THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RICHARD L. TOOKE (RT)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: The "L" is for. . .

RT: Louis.

SZ: Richard, here's what I always ask first. Tell me where and when you were born, and something about your background.

RT: Okay. I was born in Jacksonville, Florida in 1934. In 1952 I graduated from Andrew Jackson High School in Jacksonville.

SZ: Jacksonville is. . .

RT: . . .in northeast Florida. South Georgia.

SZ: A southern family?

RT: No. Well, they're a cracker family. Not southern in the plantation kind of southern. But the Florida crackers, from the central part of the state, are very different than "Southerners."

SZ: In what way? They were farmers?

RT: Yes. Well, orange groves. Mostly orange groves around there. Moss gatherers, too. In the early days of automobiles, the cushions in cars were stuffed with rubber-coated cured moss. So, there was a lot of that in Florida.

SZ: I didn't know that.

RT: Then I went to Gainesville, to the University of Florida, for four years, and got a Bachelor of Design [degree]. I graduated in '56 from the University of Florida, with a BDES in commercial art.

SZ: Just back up a little bit and tell me, maybe, something about that interest and that ability; that eye, or whatever it happens to be.

RT: Well, I had a really very good eye. I had originally thought I wanted to be an architect. When I got to the university I talked to somebody and somehow. . . I can't remember exactly what turned me. I was always kind of artistic and they [my parents] were afraid I was just going to take an art course or something, and try to be a painter or artist. So, they were pleased with architecture. The advertising aspect of it, of course, they found to be an okay kind of way to go. But I did very well. Neither of my parents went to college. My mother didn't graduate from high school. I thought my father didn't, but I just recently found out that he did. His father died when he was a teenager, and everybody in the family went to work. I enjoyed the University of Florida. I did very well there. It was my first introduction to what reputations do for you. By the time I was a senior in the commercial art department, no matter what course I took, I got a good grade. It was one of those sorts of things that I found to be peculiar.

SZ: Once you're pegged. . . ?

RT: Yes. Once you're pegged as being superior in a specific endeavor. We had projects wherein we had to collaborate with another student, and I remember this guy coming up and he said, "I've never been able to get an A in this class. Let me work on this project with you, because I know if I do I will get an A." And, of course, he did.

SZ: Because you did.

RT: Because I did. Absolutely. Because I was connected with the project. I graduated summa cum laude, a complete surprise to me. It was. I'm not a very political person, and I wasn't in college. I was not in a fraternity and everything. I was the art director for the yearbook one year while there.

SZ: Was the University of Florida fraternity oriented?

RT: Yes.

SZ: And I guess it drew from all over Florida?

RT: Yes. Students from all over. There are a few students from the north, from out-of-state.

SZ: So, your BA was in design, but I'm sure they had requirements and all that.

RT: Oh, yes. I took photography. . . painting, drawing, art history, lettering (calligraphy), advertising.

SZ: I'm just trying to establish the fact that your summa cum laude was probably a little more impressive than you're making it out to be.

RT: Well, actually it wasn't. I could not get into Phi Beta Kappa because of my lack of study of languages other than English, which were not required for my course. So I

was Phi Kappa Phi, which is the step down from Phi Beta Kappa. No, I was a very good student. I was industrious. I did well. I studied. I didn't drink. I didn't even drink coffee at that time, much less anything alcoholic, not even beer. My parents used to joke, when I'd go on vacation with them, they would say, "Oh, there's a beer joint. Why don't we stop so Richard can have a beer?" My parents drank, but not me. I was a very peculiar child.

SZ: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

RT: No.

SZ: So, your going and doing this was kind of a big thing for them?

RT: Oh, yes. Yes. They actually sacrificed quite a bit, monetarily, for me to go to college, even though it cost very little at that time. My father was the comptroller of the Jacksonville Terminal Company, which was a big job that paid very little money. As soon as I got out of college and was on my own, they put a room on the back of the house and did a few things they could not afford to do while I was going to school. They were very nice people. After I left home and was working at the Museum, I would often spend a week of my vacation with them. People at work would say, "My God. Why do you want to spend a week with your parents?" I said, "Because they're nice people and I like them. I do what I want for fifty-one weeks of the year; I can spend a week with them." They were very good. My oft-repeated story about cutting the apron strings: “My first year in college I went home every weekend; the second year I went home once a month; the third year I went home on holidays; the fourth year they came to visit me.” That's exactly the way it happened. Then, after college, I was in the Army for two years. My worst problems with them were when I got out of college and I was in the army. I only got two weeks leave each year. They thought I was going to spend the whole time with them. But they were understanding. They were really very understanding.

SZ: So, you went in in '56.

RT: No, actually I didn't. It was '57 before I went. Or was it '58? I'm always very bad with years. The year I graduated from college I spent in Naples, Florida, living with my aunt. My uncle, my father's brother, had just died, and she needed a male companion because of her work. She was a bank president -- the first woman bank president in Florida -- and at that time social life was still a vital part of banking. So, I stayed with her, worked for Doris Reynolds who was a publicist and published a small magazine. I was the art director, photographer, layout artist and mapmaker. In the evenings and [on] weekends I accompanied my aunt to cocktail parties, dinner dances, played golf and all that kind of thing. It was a nice little thing. It was great for about three months, but in a year it was a little restricting for me to have to do it. It was still a wonderful learning experience. After that year, I worked for the Prudential Insurance Company in their south-central home office in Jacksonville for a year. I decided I wanted to go back to school and get a master's degree, so I worked for them.

SZ: You mean to earn the money?

RT: Yes. Just to save some money to go. Because I didn't think my parents should have to pay for my graduate school. Then I got drafted and I was in the army for two years stationed in south-central Alabama. It sounds terrible but it was really quite nice. I was painting a lot at that time, and I rented a room off post so I would have a place to paint. It was only about a mile from the post, and I rented it from a lady. Her name was. . . . Wow. It all went out of my head. [Note: Kate McLeod] Her husband had been the superintendent of schools of Alabama at one time. She was a widow, and she just rented rooms to soldiers. She had a piano and she had tuned it so I could play. I was doing a lot of portraits of soldiers, then, and in the evening, when it got too dark to paint. . .

SZ: Making money that way?

