white, middle-class mentality, a white, upper-class mentality, and that they weren't showing art by women or blacks or other ethnic groups. They started to agitate and, as I said, this was all infected by the Vietnam War fever. This was all an extension of it. So they would do actions like the famous ones of laying cockroaches out on the table. I think this was the MoMA board meeting, was it not? They invaded a MoMA board meeting. I'm pretty sure that's what it was. I think this was during Hightower's realm, and they poured cockroaches on the table. Things of that sort. I remember the Guerilla Girls at the Whitney, they left eggs and sanitary napkins, on the stairs of the Whitney, to draw attention to themselves. That sort of thing. It became a contest to see who could do the most outrageous thing next. Of course, that was the year when *Harlem on My Mind* was born at the Metropolitan Museum, in an attempt to placate these minority groups. Hoving had this terribly misguided idea of producing a black show. Hoving always talked about relevance; that the Museum had to be relevant to the present. So this was all very disturbing to the so-called elitist public and the scholars who went to the Museum. At any rate, they carried on at a great rate, and it wasn't only the Art Workers Coalition. It was all kinds of other splinter groups, whose names I can't remember. They were effective. They were effective in raising the Museum's quotient of women exhibited

and, certainly, at the Whitney as well. They would proudly announce these statistics. Lucy Lippard was one of the ring leaders. You know her, don't you? And MoMA found itself forced to make these public relations announcements; that of such-and-such a show of contemporary Americans (maybe it was more the Whitney that did this), 25% were now women, 17%--the whole thing was such a farce. At any rate, there was a great deal of that kind of activity in the early '70s, a lot of which I covered, and Hightower himself appeared at, certainly, one of the Art Workers Coalition meetings that I attended. It was pretty unprecedented for the director of the Museum to come to one of those things, but they asked him to come and he did. And he said, as I remember, a lot of foolish things, making foolish promises to them and making concessions which he had no right to do, on the part of the Modern. But it was all in the interest of trying to calm these people down. So I think that, more than anything else, was what got him fired. That and his wild announcements about what constituted art. He would say, "You put a turkey in the oven, and that's art." That's a famous remark. I can't remember some of his others. Anyway, it would have taken a master psychologist to deal with these people well.

SZ: You mean the demonstrators.

GG: The demonstrators. There really wasn't much you could do in the face of it. And the Museum did make a few concessions to them. Well, times have changed, of course, and the Modern now finds, I'm sure, that the percentage of women who are represented . . . It's no longer an issue. It really is not an issue anymore, but believe me, it was then. Perhaps I should say not so much of an issue.

SZ: You know, last time you also mentioned John de Menil.

GG: Yes, John de Menil was a very active member of the Museum of Modern Art, of the Modern's board anyway. He called me up one day and he said (and this was a story I wrote, maybe you have a copy of it) that . . . Was it Bates Lowry? I think Bates Lowry was dismissed. Why, I've forgotten. I've forgotten what he said about Bates Lowry.

He charged some kind of conspiracy on the part of the board. I don't think he stayed on the board much longer after that, but there's this story that one could look up, but I don't remember the gist of it anymore.

SZ: So he approached you with it.

GG: He did. He did, yes. He called me. Because I knew him fairly well, and he wanted to get it in the paper, and he certainly did. Then, of course, there was that famous story about Paley firing Ralph Colin. What was that all about?

SZ: Did they call you on that, too?

GG: No. No, I found that out. But why did he fire Colin? Oh. Because Colin charged that the executive committee of the board was keeping things too close to its chest, and that they had made decisions that didn't involve the other board members that should have. I forget what this particular instance was, but anyway, Paley got very angry about it. Colin had been a CBS lawyer for something like thirty years and I think he lost that job, too. They canceled their legal contracts with him.

SZ: In a time of turmoil and there was a lot going on, how did you stay close to the place?

GG: You mean in the '70s?

SZ: Yes.

GG: Well, I had people over there who were willing to talk to me, occasionally. Certainly the union people were willing to talk to me, because they wanted to make their case. Then I developed contacts (I don't know, is this kosher? Most of these people are gone anyway) contacts in the Museum, through having reported this activity. Then people would call me and say, "Hey, you know what happened? You know what's going on here?" Or, if I wanted a particular piece of information that I knew I couldn't

get from Liz Shaw or somebody else, I would call one of these people and try to get whatever I could out of them. Perfectly legitimate. So I maintained contact with lower-level staff, because most of the higher staff would not talk very much. After Liz left things became much more open, as far as public relations was concerned, because Luisa was a very frank and open person. She talked, she would say things, she would make leading remarks and she had a certain healthy contempt, I think, for the clandestinity that prevailed at the Museum.

SZ: Which was what you felt it was.

GG: Oh, yes, definitely. Definitely. Well, I'm not saying it was peculiar to the Modern. I think it's peculiar, probably, to any corporation. Nobody wants to talk because they're afraid for their jobs. But maybe there it was a little more. I think they played their cards a little closer to their chest than they needed to, and I have a feeling it ran through the whole building, that kind of, what shall I say? Well, there's a certain . . . Maybe I shouldn't say this but there was a certain kind of paranoia on the part of the staff. A lot of the people hated each other. They didn't get along. I mean, one was aware of that. Lots of fights. Certainly, the constant simmering between Rubin and Lieberman was no secret.

SZ: Did they use you in that struggle? Not at all?

GG: No. No. And, of course, poor old Barr. Well, I guess they kept it a secret as long as they could, about his incipient Alzheimer's. But, as I said, John de Menil was also very forthcoming while he was on the board. He was another good source. He didn't hesitate to talk. He was helpful. Let me put it this way. He was helpful in certain matters. He got very indignant when this incident took place with Bates Lowry, in which he accused the trustees of . . . I can't remember. What was it? God, it's in the back of my mind. I can see the story on the page, but I can't quite remember what it was.