RT: No. Just to keep painting. I was doing landscapes but I wanted to do figures. After it got too dark to paint she would have us into the parlor, she would make cookies or cakes and we would watch TV. So, it was not a bad time at all. It was a very interesting time. I played in a dance band, a five-piece combo.

SZ: Now that you didn't tell me before. You play the piano?

RT: The piano. I took piano lessons from, I guess, about twelve to sixteen. Oh, I was younger than that.

SZ: Popular music, or classical?

RT: No, classical music.

SZ: But you could then do jazz. . .

RT: I was a very good sight-reader. I can read music easily, and these little dance bands were desperate for somebody who could play piano. So, that's where I made my money when I was in high school, playing in the dance bands. So, then, in the service I looked to make some extra money, because I was just a private. I played in a five piece combo at Chuck and Eddie's, which was across the border in Florida at a road house, which is essentially what it was. It was very depressing. Really depressing. The prostitutes -- twelve-year-old girls in there. So, I guess after not quite a year I turned in my badge to them and got a job playing organ at a church on Sunday mornings. You're talking about from one end to the other. I made much less money but it was much less stressful and very interesting work. After that, I went to Columbia [University], in New York City -- that's how I got to New York City -- and got a Master's Degree in Fine Arts. Easel painting.

SZ: So, what were you thinking of? Were you thinking you would really try to do that?

RT: I did at that time. I was painting a lot. I just decided on Columbia because there wasn't anybody I wanted to study with, particularly.

SZ: Had you been to New York before?

RT: Actually, I had been. Before I was in the service, I spent a semester in New York, at Columbia, as a non-matriculating student, because they wouldn't accept me in the Fine Arts School, because I didn't have enough painting and drawing credits. So, I took a year of painting and drawing. It was a wonderful year in New York. I had four hours of drawing in the morning and four hours of painting in the afternoon; then I worked four hours at a drugstore at night, to make money.

SZ: And you lived up there at Morningside Heights?

RT: Yes. It was a very good year. I wandered all around New York. On Saturday mornings I used to go down to Madison Avenue and walk through all the galleries -- the Perls Gallery and all those little places -- around in there. I discovered the ballet.

SZ: Which you like?

RT: Yes. I was walking by the City Center on 55th Street and I noticed that the highest-priced seat was $3.95 or something. But for $1.25 you could sit up in the top balcony, and I went back every time I had an extra $1.25. So, it was a very nice time in New York. Actually, that's when I got drafted, out of there. Because during the summer when I wasn't in school. . .

SZ: You were non-matriculating.

RT: I was non-matriculating, so they drafted me.

SZ: Well, there was no conflict. . .

RT: No, no. I was very fortunate. It was between Vietnam and Korea.

SZ: So, you started going to galleries. . . . This was late '50s-early '60s, I guess, right when all this exciting stuff was going on.

RT: Oh, it was a great time. Yes. When I was at the University of Florida I went to New York for the first time. They had a humanities field trip where they took us to New York. We went to the opera, to the museums, things like that. It was during this first trip to NYC that I visited The Museum of Modern Art. A real disaster for me. I had only seen works of art in reproductions in books or projected as color slides, so my first visit to MoMA was greatly anticipated. What a disappointment -- the Museum was filled with photographs. Here was the greatest photography exhibition of all times, *The Family of Man* [MoMA Exh. #569, January 24-May 8, 1955; C/E 1956-57, 1957-58; SP-ICE-10-55] and I could not view it with an objective eye because of my disappointment about the paintings, sculpture and drawings not being on view. However, there were compensations, such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frick Collection and private galleries such as the Stable Gallery, which really impressed me. The Stable Gallery, at that time, was still in a horse stable up there. A wonderful space. Incredible.

SZ: Where was it?

RT: Actually, I have a vague memory that it was somewhere near Carnegie Hall. It was up on Seventh Avenue near 58th Street, or. . . . It seems to me it was sort of northwest of Carnegie Hall, in what was really an old stable. It was really nice and the art shown was, as we say today, on the “cutting edge”. I remember later when I went back to New York -- maybe that was the year, 1957, I was studying at Columbia -- seeing that, somewhere near the Wildenstein Gallery, my first show of [Pablo] Picasso linoleum cuts. Those incredibly strong things. Picasso is somebody I don't really like, but every time I see some of his work, I’m impressed. It's just like the portrait show

the Museum had several years ago, really an incredibly impressive thing. But he was such an awful man; I guess that's why I think I don't like his work.

SZ: So, you were really seeing, I presume, lots of paintings. I presume some of these things are yours? These paintings [pointing to paintings on the wall]?

RT: This one is mine. I did oil paintings. That's the only one here; I've taken most of them to Florida where my partner and I spend the winters. When I first graduated from Columbia, after I got my Master's Degree, I had a job in a cold type printing company -- type composite company -- very near where I lived so I could paint. My partner Charles L. Marshall, Jr. [Chuck] and I used to go to Maine every fall for two weeks, and we just painted. Two weeks of painting, in Maine.

SZ: Charles paints, too?

RT: Paints, yes. He's an architect. He does water colors and I did oils. We had a show at the St. Paul's Chapel "Crypt" Gallery at Columbia two years after I graduated from there. Then I was working at this type composite company. It was a small company. Two men owned it, and they kept wanting me to do more and more. I was doing some designing things for them. I wasn't interested in a career with them, and I just decided I didn't want to stay any longer because they were demanding too much. I was working at night and not getting any painting done. So, in the Fall of 1962 I walked down to 53rd Street one day, went into the personnel department at The Museum of Modern Art, and asked them if there was a job available. I interviewed with Pearl Moeller. I got home and I said, "Jesus Christ, I really want that job. I didn't really try very hard. I don't know why I didn't put out a little bit more." Anyway, Pearl liked me and. . .

SZ: So, you wanted to be at the Museum?

RT: Well, I just wanted a job, something I didn't have to worry about too much. But, then, after I worked there for awhile, I decided I really wasn't that good a painter, and I couldn't justify continuing to pretend. Not pretend, but to waste my time -- thinking of Mildred in Of Human Bondage, her desire to be an artist and the frustrations of it. I paint very well. I have a certain facility and I enjoyed it, but I decided being a Sunday painter was perfectly acceptable to me. So, I just stayed on at the Museum for thirty years.

SZ: You didn't know anybody when you went in. You just walked in cold, off the street.

RT: Yes. Right off the street.

SZ: Because you were in modern art?

RT: My first exposure to a real [Piet] Mondrian painting was at the Modern [The Museum of Modern Art]. At my retirement party, I made a big deal about Mondrian. Actually, in my letter of resignation. . . . Going to the University of Florida, taking art classes there, there was very little opportunity to see live art. It was all slides and reproductions. Mondrian, of course, has no life on a book page or on a slide screen, and I was really bowled over with Mondrian when I saw that gallery of the Mondrians at the Modern. So, when I wrote my resignation letter to Dick [Richard E. Oldenburg], I told him that the days when I was at work, when I was really stressed and I needed to relax, I would go down to the galleries and sit in the Mondrian gallery and regroup. That's exactly what I did. I had two places I did that. One was the Frick. I would go at lunchtime and sit in the garden, in their little courtyard there and relax. Or during the day, for ten or fifteen minutes, I would just go down into the Mondrian gallery. I always encouraged my staff to go to the galleries. It was amazing how difficult it was getting them to go to the temporary shows. I would badger them. I would say, "Look, it's closing in a week. You have to go down and see this before it goes." As you know, when you work at an institution you have a tendency to take it for granted. I

thought there was no reason to work at The Museum of Modern Art if you didn't see the stuff that was there. I got caught up in it.

SZ: Now we were at the point you were at the Museum and you were hired by Pearl, and Pearl was at that time. . .

RT: . . .was head of Rights and Reproductions, which was part of the Library, under Bernard Karpel. It was actually where the original Library of the Museum, in the 1939 building, was, overlooking the garden. Was that on the fourth floor?

SZ: I think that's right.

RT: I think it was on the fourth floor. And Rights and Reproductions was on the west side of it there. There was a small slide library run by Willard Tangen. Have you run across his name? The slide library was part of the Rights and Reproductions section there, and the photographer was Petersen, Rolf Petersen, who did the fine arts photography for the Museum. He was still around, but I'm not sure whether he was there. He's the one who hired Jim [James] Mathews, who was running the photo studio. That's not true. Jim Mathews wasn't there yet. It was [Soichi] Sunami. Sunami was still there. That's right. But Rolf Petersen had done it later on. Later on he recommended Jim Mathews. But Soichi Sunami was the fine arts photographer when I started working at the Museum. He did not work at the Museum, he was contracted by the Museum. Sunami was never a staff person, It was a nice, small museum at that time. It was a big museum, but it was small and intimate, you knew everybody and everybody. . . .

SZ: What was the atmosphere like when you first got there?

RT: Oh, very pleasant. It was unbelievable. It was like an extended family kind of thing. The tea cart came around in the afternoon, with cookies and cakes and tea. Literally. It came around to the different offices. After they stopped that, we still had a tea

break in the afternoon. We would go down to the garden and have coffee or soda or whatever. I remember hearing about a Mrs. Guggenheim. Was it Guggenheim? One of the Trustees who would come around the Museum, and if the curtains looked like they needed cleaning, she would have them cleaned. The Members Lounge upstairs was still, really, just a lounge, up there on the sixth floor with the balcony and chairs. A very informal cafeteria up there too.

SZ: You would pretty much have your lunches there, in the Museum? Some people told me they would go out a lot.

RT: Well, there was no separate facility for the staff. I ate at Woolworth's most of the time, for lunch, over on Sixth Avenue, and because I was making a very small salary. I forgot to ask what the salary was when I applied for the job. I didn't even know what I was going to be making. I think it was what? Eighty dollars a week?

SZ: Which you need to put into perspective, anyway. At that time it was really not a lot.

RT: No, it was very little. So, frequently I would have breakfast for lunch, because that was the cheapest thing on the menu. You got scrambled eggs, toast, potatoes. However, I discovered at this Woolworth's that the main cook there -- a big black man from the South -- he would come in early and make individual sweet potato pies. I could have a sweet potato pie and a glass of orange juice for lunch, to fit my budget, and they were just superb things. Larré's was still. . .

SZ: Oh, I remember Larré's.

RT: I would occasionally splurge and have lunch there, because it cost a little more but you got lots of bread and you could have pasta. It was really wonderful. The other restaurant I'm sure Pearl told you about is the Italian restaurant on 54th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenue. [La Scala] It was next door to a jazz bar. Do you know what it was at all?

SZ: I don't remember. I remember Carolyn Lanchner liked to go there.

RT: Yes. But at that time Pearl had lunch there with Dorothy Dudley, and Monawee Richards who worked for Bill [William S.] Lieberman. Then after Bill left she worked in the drawing department. There were two other ladies in the Museum who lunched at this restaurant -- La Scala; it was La Scala. I know they had a regular luncheon date there once a week or something like that, so I would occasionally go in there. It was the first time I was admonished by the waiter to not put grated cheese on white clam sauce. What did I know? Where's the cheese? You don't put cheese on this. Anyway. That was really a very nice time. Dorothy Dudley was a wonderful woman. I didn't have lunch with her. I worked with her, though, because of the registrar. As was Dorothy Miller, an incredibly nice lady. Alfred [H.] Barr [Jr.] was scary. Every time, when I was working there and my phone rang and I would answer it, if Alfred [H.] Barr [Jr.], was there, I knew I was in trouble. You had done something he was calling about. He was never angry or anything but you knew he was calling you about something he had seen or read about. His secretary never called first, he always called directly.

SZ: Maybe this is a good place to describe, when you were hired what you were hired to do, and what you did do.

RT: Well, I was a photographic clerk, I guess was the title at that time. [Interruption] I was the photographic clerk, and. . .

SZ: Slightly over-educated for that position.

RT: Well, not really. I don't really think so because I had had some photography courses in college, so I knew a little bit about photography and had done printing and developing and all that sort of stuff. Because my expertise was off somewhere else, really. I did have an awful lot of art history which gave me a lot of things, but I had no

degree in art history and administration or anything like that. I was just trying to remember. I guess we did not have a separate clerk at that time, we just did the order for photographs. But I essentially handled the black-and-white requests that came in. During those days we divided up the person who handled the black-and-white requests and the color. Pearl did the color requests, I did the black-and-white. There was a secretary in the office. I guess there was always someone who just did the photo ordering for us. But then we would have to set up for new photography and everything. But at that time, all the requests for photographs, color or black-and-white, and authorization to reproduce them that we received were approved by the curator of different departments. Dorothy Miller was doing it for Alfred at that time, so if we got a request in to reproduce something from a certain department, we sent it to them for approval. Although, according to Dick [Richard] Koch, there was hardly any way we could refuse a legitimate request for it. Unlike the early days, when Alfred Barr would not let them reproduce things if he decided they were not doing it properly or going to write the correct things or whatever with it.