SZ: Well, I can tell you what some issues are that have appeared in print. Apparently, he really came in and wanted to change a lot of things. He had this idea for an international study center and was bringing in his own staff and, I think, had an apartment and there were some issues with his apartment. I think those were the major things, but that doesn't strike a bell with you?

GG: No, but my memory may just be faulty. What I'm trying to think of is a specific thing that John de Menil told me, or said he believed; that the trustees had done such-and-such a thing; taken such-and-such steps to oust Bates Lowry, on the basis of something that he did not believe in; that he, John de Menil, thought was wrong. I can't remember what it was. As I said, it's in the record.

SZ: In the record, and I don't have that. In terms of the two Bills, the way that was finally solved. Was that a story for you? Do you remember? And in the end the fact that Bill Rubin did get the department of painting and sculpture?

GG: I think I wrote a story about Bill Lieberman leaving to go to the Met.

SZ: Yes, that was in '78. Or '79.

GG: But I don't know that I wrote a story about Rubin getting that job. I don't know that I was, to tell you the truth, quite aware at that point.

SZ: Well, maybe we could talk a little bit about Dick's appointment.

GG: Dick's appointment.

SZ: Yes.

GG: Well, I told you, I told Claes to tell Dick not to take the job.

SZ: Yes, you told me that.

GG: But I think it was probably a good appointment, certainly from the Museum's standpoint, because he's a peacemaker and a person who . . . Dick is extremely good at dealing with some of those personalities. In a sense, although he wasn't like Réne d'Harnoncourt, he had that kind of, I think, maybe a calming, objective presence, I felt. He was certainly very good at coping with Mrs. Rockefeller, not that she needed much coping but I think she leaned on him a great deal. I think he was a good spokesman for the Museum. He gave the impression that things were running very smoothly. And, as I said, he was the kind of person who . . . What's the word I want? He was . . . Not a peacemaker. I don't want to call him a politician, but he certainly had enough political sense, political savvy, to get along with these warring departments and try to make them come to terms. I think. He was there during the Rubin/Lieberman whole situation.

SZ: Yes.

GG: And I think that was a bad situation for the Museum. Not that the public was aware of it. The public wasn't aware of it. I think the important thing for the Museum is the public perception of it. What do they care if a few people like me and other people in the business knew about this? But I think Dick was very good at creating a public perception for the Museum, more of a public persona.

SZ: Well, he was, however . . . He was not an art historian.

GG: No, he was not. He certainly was not, and he had no . . . But they never pretended that he was.

SZ: But that was a switch. That was a change.

GG: Yes. They never pretended he was an art historian. He was brought in as an

administrator. And then, of course, Rubin, in effect, ran the art side of the Museum, in his bullying way, and I guess they were sort of satisfied with that setup. Rubin, in effect, acted as the chief curator. Did he ever have that title? I guess he did.

SZ: He had that title for a very short time, then he became director of the department, and that was his official title.

GG: But from there . . . Remember, that was the title that Barr had, really. Wasn't it?

SZ: Yes, but then they changed it and made every head of a department director of the department.

GG: But the painting and sculpture department is, of course, the most important. So from that perch he was really able to run . . . I think he had a tremendous voice in what went on, and I think Dick must have found him, at times, pretty hard to stomach. Because, I'm sure, he would ride roughshod over Dick when push came to shove. So there was nothing to end it, because, as you say, he had the clout of having all that scholarly experience and degrees and whatever. And for all of his shortcomings, he certainly is an intelligent fellow, Rubin. So he was very smart, even though a bully. So I think he must have been a great thorn in Dick's side and I'm sure he got in the way of many decisions. Although, again, I was not a party to that. All I knew about was my own dealings with him, and Rubin was very, very anxious for publicity on his projects. He would call me personally, or call Hilton or somebody. He never worked through the public relations department.

SZ: Was that, for you, a good thing or a negative thing?

GG: Well, it was a good thing in that you got it kind of unfiltered. It wasn't put into the Museum's usual boilerplate, it was straight from the horse's mouth. But, again, he said what he wanted to say. Several times I was lied to by Bill Rubin, or the truth was stretched or exaggerated.

SZ: Did that ever catch you?

GG: Well, not really, but in small ways. First of all, he was very touchy about the fact that his brother was a dealer, and was furious once when I wrote that in a piece. He said, "Well, what relevance does that have to anything?" I said, "What do you mean what relevance does it have? Is it a fact or isn't it that your brother is Larry Rubin, the dealer?" "Well, that has nothing to do with me." I said, "Well, I thought it was worth mentioning," and every time--because he was accused, as you know, of arranging certain shows of artists that his brother represented, like Frank Stella--every time that was mentioned he would be apoplectic and bullying. He was an extremely bullying person, and threatened to do all kinds of things. Every time he was quoted he insisted on going over every comma and semi-colon of his quotes; they should be read back to him. Then he had a way of, for example . . . This is something that sticks in my memory for some reason. When they bought the Matisse, "Late Dance" cut-out, the late Matisse cut-outs. He described them to me in a way that eliminated the fact that Matisse had used burlap. I forget what he referred to it as, but it was actually burlap that he had used. But for Bill, that was not a refined enough material, I guess, so he described it as something else. I wrote that, stupidly, without actually going to look at the thing, and found out later.

SZ: You mean you wrote it the way he described it?