The only time we really would say no was if it was any kind of commercial usage. T-shirts at that time were not being done but there were certain aspects. . . . What we said at the time [was] an educational use [was] where it was used art historically in context with what the text was all about. There was no question about letting people use the things on it. But one of the things that was so nice about working in this department -- and probably why I stayed -- was that it was not isolated from what was going on around the Museum, although we were outside the political aspects of the Museum, which also kept me going there. Over the years that I worked there, my friend and partner, Chuck, whenever a job would become available, like in photography -- the head of the department -- he would say, "Why don't you apply for that job?" I'd say, "Look. I'm very happy where I am. I enjoy what I do, I do it very well, and I don't want to get involved in the politics of the Museum." [Interruption]. I stayed there, my department grew over the years, and it was a very satisfying job to have.

As I started to say, because we worked with all the departments in the Museum, it made it really very interesting, rather than just working in the Drawings department or Prints or this or that. It was like you were working in the Public Information department. You gained knowledge of the whole Museum. I learned so much more about prints, drawings, architecture and design because of my job at the Museum. It's why we have all this furniture here in this room. This chair. These two Charles Eames chairs were purchased from the Museum in 1964, during the expansion. They sold off all the old furniture to the staff for $2.00 each. I think they were all $2.00 or $5.00 each. These are Alvar Aalto chairs, stack chairs. Actually, that one we bought last year at an auction, here in Pennsylvania. It's a Jens Rison designed for Knoll. But my education at the Museum just continued to grow. It was really a fascinating place. René d'Harnoncourt was the director, of course.

SZ: Well, that's one of the things I wanted to ask you. Because when you got there, he was still there.

RT: Yes.

SZ: Did you have a sense that here is Alfred, and there was René; how the Museum was being run?

RT: No, I had no idea at that time. I was just in awe. Not in awe, but I was surprised, to be there, and it was wonderful. I know everything I heard about René was always positive. At that last big show he did, the Picasso sculpture show [*The Sculpture of Picasso*, MoMA Exh. #841, October 11, 1967-January 1, 1968], I ended up just being blown away by the fact that the first party he had after the show was for the people who worked on the show -- the carpenters, the painters, all of that. He had a small, afternoon party for them, before the big party of the night, for the donors and the lenders and everything. He was very well liked by the gamut of the people who worked at the Museum.

SZ: But you didn't get to know him very well?

RT: No, he left shortly afterward.

SZ: He left in '68.

RT: That long? I didn't remember that it was that long that he was there. Somehow it seemed like he was there such. . . . Well, in the early days of the Museum everything went very quickly. The years went by. It was an exciting time to be at the Museum.

SZ: Well, you got there in '62, and then in '64 there was the expansion and the re-opening. Did you get new quarters from that?

RT: Yes, yes. I was trying to remember. Let's see. I know we moved from the main museum to what was the People's Art Center on 53rd Street, the Philip Johnson addition to the west of the Museum. There was just that one, small little building there.

SZ: The 21 building [21 West 53rd Street].

RT: The 21 building, yes. We moved there. But I think that was before the expansion occurred. I know when we moved there, in the hallway was this sculpture, this hanging sculpture, with glass and wire, and we kept thinking, "Oh, we should move that into the office. It's really kind of nice." Obviously, it was something some student had done at the Museum. We never did get around to doing it. About a month after we were there, Eric Rowlison from the Registrar's office came into our office and said, "We're looking for a lost [Alexander] Calder. Has anybody seen it around here? It turned out it wasn't an official collection item. Calder had come to the People's Art Center and given a demonstration one day, and had made this hanging fish. It had been hung in the hallway and sort of forgotten about. So, Eric came around and took it away from us. But that just indicates the casualness of the times. I remember

needing a work of art photographed quickly, going down to the galleries with the curator and taking it off the wall, walking into the photography department and unframing it ourselves; photographing it, framing it and taking it back into the galleries.

SZ: You had that kind of freedom.

RT: Oh, yes. It really was. Like I say, it was really a very, very pleasant atmosphere. Not that it wasn't when I left, but it was a very different kind of thing. Is it true (I think I remember seeing it) that René d'Harnoncourt used the [Antonio] Gaudi desk as his desk at one time? I remember hearing about this and thinking what a gutsy thing to do, to use something from the design collection.

SZ: That's another example of what you're talking about.

RT: About the casualness of the Museum. Like I say, being interested in architecture, thinking about it as a career when I was younger, I used to go to the Architecture and Design department, to their storage areas, and look around. Arthur Drexler was very pleasant but he was always a little aloof, I thought. I got to know his assistant. You can't help me; you don't know his name.

SZ: It depends. Who?

RT: He was the one who did photography for the Architecture Department, George Barrows. The photographer. I guess I got to know him because he was in and out, photographing things, because in the Rights and Reproductions department we were getting things photographed. Of course, in those days the "push". . . . Well, all the departments, and Architecture and Design was the one that was dragging its feet the most, that kept the complete collection photographed. In addition to answering questions from the public we were also involved. . . . Sara Mazo in the Painting and Sculpture department, it was her job to make sure that the new acquisitions were

photographed. George Barrows did it in Architecture and Design. It was Monawee Richards I was trying to think of earlier.

SZ: That's right.

RT: That was one of the early people; the lunch crowd with Pearl and Dorothy Dudley. Yes, I had forgotten that aspect of it. I should have mentioned, of course, that Pearl talked about that. One of the unique features of the Rights and Reproductions department is the photographic archives. Alfred Barr, who had foresight for many things, required that every work of art that was exhibited in the Museum, if it was not photographed, the Museum photographed it; therefore, we had a record of everything that's ever been exhibited there, not just the collection itself, which is incredible.

SZ: Are you talking about the installation photographs?

RT: And the individual works. For each object, there was a photograph of it.

SZ: I guess originally Sunami was not on staff, and then. . .

RT: Never.

SZ: Never. Afterward, the Museum decided to have an official photographer on staff?

RT: On staff, yes, and I guess that was Rolf Petersen first. It was after Sunami retired that Rolf Petersen came in. And Sunami, we always had a terrible time holding onto a space for him to photograph, trying to keep some area available when he came in to photograph, because space is always at a premium in institutions. Anything that's empty for two days or three days out of a week, somebody's always going to want to put a claim on it.

SZ: So, there was no studio at all.

RT: No studio, certainly no darkroom. It wasn't until Rolf Petersen came in and set all that up.

SZ: So, he would take the stuff back to the design studio?

RT: No, he photographed it at the Museum.

SZ: No, I mean where would he do the developing?

RT: Oh, yes. The film was all done in the kitchen of his house.

SZ: Did you know him well?

RT: Oh, yes.

SZ: Maybe you could tell me a little bit about him.

RT: Oh, he was a very. . . . It's hard to say. He was a very nice man. After I got to know him he would have small parties at his house. He would include Pearl, and I would go too, and there were artists there that he knew. His wife, Sue, who is still living, she was much younger than he was. I got to know John and Reiko, his children. I still send Christmas cards to them each year. His kind of photography was what I've begun to think of as the right way to photograph works of art, especially sculpture; no theatrics were involved in the way he photographed sculpture -- unlike some other photographers the Museum used over the years, whom I won't mention. I know during the war he was saved from going to a camp. I remember hearing stories about that, and about his dismay at. . . . Who is Sara Mazo married to?

SZ: [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi.

RT: Kuniyoshi. Yes, during the war Sunami and Kuniyoshi had a sort of falling-out because of something related to how each handled being Japanese in the USA during World War II. I just heard stories about it. But Sunami was very quick, very good. His negatives were very precise. Later on, after he had retired, we had a great deal of difficulty printing his negatives because he did not include guide prints with each negative -- what's called a guide print. So, we would have to take a master print out of the archive, send it to the lab with the negative, so you could get the same values, the same densities and all that sort of thing. I think it was Rolf Petersen who introduced keeping a guide with the negatives.

SZ: Because each time you would. . .

RT: . . .have to start all over again.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: So, what you were saying was there was no guide print, so you'd have to take something out of the archives each time.

RT: Each time it was like starting all over again, trying to get a print. So, what we began to do. . . . Pearl got an appropriation from the Museum to make a guide print. Every time a negative was printed we would take the master print. They would then make an additional master print, which was then marked “master”. Then it would go back with the negative, so the next time that negative came up you would not have to start all over again. On the back of each of the guide prints that the Museum made there were printing instructions -- the paper you were to use, how long to expose it, how long to develop it. It was a little code, if you look on the back, in pencil, telling you what to do about that.

All these sorts of things were learning experiences for me, that I really enjoyed being involved with. I don't know if Pearl talked about the color transparencies the Museum made. They had a unique system, which they still use, of color negatives, which were originally housed at Sandak's, Harold Sandak's office, which was just down the street from the Museum, originally. Positive color prints and positive color transparencies at that time, and for the most part still, are very unstable things. So, if you have an archive of color transparencies, they're going to eventually deteriorate and fade and be useless for you. We would order a new color transparency every time we needed one, and it's worked out. They also made all the 35mm slides for the bookstore from the color negative. What it did was save from re-photographing the original works of art every time you needed a new color transparency. During my first year at the Museum, we thought the color transparencies were more stable than they turned out to be. If we had one in the files that was, say, three or four years old, we would send it out to people and think it was fine. We learned the hard way. The Museum always required that a printed color proof be sent back. I don't think we do anymore, because the volume is just too much to deal with. So, we would get a color proof back from the publisher. We would go down and compare it to the original work of art, then we would send comments back about it -- corrections to be made. Well, Pearl was doing that initially. I only did the black and white. She got this proof back that was just completely unacceptable to her. She wrote them back and told them how bad it was, and she couldn't even correct it unless they did a better job. The publisher wrote back and said, "But it looks exactly like the color transparency you sent me." So, they sent it back, she took it to the gallery, and [she saw that] it had deteriorated, the color had changed. So, that was the point when any color transparency was more than two years old, we always would check it with the original before we would send it out to anybody, to make sure it was going. . .

SZ: It's sort of interesting to do that, too.

RT: Oh, yes. Color proofing was wonderful. It got you down into the galleries or the storage areas. Anything that got me into the galleries I was happy to do. But it also

showed us that we still had to continuously look into how we did things, and what process is worth while continuing or changing. One of the other, peculiar things about the name of the department, and I had no idea who came up with Rights and Reproductions. . . . It was always something that bothered me a lot because it was so misleading. We were not "rights," like the Publications department was and we did not do any reproductions, we did not produce them. We were a photographic service. I think the title of the department is now changed to something of that order. I always forget what the new title is. It came after I was there. [Note: in 1992-1993, the department's name was changed to Photographic Services and Permissions].

SZ: After you left.

RT: After I left I mean, yes.

RT: But it did change. The thing I found most peculiar is that other museums, as they grew, also named their departments "Rights and Reproductions."

SZ: They were copying you.

RT: They were copying The Museum of Modern Art. Even Harry Abrams named their department the Rights and Reproductions department, which had nothing to do with their printed text but only their images. It was one of my small conflicts with Dick Oldenburg, although I got along with him very, very well. He would not let me change the name of the department. Every time I got a new director in there I tried to change the name of the department.

SZ: For a while you had quite a shot at it. That's interesting. You never found out where the derivation. . .

RT: Pearl is the only one who would know about that, because she was the founding director of the department. [Note: see also, Pearl L. Moeller Oral History, 1991].

SZ: Tell me a little bit what it was like to work with Pearl.

RT: Oh, Pearl was wonderful, a very, unbelievably. . . . No, I'm going to put my foot in my mouth. How many years did I work with her? Twenty? About twenty years. In that whole time, I only had one conflict in my relationship with her, and I was insubordinate to her at that time. I was absolutely in the wrong. I was saved by an act of God. Literally, by an act of God. I'm not a very aggressive person. Like I say, I wasn't interested in rising in the Museum in any way. But because of my background in commercial art and designing things. . . . Do you remember when the big blackout was in New York?