GG: The way he described it. It was just ridiculous. It was just stupid. That's why that one little thing sticks in my memory, it was just so dumb. He had a way of eliding things, or, certainly, playing things to his own advantage. I told you about the time he greeted everybody, at this party, this celebration that was given for Barr, on the occasion of . . . Remember, I told you this was when I first realized Barr was not well. They gave an opening . . . All the Picassos that were acquired by Barr during his tenure at the Museum were shown, and Rubin was very much on hand, taking bows and kudos--although, I think, at that point he had been instrumental only in getting one of them,

one of these things. It must have annoyed Margo Barr beyond believe.

SZ: What was it about Rubin, do you think, that kept him in that position for so many years?

GG: Well, he was very intelligent. He was very smart. He had good ideas about shows. He was a scholar, and he was someone, you know . . . He was the heavyweight, and they needed a heavyweight. They really did need a heavyweight in that department, certainly, and that he was. He had a gift, too, for deducing what shows would be popular with the public. The Picasso show he staged, and then the big Matisse show. This was much later, of course. They were very weighty shows, they weren't fly-by-night affairs. So what kept him there was that he was very valuable, for all of his shortcomings. So I think people just tried to get along with him. Luisa used to tell me about the screaming matches that he inflicted on his staff, on her and on everybody who came within his presence, and tried to do it several times on me. No, I think he was a genuine heavyweight, and they really needed him. An authority, so to speak. If I had a question on some matter, of Cubism or any of the Modernist, 20th Century movements, and I really was stuck for an answer I would call him and he would invariably come up with an answer, right off his head. So he was very well-versed. He's not connected with the Museum in any way anymore?

SZ: I can't answer that.

GG: They spent a lot of time in the south of France. How old is he? He must be in his early seventies now, hmmn?

SZ: I think he's older than that, maybe.

GG: Really? He hasn't been well. He's been, as you know, not well for some time.

SZ: Did you deal with Bill Lieberman?

GG: I dealt with Bill Lieberman, sure, from time to time.

SZ: When he was there?

GG: What about him? Well, Lieberman, again, had his own way of finagling everything. He was not shy about taking credit to himself, and when you talked with him you had a sense that everything was very heavily filtered through his own fantasies about himself and his role. But he, too, was very competent. I'm not denying his competence. He certainly knows his field backwards and, I think, did some very good shows there. He has a sense of humor, but in late years he has become very, very pompous.

SZ: Well, you still deal with him, obviously, from time to time, because he's at the Met.

GG: I do occasionally, at the Met. Sure. I see him occasionally, too. He and I used to sit on the committee of something. I only saw him on those occasions. I don't see much of him anymore. But when he was younger he was friendly and funny, and had that sort of very homosexual, inside, knowing kind of information and appreciation. He was certainly much more palatable than Rubin, who was a real bull. He was easier to deal with. But as to who should have gotten that job? I think it probably Rubin who should have gotten it. I wouldn't like to say this but Rubin had the better eye. Bill has a good eye, I shouldn't say that, but Rubin was more solid. You had the feeling he was more solid. And another thing. Lieberman didn't write, which is very, very important to a curator. A curator has to expound his ideas, and Rubin is very good at this. He has long, Talmudic, scholarly arguments. So that was a great drawback, a great disadvantage. When Lieberman wrote an essay, it was a couple pages and it skimmed the surface of things lightly; it didn't begin to mine his own knowledge. So he was not a writer. I think that was in his disfavor.

SZ: Was that a big story for you when he left? When he went to the Met?

GG: It certainly was a story. I don't recall how big a story it was. Again, I could look it up. But I'm sure we wrote about that. I told you I said to Rubin, "He's going to take with him some of his collectors," and Rubin got very defensive about that. He said, "Why do you say that?" He felt very threatened and paranoid about that. And it happened. But, I think, by that time Rubin probably didn't care. Anyway, for those two, as far as those two were concerned . . .

SZ: Well, we talked a little bit about Drexler the last time, and then there was Szarkowski.

GG: Well, I didn't know Drexler too well. Drexler was a great friend of Liz Shaw's. He, too, was a very smart fellow in his field, and I think he had a lot of taste, but I can't speak too much about him because my contacts with him were very limited. I remember him as rather dry, sarcastic, droll--sometimes--so I really don't. My contacts were basically with those two.

SZ: And Szarkowski?

GG: Szarkowski, too, I had very little contact with. All those people were very good. They were very good in their field, and they were good curators in the sense that they were showmen. A curator has to be, in addition to everything else, a real showman. He has to know what's going to work well and what's going to interest the public. I think all of them had that quality. They were all very smart about that, and that's really one of the most essential ingredients for a curator. First of all, they have to know their field, but secondly, they have to have a sense of what's going to make an exhibition. That's one big difference between them and art historians--academicians.

SZ: Well, you know, in that decade there was a lot of change going on exhibition wise. I'm just thinking that there was *Cezanne: The Late Work*, which Rubin did in 1977, which I think was the first, real huge show for the Modern.

GG: The first, shall we say, blockbuster. Yes. When was this?

SZ: It was in '77, the Cezanne show.

GG: Yes. And that was an enormous hit, if you remember. See, Rubin had the courage of his convictions. He was convinced that a good, heavy, scholarly show would bring in crowds, and it did. So it was sort of re-inventing Cezanne, re-inventing Matisse. I shouldn't say "re-inventing," but repackaging them. That's what he did, in a very effective way.

SZ: Yes. Then the Picasso show was in 1980, and there were a lot of other changes that began to bring in all kinds of corporate sponsorship.

GG: Which has totally changed the Museum forever, all that corporate sponsorship. No question about it.

SZ: Well, not just that museum.

GG: Not just that museum. The whole museum world has been completely changed by it, yes. But it certainly had a huge effect on the Modern, too. I think Rubin even had to kowtow or knuckle under to some of it, I'm quite sure. But I don't think it interfered with the nature of his shows, did it? I don't think so. Although I think it probably galled him to put "Sponsored by Coca Cola," or whatever. Philip Morris. To have to deal with that. But I don't think corporations really had much input, if any, into the *content* of the shows. You know, the funny thing is, the Modern always had this ban against showing nudes, and Barr was particularly careful about that. I don't know whose rule it was. Maybe it was Barr's. Remember, he was the son of a minister. But the perception was that the Museum could not show nude and so corrupt the public, so they didn't. The same thing happened at the *New York Times*. They didn't show nudes in a photograph. If one wrote about a nude art show, there would be no photographs to go with it because of this perception of offending public taste. Even

though a nude is an art object--you know, it's one of the classic art objects--so I think if you look into it, I think the Museum has never had a show in which a nude has appeared, the image of a nude. I could be wrong. I think even Cezanne . . . Well, Cezanne didn't really do nudes. Yes, he did. He did bathers.

SZ: Well, maybe that's different.

GG: Yes, it was very formalized and stylized.

SZ: Two things. I never really asked you. We talked about Canaday's feelings about the Modern and this whole issue of what's modern, what's contemporary? If you're a museum, what can you be or hope to be? I didn't really ask you where you come down on those issues.

GG: You mean what . . . ?

SZ: Well, he certainly felt, from what I could perceive . . .

GG: Well, the big argument during those days was should a museum just report to its public, or should it be a leader in the field of taste? I think his feeling was that a museum should exercise a certain leadership and not try to find out what its public wanted and then respond to that. I think he felt that by showing current contemporary work that wasn't up to his standards--that by showing certain works the Museum was compromising itself and becoming just, as he said often, a tastemaker, a trendsetter--as he often accused Alfred Barr of being--by picking up on the latest stuff that was going on in the art world, instead of trying to maintain a distance from it. I don't see how it's possible for a museum of modern art to maintain a distance from the contemporary art world. It's not possible. So therein lies a contradiction. Obviously it's under great pressure from dealers and collectors, always. Collectors want certain things shown so their collections can be bolstered, so they can get better prices for them at Sothebys, if it has the imprimatur of having been exhibited at the Modern.

And the Modern lent itself to that a great deal. All museums do that now. A museum like the Metropolitan, and I think it should never have opened up a 20th Century department. Of course, the argument was, "Well, that's the only way we'll ever get gifts, if we have a repository for them." But the point is, any museum that's involved with modern art is going to be under pressure from the market. There's no way around it. And I think that's what Canaday was trying to get at, though he didn't really talk about that. He just talked in terms of the museum setting fashions and trends, and accused Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller of being the two chief couturiers. That was the debate, and I don't think it's much of a debate anymore. I think it's pretty much accepted now. It's a fallacy to think that museums have ever been leaders in taste because they haven't. They've always grown, they've always developed on the basis of what their patrons and collectors collected. The Metropolitan never went out to acquire Cezannes and to acquire Impressionist art. It got them from Mrs. Havemayer. That's why it has such a fine Impressionist collection, but they never went out to look for that stuff. They got it, so they developed an Impressionist area on the basis of that. Barr certainly had a program for the museum. He knew what he wanted in the museum and what he wanted it to reflect, etc., but most museums just grow by what collectors are willing to give them. For example, the Metropolitan never had a real Chinese department until recently, but they never paid any attention to Asian art anyway. Not very much. So to expect a museum to be a leader in the field, in any field, I think is fallacious.

SZ: Of course, you know, I think there was that attempt, after the Second World War, for the Whitney, the Modern and the Met, so that the Met wouldn't, in fact, need to have a 20th Century . . .

GG: Well, it was a failed attempt, because they were all too turf conscious. That could never work. They would just never have agreed to split up the territory like that. Let's see. At the Modern it was Barr. Was Rorimer at the Met at that time?

SZ: Yes.

GG: And the third was the Whitney. I forget who was the leader at the Whitney, but the Whitney was the weak leg in that triangle. At any rate, I just couldn't see those two powerful directors accepting a division of turf.

SZ: Maybe I should ask you here, for yourself, what was going on during this time, at the *Times*. Same structure? Or what?

GG: What do you mean?

SZ: Well, during this, what was going on in the art department?

GG: At the paper?

SZ: Yes, and in terms of your . . .

GG: Well, of course, the biggest change in the art department was when Hilton Kramer joined the staff, which was in '69.

SZ: Which you did talk about.

GG: Yes. And I told you how gradually Canaday became an appendage, which was very sad but I think not unmerited. I'm betraying Canaday by saying that, but I think it was true. This is strictly entre nous, but Hilton was the Bill Rubin of the *Times* art department--although Hilton and I always were good friends, and I still am friendly with him. But there's no question that he began to set the intellectual tone and pace at the art department, in a much more aggressive fashion than Canaday had ever done and with much greater depth. And while Hilton has always been a conservative, I must say he was always receptive as a journalist to what was going on in the art world. However much he decried it, he insisted he wanted it covered. I told you he goosed me into doing all these stories. Well, not all of them, but he'd say, "Listen, this

has to be in the paper," and I realized he was absolutely right. You couldn't ignore phenomena like that, going on. So I credit him with that. Then, of course, I got very interested and actively began to cover all those goings on.

SZ: Which goings on?