SZ: ‘77.

RT: ‘77.

SZ: There were two.

RT: The first one.

SZ: That was 1965, I think.

RT: Sounds right. Because we were in the 21 building. That was 1965. We were redesigning our permission forms at the Museum. I was doing all the writing of the permission letters. Pearl signed them all, and I really had a great deal of difficulty with her with the spacing of the words in the letter, in the contract. Specifically with how much blank space was needed when completing a specific contract. So, we sat down and worked on it, and I said, "I really want to have it this way," and Pearl said, "No, no. This is the way it's going to be." So, she gave it to me to finish up and send down and get printed; I just changed it to the way I wanted it. I cannot believe I did that. I do not do things like that! I changed it to the way I wanted it, after she had said, "This is

the way it's going to be." I don't know. It's not like me at all. Anyway. I sent it out to printing. They [the printed forms] were sent directly to Pearl's desk. She called me over and said, "What is this? This is not what I approved." And I thought, "Oh, my God. What have I done?" This was at the end of the day. Suddenly, the office went dark. It was the New York blackout. By the next day she had forgotten all about it, and we used those forms forever. I told you, an act of God saved me. I don't think Pearl would have fired me for it, but she could have been really angry at me -- justifiably angry -- for a long time.

But Pearl was very fair to people. She treated everybody the same that she hired. She hired Jim Rudin. I don't know if you know his name. He was a black man whom I'm still very friendly with. He's in Grenada now. He has an art gallery there, and he's a photographer. Actually, he was the first black person I had ever worked directly with, being from the South. And in those days, before the '60s. . . . I'll tell you a little anecdote about Jim. Jim was – is -- a wonderful man, really very nice. I forgot to tell my father about his being black, when they first came to visit me at the Museum, from Jacksonville. I don't think Jim noticed, I hope he didn't, but my father blanched when he found out I was working so closely with a black person. I just never even thought to say anything to him about it. Jim left the Museum. I know he would have stayed longer, but he married a white woman and even in the '60s it was unpleasant for them in Brooklyn, where they lived. So, he moved to Grenada.

SZ: His family was from Grenada, I presume.

RT: No. His father was East Indian and his mother was African. He actually grew up in Amityville, Long Island, where his mother still lives. I think he knew some people from Grenada that he had met.

SZ: So, he went there and he started an art gallery.

RT: Yes. Which he still has. Chuck and I visited him there last year. Finally, we got down there to see him. He handles only local artists and [those from] the surrounding islands. He sets up shows on cruise boats. When the cruise boats come in, he will set up an exhibition of the work on the boat, and encourage people to come into the gallery, too. It's a nice setup. So, Pearl hired this black man, whom I got to know and work with. Chuck and I were talking, now that we're both retired. . .

SZ: Is Charles from the South, too?

RT: No. Topeka, Kansas.

SZ: Is that the North or the South? I can't remember.

RT: John Brown? Well, it was debatable whether it sided with the North or South at the time of civil war; a free or slave state. But one of the things about working in New York, and my working at The Museum of Modern Art was that it expanded our horizons with people and art, music and everything; it was a kind of melting pot. I would never had black friends if I'd stayed in Jacksonville, or Oriental friends, Indians, whatever. Working at the Museum expanded our lives in the same kind of way. It really was an exciting place to work.

SZ: You must have seen the Museum in terms of that; the composition of the staff changed dramatically over the time you were there, right?

RT: Over the decades, yes. Oh, yes.

SZ: Your citing Pearl as hiring this guy from Amityville, which was, I think, then. . .

RT: There were few black people. I can't remember. There might have been a black woman in the Accounting department somewhere, but I can't even remember that. There were black guards, but not in the offices. Pearl is very straight-forward, and

that makes it easy to deal with anybody, but she's also very expansive and open to everything -- except designing permission contracts. I'm sure she forgot all about it. I'm sure if you mentioned it to her she would have no memory of it whatsoever. But I guess one of the most traumatic points of my career at the Museum was when Pearl left the department and became head of Special Collections. [Note: Pearl Moeller left the department of Rights and Reproductions to become head of the Library's Special Collections in 1969; Richard Tooke assumed the position of Supervisor, Rights and Reproductions].

RT: Gray Williams was head of Publications when Pearl went to the Library. Pearl got a phone call and she came to me and said the Publications Director, Gray, would like to see you. I had no idea why. I went into his office and he said, "Would you like to be the head of the Rights and Reproductions department?" I said, "Well, what about Pearl?" That's what I said at the time, because I knew nothing about this changing around and restructuring and reorganizing. I said, "Well, what's happened to Pearl?" and he said, "Well, she's been given the position of head of Special Collections in the Library." It was something I had no idea was going to happen. But I said, "Of course." As long as I knew Pearl wasn't being kicked out or fired or anything. Because it was one of the times I was surprised she didn't prepare me a little better for that. I guess it was a dramatic time for her, too. I was surprised she never talked to me, because usually she's very open and easy. I went back to my desk with trepidation; really, I was so embarrassed about that, for some reason. I didn't know what was going on with everything. But just about a year before that I had really thought about maybe I should be a little ambitious and go somewhere else; like look for another job. I was very happy there, but as in so many small departments of the Museum, when you went so far as to know you had to die or retire or be fired before you could go anywhere else . . . I did think about it. I didn't do anything positive, but that came at a point in my life that was very good for me, to suddenly have more responsibility and a slightly different job.

Then, of course, as you know, over the years the department expanded and went up and things changed. You were asking about working in the Museum. How I felt about it. All the departments in the Museum changed spaces once every five or eight years or something like that. I always enjoyed it. I liked to change the location of my desk; looking at how I did things; reorganizing things; looking at things in a slightly different way. I never felt that people were trying to get me if they complained about the way I did something. Because if it was not done the right way I wanted to know, so I could do something about changing it. In fact, I had trouble with my staff when I became head of the department, getting them to let me know what the problems where. I'd say, "Look, if you don't tell me, it's your problem, not mine or the Museum's."