GG: Well, during the '70s. The demonstrations and the this and that. So, certainly, he was an asset. And although Hilton always had a political agenda, I think it didn't become so evident until later, when he became more and more conservative and instead of dealing just in art politics, he began to really sort of become involved with real politics. So, anyway, that was the most important change that happened in the department during my time there, and he was there for sixteen years. The department, I must say, when he began to take it on, became a very strong department. Of course, the times were different, too. But I think it's a very strong department. One of the big differences he made was that he had the ear of the managing editors, Rosenthal and Gelb, in a way that many people didn't. They respected him because of his intelligence. I think also his political views were closer to Rosenthal than Rosenthal might want to admit. So it was a very happy department during his tenure. When I say happy, it was a department that was un-interfered with, more or less, and respected.

SZ: And then John Russell came on at some point.

GG: John Russell, I had a hand in that. When Canaday finally left he had to be replaced, and Hilton and I sort of wracked our brains and we came up with lists. At that time John Russell was writing for, I think, the London *Times*, the daily *Times*. He was their regular critic. He was kind of high on our list because he was a very good writer. We never thought he would come to the States but it turned out he was involved with Rosamond [Bernier], so he was only too anxious to come here. So he was an addition to the department. When did he come? Certainly in the late '70s, didn't he?

SZ: Yes. My last question is, at that time how much crossover was there with the architecture critics?

GG: Oh, that's a whole other story.

SZ: It's important because next time, if we talk about the whole expansion and everything, I know that that was a whole thing.

GG: How much of a crossover? Well, Ada Louise Huxtable really pretty much functioned on her own. She was the critic, as you know, for some years until Paul Goldberger came along. I know Hilton respected her enormously, and I think she did a very good job for the *Times*. She did a great job of calling attention to . . . I won't say she created the preservation movement, but she certainly was a big promoter of it, and she always had interesting ideas and insights. So I don't know how she got along with the people at the Modern. She had worked at the Modern at one point, and Arthur Drexler, I think, and she and he were fairly close. I'm not sure. It's hard to say who was close to Ada Louise and who wasn't.

SZ: Were you?

GG: No. No. Although she and I saw something of each other. We were certainly friendly enough. But no, I certainly can't say I was close to her. And let's see. The story of her departure from the paper is a very sad one that I would not like to go into.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **GRACE GLUECK (GG)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **91 CENTRAL PARK WEST, NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: **11 NOVEMBER 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: Well, I have a whole list of things but I was hoping we could start off by getting some of your memories of your whole expansion project at the Museum, because, in fact, that became your . . .

GG: Well, I can't remember with any great specifics about the Museum's expansion, but I do remember, however, that when I first knew the Museum it was a quite small, intimate place where it felt, what shall I say? When you walked into it you knew every nook and cranny of it, even the personnel and the receptionist who was sitting there, etc. It almost had the atmosphere of a club. Then, as they started to expand--sure, I'm not giving any new insights--but it became much more corporate, much more impersonal. It was a major, major change, and for myself I can't say it was for the better. I'm sure it was for the better as an institution and for the art world, but in terms of visiting it, it was much less friendly and much less--what shall I say?-- it had much less personality. From this high, WASP enclave into a much more corporate entity was a big step. Of course, there were several expansion projects. The first ones took place when?

SZ: Well, there was one when you first started covering them, which was in '64. But I'm talking about the one that really spanned . . . Discussion of it began in 1976, and then the Museum opened its big, better self in '84. There were several things that . . .

GG: Well, first of all there was the whole business about the air rights.

SZ: That's right. And the Trust for Cultural Resources.

GG: Yes. The Trust for Cultural Resources. Which I reported. But I think the air rights thing was a shocker because, to my knowledge, it was the first time this had been suggested by a man who . . . Richard . . .

SZ: Koch.

GG: No, not Richard Koch.

SZ: Oh. You mean Richard Weinstein.

GG: Richard Weinstein, I think, was the author of this.

SZ: That's in dispute.

GG: Well, he certainly had something to do with it.

SZ: Oh, yes.

GG: So it was a shocker, and it was hard to get used to that idea. I still think it was not a good idea, because it opened up the way to so much abuse on the part of developers in the city. The excuse was, of course, this was a non-profit institution and rules could be bent and waived for it. The truth is, the Rockefellers had a great deal of clout and they could get all that done. It was very easy. So that, I think, was a departure, and secondly the trust . . . Tell me about the trust again. Refresh me. They used dormitory bond money, did they not?

SZ: Yes, that's right. The state . . .

GG: It was a state dormitory bond fund or something like that they used to build . . . Well, I suppose that was certainly legit. I'm sure it was shoe-horned, it was finagled so the Museum could take advantage of this. But if the state is going to spend money it should spend money on its cultural institutions as well as universities. So, anyway, as I said, it was a matter of choosing an architect, Cesar Pelli, etc., but the main point is that it made a very dramatic difference. Again, much more so, of course, in the first expansion. It made a very dramatic difference in the way the Museum presented itself to the public, the way you felt when going into it, and in simply the hordes of people who came and probably made a great change in Museum exhibition policy in that . . . Well, this is probably not true. They did have a larger public to satisfy, and maybe made some concessions in the way they did things for that public. And, of course, the Museum had to have a restaurant, it had to have a huge shop--which I've always objected to--and it just became a much more enterprising, corporate place. So what else can I say about the expansion? Was it a good thing or a bad thing? Well, of course, the Museum can expand forever. Theoretically, it will have to if it keeps on acquiring art. It's going to have to expand until it expands beyond the limits of New York City.

SZ: As in the Guggenheim?

GG: As in the Guggenheim. It's either going to have to do that or give up collecting after a certain period. So that's the quagmire it faces. Of course, they're planning another expansion, right this minute, even as we speak. Who knows how long it can go on? It can go on until they run out of property and acquisition rights and money.

SZ: Well, you're familiar with the collection and you're familiar with, essentially, what the exhibition program is like.

GG: Yes.

SZ: In a way it goes back to the whole Canaday argument.