So, I really enjoyed when we had to move our office. Then the last time we moved I hated it, and I thought, "Oh, God, this is time to leave. I don't want to change anything now." I've gotten older and am settling down. But it was really true. That last time I hated the idea of having to change again, rethink everything and begin all over again. But I continued to do it. My last office at the Museum, for the first few months we were there, anytime anybody would come into my office space, even the staff, they would say, "Oh, you've changed things around again." Well, I had to try to organize the physical layout in order to accomplish my daily tasks in the most efficient and pleasant way -– so that all aspects of work for together. It took me longer to adjust. The other times I thought it was good for me -- mentally, physically and everything -- to move to a new space. It was certainly something that continues to happen at The Museum of Modern Art. So, like I say, the growth of things and the change, the different directors -- I always found that stimulating and not a bad thing to happen. Except when they got fired; that wasn't very pleasant.

SZ: Well, for you, the move from line responsibility to being a manager. . . you welcomed that.

RT: Oh, yes. I really did. The last several years at the Museum were not as enjoyable to me because I became mostly an administrator. I was not involved in the daily

workings of the office. I really prefer the daily work of replying to requests, sending contracts, ordering photos, billing, and then the receipt of a finished book. Occasionally, some of our old clients would write to me and want me to respond. I would say I would do this, and the letter would sit on my desk for two weeks. Then I'd finally turn it over to Tom [Grishkowsky, Permissions Officer] and Mikki [Carpenter, Photograph Archivist], because I just didn't have the time. I would like to have done it, but I would just have to say, "Look, if you want your letter answered, send it to Tom. He'll get to it. He does things in a very orderly way, and it won't sit around like it would on my desk."

SZ: So, you took this position at the time Pearl left to head Special Collections. So, you were in this managerial position at the time the whole union thing broke?

RT: Yes. It's partly my fault. The union. . .

SZ: Well, tell me that story.

RT: Well, of course, I knew a lot of people at the Museum, and I realized that the lower staff had no recourse if there were difficulties with a department head or a supervisor. I wasn't one of the organizers, but when I was approached about having this staff association, I thought it was really a great idea and I thought it would really be very good. So, I helped write letters and. . .

SZ: This was while you were manager?

RT: Yes. But I was not a department head at that time. I was supervisor. My job was supervisor of Rights and Reproductions, a section of the Publications department. I went to meetings after work with. . . . Who was the woman in. . . ?

SZ: Mildred Constantine?

RT: No, no. In the Publications department. She was an editor.

SZ: Jane Fluegel?

RT: No.

SZ: Oh, somebody else.

RT: No, somebody that Bates Lowry brought in. She was very. . .

SZ: Linda?

RT: No.

SZ: I'll look it up.

RT: Sharon? Was her name Sharon, too?

SZ: I don't know.

RT: Anyway, she [Note: Irene Gordon] was very active and organized. She was a very good organizer. I remember we met at her apartment once -- because we did all our meetings outside the Museum, originally, and I remember helping draw up a charter, for the organization for Staff Association within the Museum and getting it all together, petitions. . . going to Dick Koch. I think Miriam Cedarbaum was there at that time, helping advise with rights matters -- legal matters -- and I remember being told this has to be a union or nothing at all. There was very little interest from either Dick Koch or the Trustees above him. I don't know whether he was speaking his own mind or speaking for the Trustees, but I just remember their saying it had to be one or the other, "We're not interested in anything that would work within the structure of the Museum." Then they had this certification election, and it passed by eighty percent.

That really set the Trustees on their ears, because they had no idea there was this much dissatisfaction. Then, of course, after the certification election and everything was divided up, my job was declared management and I got thrown out of the Staff Association. But I continued to support them as much as I could. I'll tell you something you probably don't know. Mikki knows about it and a few other people -- probably Mary Lea Bandy does. Of course, she was very active in the union at the Museum before she became management. During the first strike the union held, I'd come in to work, and Dick Koch would call me up and ask me if I would do somebody else's job, and I would say, "No, I would rather not do that." He would say, "Okay." It was a very difficult position to be in, but he was very understanding. When the union, which was certainly very small at that time, needed somebody to picket in front of the Museum, as a striker, at night, I did it. And then I would come in and work the next morning. I'd break the strike, walk through it, and go into work. But I had quixotic feelings about the union. I disliked it because it made a division between me and the people I worked with. There were certain things that, suddenly, I couldn't talk with them directly about and they couldn't talk with me about. I think at the end it's what made my being an administrator not as pleasant. Because it was all so structured and there was so much with the strength of the union and everything. It knocked a lot of the pleasantness out of working at the Museum. Like I say, I certainly understand how it came to be at the Museum, but I was really sorry that they didn't let us do as the Metropolitan Museum (who still don't have a union for their administrative staff). . . Thomas Hoving [Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1967–1977] was very, very wise to offer some sort of structure within the organization for staff to vent their feelings and problems.

SZ: Yes, this was really sort of fortunate. And I guess also, then, that the union ended up being attached to the Teamsters. . .

RT: The Teamsters, right.

SZ: That was kind of weird.

RT: Well, I remember talking with the chairman -- they had never had a president -- of the Staff Association. That first strike, I remember her talking about her having as much trouble dealing with the teamsters, who wanted to take over, as she did in trying to deal with the administration of the Museum. I guess it still goes on, with the union.

SZ: Do you remember? Were there repercussions for some people, having them so forcefully interested in organizing?

RT: I do not, no. No, none of that. It certainly didn't affect me, and I was very active and signed all the papers and did all the things to make it happen, essentially. But I was just really very unhappy that it came to be a union, because of the relationship to people within. I know there were a lot of people, and I think there probably still are. . . . A lot of animosity between the very active people the very passive people in the union. Of course, it's still an open shop, which is something that I prefer. I'm completely against closed shops. It's just my own personal thing, and I'm really still glad they've managed to hold that, although the Teamsters, certainly. . . I think every time they have a meeting or an election within themselves, they try to change it to a closed shop. Like I said, it's a personal thing. I don't think one should be required to join anything to keep your job. It's just a simple thing for me. Too simplistic, I know, but that's just the way I feel about it.

SZ: But it did give staff leverage.

RT: Oh, it did. As I said, I fully understand how it came about and why it's there.

SZ: But what you pointed out is something that has been said to me frequently; that the tiered structure has really had some unfortunate effects. The whole idea of the staff feeling and everything.