GG: Yes. Well, it goes back to the Gertrude Stein argument. She said to Alfred Barr, "A museum can be a museum or it can be modern, but it can't be both." So that's what it does go back to. Either there's a cut-off point or there isn't. The Museum just keeps on being a form of reportage on the art scene to the general public. So it does go back to those old arguments. I'm one of the people who didn't like the idea of the Metropolitan Museum opening a contemporary department. I think I said that before.

SZ: You mean their 20th Century department.

GG: Yes. The 20th Century department. Yes, I thought that was an unnecessary move. But, of course, the argument was, "Well, we have to do this so people will keep giving us things."

SZ: Well, the other argument was that this was a synoptic institution, so . . .

GG: Sure, but there are other museums in the city that cover the contemporary area very well. Why does the Met have to engage in this? Anytime you see a contemporary exhibition policy, the museum becomes very much a part of the market place. It's inevitable. It has to be. It's going to be at the mercy of collectors who want to see their things exhibited. Well, of course, that's true in other areas but much more true in the Modern--who put pressure on the staff to get things that will enhance their collections, shows that will enhance their collections. And it also faces pressure from dealers and from entrepréneurs in the market place. So maybe that's unavoidable. The Romans had an art market. There was a brisk trade in Roman sculpture during the high period of Rome, and in Greek sculpture as well. There were dealers, people who bought and collected the stuff. So maybe that's a problem that can't be resolved.

SZ: Now basically I think it was a six-year period, let's say--'78 to '84--when the whole expansion was a lot in the news and you were doing a lot of the coverage and

everything. This is what I started to ask you last time. You were doing, essentially, a lot of the news, I guess, and the story angles to it. But there was the architecture angle which, I guess, Ada Louise did a little bit of, but then Paul Goldberger came along in the end. So would you ever work together in doing those things, or was it just seen as a very separate thing?

GG: No, it was seen as a separate thing. My job was to cover the news part of it.

SZ: Right.

GG: I at that time was not functioning as a critic, so I had nothing to say about it critically, except what I did imply in my news stories. No, the architectural coverage was always very separate.

SZ: Right.

GG: It was a matter of . . . They gave it full coverage but it was very much broken down by departments and people.

SZ: So did you have an opinion about the architecture of it?

GG: Did I have a feeling?

SZ: Did you have an opinion?

GG: I thought the Pelli thing was a little bit slick, but I don't know if I want to be . . . Not that it matters if I'm quoted or not. I thought it was a little slick. And, of course, it had to take into account this huge tower. That's part of the slickness of it. And I didn't like the marble floors, those very Italianate, what is it? The grey and white marble floors, etc. I thought it was too fussy. Too fussy an interior for the Museum of Modern Art. I don't know whether Barr would have approved. So no, I didn't approve of the

architecture, particularly. Although now, to me, it seems nondescript. It's hard to tell the Museum . . . The Museum is not an architectural entity, so to speak, when you look at it.

SZ: You mean anymore.

GG: Anymore, yes. It doesn't look that distinctive anymore, to me, from the other buildings. It's not. Because that whole midtown area has become such a mish-mash of skyscrapers.

SZ: Oh, that. In terms of that. Yes. I thought you meant internally, from what it was.

GG: Internally, I think it's lost distinction. But look, it has to be a functional place, and so it has to be a more functional place than it was, apparently, so I suppose it works. I don't know how well it works for the staff, but in terms of handling crowds and stuff, and those escalators, that flush you from floor to floor, are a much more efficient way of getting around, I think, than those little stairs they had in the back. Yes, I think probably, functionally, it works a lot better. I just don't feel that it's particularly a comfortable or interesting place to be, aside from the art. The galleries are certainly bigger and more flexible, so I can't complain about that. But why does my opinion make any difference about the Museum?

SZ: Did you get involved in (well, it's the wrong word) the sending of *Guernica* to Spain? Did they call you on that?

GG: Yes. I wrote the story.

SZ: That's what I thought.

GG: I wrote the story of it. Yes, it was sent. But just to get back of the business of the Museum. Recently I was asked to come as part of a group of critics and people to

comment on the plans for the Museum's new expansion; to comment on what . . .

SZ: On what? The three finalists?

GG: No. What our reaction was to the spaces and what might be needed, and what we felt, as critics, looking at the work; how it could be facilitated in the new structure and what all. I'm sorry I turned it down. I had to, because I didn't have time to do it. I was surprised the Museum invited, actually, attention from outside people at this point--and maybe even the public, for all I know--as to what they should do, in terms of architecture, because it had always behaved very imperiously in that regard, like most institutions, doing what it wanted to do. So this came as a surprise. It hasn't happened before, to my knowledge. As far as *Guernica*, yes, it was shipped off, as you know, clandestinely, at the last minute, to the Spanish government, because they didn't want a large public outcry in attendance, carrying-on, etc. I forget how I got wind of that story. Maybe they called me at the last minute, to tell me, because they certainly wanted it in the *Times*. I don't know how I got onto it. I don't remember. But that was a pretty wrenching decision. It was something everybody knew would eventually have to happen. So it was an exciting story to write because . . . We had the exclusive on it, I think. Nobody else knew about it. So, you know, I think it went out at dawn or something, undercover. There was some subterfuge about what they were sending out. They sort of disguised the fact that it was leaving the Museum. I don't quite . . . Do you have that story? Yes. So that was a good story.

SZ: But you weren't there.

GG: No, I was not there, because I wasn't invited. I didn't know about it. I was told about it on the phone. I don't think anyone was there except the Museum officials. I don't think they would allow anybody to be there. So that was a story, as they say, done over the phone.

SZ: So let's go back a little. When did you start doing criticism, and how did that start?

GG: Well, let's see. I started doing the column in 1964, I think. Yes, 1964, and at first I had my hands full doing the art gossip, so to speak. But I started to do criticism when Hilton came along, which, I think, was about two years later. I think he came in '66, if I'm not mistaken; I don't know. But, obviously, we needed more people, more staff, we didn't have it, and Hilton, I think, encouraged me. I know Hilton encouraged me to go out and do criticism. One always has this feeling that one doesn't know anything, or one doesn't know enough to do that, but gradually over the years . . . I did it on and off for a period of some years, and I never did anything very major. I remember having one or two fights with Hilton over various differences of opinion we had about certain artists.

SZ: Oh, yes?

GG: Yes, but actually he was very encouraging and very generous, and never negative about my work. So I started doing it, I would say, around 1966 then, as I said, switched off for a while, then sometimes did it, sometimes didn't do it. It was hard to do criticism and write the column, because that was kind of a conflict of interest. If you talk to artists and interview them, it's very hard to review their work later, especially if you interview them and they have expectations of you. So it did create something of a conflict of interest. Then I did criticism much later, after Hilton left, and, in fact, I became assistant critic. When Russell took over the job as chief art critic, I became the second-string art critic. I went back to being a news person, writing news stories, etc. for, oh, I don't know. What? Let's see, I think I stopped writing criticism in, oh, about 1984 or '85, and officially retired from the paper in '91. So for maybe six years I confined myself to news stories. Maybe I stopped in 1987. I forget quite when. So I had done criticism on the paper, off and on since 1966.

SZ: And then also . . . Well, I guess after you left the paper . . .

GG: Then I got a job with the *Observer*, then came back to the *Times* in my present

capacity.

SZ: Was the *New York Observer* a very different experience?

GG: From the *Times*? Oh, it was very different, because at the *New York Observer* you could say anything. I felt much, much freer. I had a great editor, and they didn't have the kind of nit-picking copy desks, that questioned the use of certain words that were outlawed by the *Times* and things of that sort. You could say almost anything you wanted to. You had that freedom. There was nobody to tell you, "Look, don't say this or don't say that." The only standard was liveliness at the *Observer*. Well, I shouldn't say "the only standard." They did have a responsible copy desk, that made sure that stuff wasn't libelous or that it wasn't in outrageous bad taste or anything like that. But the *Observer* has a much more sophisticated view of its relationship to its readers, and a much more intimate relationship to its readers than the *Times* does. So yes, from that standpoint, it was fun. Much more fun. And I picked and chose what I wanted to do, what I would do, and I never had the slightest interference from Hilton—who was my boss at *The Observer*, too--who usually took the major shows but not always. So I felt very free over there. At the *Times*, now, I'm part of a staff. We have a collegial relationship. There's a pecking order. Things are discussed in advance. It's quite different. And the copy editing is much more stringent, in, I think, some very restrictive ways. At the *Observer* you could establish a tone. The *Times* encourages you to establish a tone, but basically feels ambivalent about it. In other words, the *Times* doesn't want its writers to have too much of their own tone because then it takes away from the majesty of the paper as a whole. You know what I'm saying? So that was the difference.

SZ: And you had to leave the *Observer* when you decided to go back to the *Times*?

GG: Yes, unfortunately. I did. Well, I couldn't have handled both. As it's worked out with the *Times*, I certainly couldn't have handled reviewing for both institutions. But, by the same token, when I went to the *Observer* I didn't do anything for the *Times*, either. It

was very hard to do. I would give stories to the *Observer* that, had I been at the *Times*, I would have given to the *Times*; stories that I, myself, didn't do.

SZ: Essentially, you've been covering and doing criticism of gallery shows. I guess what I'm trying to say is that sort of the whole museum beat has waned.

GG: Has waned? No. In what way? Do you mean for me?

SZ: Yes.

GG: No, I cover probably more museums than I ever did. Because museums are more and more active in organizing shows.

SZ: But as a critic, not in the capacity of a news person.

GG: Well, I paid a lot of attention to museums in my capacity as a news person. I had to. That was part of my job. In fact, at one point, I had a very specialized knowledge of a lot of museums and I don't feel I have that knowledge anymore, because I'm not in that much contact with them. Because when you review shows it's an entirely different thing from doing news stories. But yes, I don't have that feeling of, what shall I say? Of rapport with museum staffs that I once did. So it's a very different experience. And you know, the whole problem of doing news stories and reviewing is a major conflict of interest because when you start writing news stories, as I said before, you have to talk to people and ask them questions. It's inhibiting. It tends to inhibit you when you write reviews, and vice versa, you know. I don't like to meet and talk with artists because I'm always worried, because then I feel obliged, I feel a certain obligation to take a benign view of their work. God knows why. I don't think Hilton ever had any problems with this. But to meet somebody and experience that person's personality already confers on you . . . The person ingratiates himself or herself with you, and you find it much harder to make serious criticism about their work. You think, oh, he's going to read this or she's going to read it and not like it, and

I'm not being fair. By the same token, knowing an artist can throw important light on his work, you know. It can tell you what goes into his mind and shapes the work and everything else, but on the whole I think it's better for critics to maintain a distance from their subjects. I think that goes for critics of every kind. Sometimes you feel critics are too captivated or too drawn in by their subjects. It's true, they really do lose objectivity. I have to admit I see this more in the movie area. Some critics, I should say, are captives of the industry. I mean, I don't know why. This is all probably very outside of what we want to talk about but I say, for example--Oh, I won't even go into it. I'm thinking of my prejudice against violence in the movies, and none of the critics ever mention that when they do reviews. They don't even talk about it; it's taken for granted.

SZ: Well, it seems hard to believe that it's not.

GG: Because if I had my way I'd have another rating--VG--violence guide. Anyway, going along. Is any of this helpful to you?

SZ: Yes. Have you had much contact with Glenn Lowry?

GG: No. That's another reason I'm sorry I had to pass up this opportunity. I told you they had invited a bunch of critics last week, and he was to be there at the luncheon. I've had almost no contact with him at all. I think I've met him once or twice, at various functions, and I don't think he has a clue as to who I am.

SZ: Or a sense of the institution, now that he's been there a couple years? Changes in it?

GG: Again, that's a product of my not covering the museum news-wise. I don't have much of a sense of the institution now that he's been there. I really do not. I have lost contact in that area, because it's not necessary for me to know it, you know. So I don't know what's going on.

SZ: Well, then let me just try to hit a few other people, because we talked about Barr and Dorothy Miller some. We talked about Arthur.

GG: And Liz Shaw.

SZ: And Liz Shaw. We didn't talk about John Elderfield.

GG: I don't know John Elderfield too well. I don't know him well enough to really . . . It's too bad. I know Riva quite well.

SZ: Yes. Riva.

GG: Of course, we talked about Bill Lieberman.

SZ: Well, Riva we did not talk about, and also John Szarkowski I don't think we . . .

GG: And John Szarkowski I knew very slightly.

SZ: It was photography and different critics, as I recall. Yes.

GG: I didn't have much to do with it. I do have much more to do with photography now than I did, because it's become very interesting. When I started doing criticism, photography was still considered a pretty separate domain. We had separate photography critics. But Hilton was always interested, always wrote about photography, always considered it a part of the mainstream art. And we still do have separate photography critics at the *Times*, but now there's a much more . . . I mean, I feel I can cover photography shows, and Michael Kimmelman certainly does. All the staff is encouraged to cover photography shows, even though Vicky Goldberg and Sarah Boxer are the so-called photography critics. But in the days when I was doing it, it was still considered a pretty separate thing. And although Hilton would once in a while cover a good photography show, the focus was much more on paintings and

sculpture and fine art. Nowadays, I see photography as indistinguishable from the fine arts.

SZ: So Riva?

GG: Well, again, what do I have to say about Riva? She ran that department in a very vigorous fashion. Under her it became pretty authoritative. And I think she was a pretty competent administrator--judging from the fact that she was appointed deputy director, wasn't she? Didn't she take on that role?

SZ: She became deputy director, I think, in '86 I think. In '84 or '86.

GG: Yes. But under her I think the museum did a number of very good shows, and she certainly had and still has a reputation in the field. But again, I like what I know of Riva. I've always found her to be very knowledgeable and modest. She wears, so to speak, her knowledge lightly. I always like that in people. But I've heard stories that she must have been a tough cookie. I think you'd have to be pretty tough to be head of a department in that Museum, because there's a lot of pressure from within and without, on you. Certainly, the staff of that Museum doesn't have the reputation of being an easy-going, collegial group of people. Does it in any museum? I don't know. Museums are like hothouses. They seem to encourage staff rivalries, almost more than any other institution, rivalries and certain demesnes and fiefdoms and that kind of thing. Maybe it's their very nature to do that. But the Modern certainly seemed to me to be a prime example of, what shall I say? Internecine warfare that didn't get out much to the public. I mean, you have these macho people like Bill Rubin and even Szarkowski, and Arthur Drexler certainly was, in his own way, a gadfly. I always had the impression there was a lot of friction there, and I certainly got that impression from Luisa. [Laughs]

SZ: Well, Luisa was also a woman.

GG: Yes, that's another thing. Of course. And, of course, they always gave women subordinate positions and paid them less money. That's right. Riva was a woman, and I often wondered how Riva fared in that hierarchy, as a woman; how she was able to assert herself and create a dominion for herself. I think it must have been fairly difficult. She had the advantage of being accepted in the field. She was well known, and I think they respected her. On the other hand, the Modern has never had a woman director. Although she was a deputy, a deputy is a deputy. Let's see. What else? I never really talked with Riva about how it felt. Riva's not my idea of a person whose feminist consciousness is raised to the point of, shall we say, demonstrating. And I think she always felt her role as an administrator and was very cautious about that. But I've often wondered how she got along with "the boys," so to speak. I assume she got along with them quite well. I mean, she had to deal with artists like Jasper Johns. That's no picnic. And Ellsworth Kelly and all of those people.

SZ: Last question, maybe. Can you make any generalizations about what's happening to the contemporary scene today?

GG: You mean as far as the Modern goes?

SZ: No. I presume you can't, because you told me you don't have much . . .

GG: No, I don't have much connection with it.

SZ: No, I just mean in the New York scene.

GG: Well, it seems to me to be enormously fragmented. Anyone who starts to cover the scene begins to get that impression. It used to be that one could more or less depend on a movement. (That's been gone for a long time.) A movement to sort of unify things. It made it much easier to classify people under one umbrella, from the Abstract Expressionists to Pop to Minimalism. The Museum would even do that. The Museum would have these categorizing shows like Op art and things like that. Now,

there's no kind of unified approach to art today that you can measure anything against. [Interruption] You no longer can characterize art in the terms that we've been used to characterizing it for thirty or forty years; that it belongs to this school or that school.

SZ: It's very eclectic.

GG: It's very eclectic. I suppose it's good. I think it's good that there's nothing to measure it against. At the same time it makes it feel like there's a lack of momentum, that there's a lack of momentum to it.

SZ: So maybe that's it. Maybe I'll see what we've got.

GG: Maybe you're finished?

SZ: Well, I'm finished now, then I'll see.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 1

END INTERVIEW