RT: Yes, it does. It makes a barrier between certain levels at the Museum that never existed before, although, of course, it did exist in a more subterfuge kind of way -- which is what brought about the union; the staff wanting to be happy. I certainly remember it was almost impossible to change departments at the Museum in those days, before the union. People who left worked somewhere else for a couple years, then came back to another department [in the Museum].

SZ: That's how you had to do it.

RT: That's how you had to do it. That was not the right way. When I first became director of a department, and started going to department head meetings, that was another eye-opener. I always used to tell people the Museum was like a group of small city states with feudal lord heads of the different departments. I was so surprised; nobody would talk at the department-head meetings except John Szarkowski and me. We would ask questions, we would have something to say and everything else. Nobody else would talk because they were protecting their positions, as I understood it. They didn't want other people to know where they were going and what they were doing, other department heads. Of course, when Bill Rubin arrived nobody else had a chance to talk at department head meetings. John Szarkowski and then Kirk [Varnedoe], he talks a lot, too, at department head meetings, because he's interested. But the union still continued to contribute to things, because I remember the point at which they required department heads to report back to their staff, which is something I always did anyway. But often department heads didn't. They did help the flow of things – communication -- in that kind of way. But I want to go back to a director of the Museum, John Hightower. You may not want to keep this in the record, but this is a story you will enjoy hearing. At his going-away party -- which is something that always surprised me at the Museum; when people left, under clouds or whatever, there was still always this big, formal thing with everybody there --, I was standing upstairs in the founders' room -- remember? the big-domed room that Philip Johnson designed, which was really a wonderful space? In the middle of the party, John came up to me and said, "Oh, Richard. I'm so sorry I'm going. There were so

many plans that I had for your department and so many things we could have done together." I said, "Look, John. You hardly ever thought about me. Why are you giving me this show job now when you're not even here anymore?" It was not a nice thing to do, but I could not just let him go on and on pretending that he was going to do anything like this. He's a very funny guy, personable, social, but unfortunately not a successful administrator.

SZ: Let's back up and go through them [other Museum directors]. Bates Lowry. His coming represented a big change in the Museum, I presume.

RT: Sure. The staff grew by leaps and bounds, which is one of the reasons. His coming is when the Museum really began to become a big octopus thing, as the staff grew and grew and grew.

SZ: What was it like under him? Because it was also a time of a lot of political activism. There were a lot of things going on, all of which, I guess, affected what was happening. Well, that especially was with Hightower.

RT: Well, Bates Lowry, the feeling I got. . . . He made a really good effort to communicate with the staff as a whole. He had meetings where everybody was there in the auditorium, and he did some things that really seemed very good. But he was there such a short time I didn't really get to know him at all. I had gone on vacation in California for two weeks, and when I came back he was gone. As I said earlier, one of the enjoyable things in the department I worked in was we were not involved in the politics of the Museum.

SZ: So, you didn't have a clue that he was going to be gone?

RT: None whatsoever. When I came back and he was gone it was like, wow. It really was. And I remember the turmoil among the other staff of the Museum. All the people he had brought in, and he did bring in quite a few. It was very turbulent. It was Dick

Koch, Wilder Green and Walter Bareiss, who always reminded me of that [William] Gropper painting, The Senate. He always looked like he was one of the characters in that. A very nice man, Bareiss. He was surprisingly jovial about the whole thing, the whole time. Like I said, because our department wasn't involved in any of that, we just continued. . . . It was like we were going along and all of these things. . .

SZ: None of these changes really affected you, is what you're saying.

RT: No, it didn't really affect us at all. Then, when John Hightower arrived, he was everyman's buddy sort of thing. He had his court jesters -- we called them. Do you remember who that was? Geoff Brown, and he wrote this little publication, *Organ*, with a running feature titled *Ebbs and Flows*? It was like a kind of gossipy.

SZ: That went where?

RT: Just around to the staff in general.

SZ: You mean it was like an internal. . .

RT: But it was done as a joke. It was not a serious reporting of things. It was a gossipy little sheet. I can't remember. I can see the guy who published it. It was just one of his sort of ways of saying, "I'm just an ordinary guy, like you."

SZ: And you didn't believe it?

RT: No! Nobody did. Everybody knew what it was all about. It was too obvious.

SZ: What was it all about?

RT: It was just a gimmick. A little gimmick that didn't work. Everybody knew he was not that. . . In his position, he can't be like that. And then his office, with the little Oriental

rug under the desk. It was sort of a little show. He was essentially a nice guy out of his element. He was just not a very good administrator, unfortunately. But I always felt it boiled down to a very pleasant person.

SZ: Well, the first strike happened under his watch, right? That's right, I think.

RT: Was it?

SZ: Then the second was under Dick [Oldenberg].

RT: The only time I ever was a scab or such a thing was once when the guards were on strike. I did go stand in the galleries. But I only did that twice. I was pressed into service twice to do that. And even though my staff didn't like it and they let me know about it, I said, "Well, unfortunately, I've resisted as much as I can." My father knew I said no, and he said, "What do you mean? You're management. You don't say no." But like I say, I felt very fortunate that the people in charge were understanding of my feelings and did as much as they could to listen to me.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: Under Hightower the idea that an institution could be politicized, or that it could be used in a political context. . . . How did that sit with you, and what do you remember about that?

RT: Nothing, purely. Like I say, I was not going to department head meetings at that time. I would occasionally get invited to certain things going on. I remember at one point seeing that Hightower had lost the complete confidence of the curatorial heads. At this one meeting, he banged on the table at one point and said, "I am the head of the Museum," with all the others, [Arthur] Drexler and these other people, sitting around.

Obviously they had no confidence in him at all. It was quite obvious he was in trouble, to me, even, who was not involved in any of that sort of stuff. I do remember the day he lasted one full year and he celebrated. He said, "I made it a year!" Again, he was quite obvious at what he did. He seemed to think he was still snowing people with things and he was not. Like I say, I found him a very personable, very nice guy, but he just did not work out.

I think Bates Lowry had similar kinds of problems at the Museum, but because of his stature and his abilities in many ways, it was not as obvious. I always felt that he was kind of led down the garden path by the Trustees at the Museum, Lowry was. They just let him hang himself in some sort of strange way. I always found him very, very easy and very nice and direct to deal with. With Dick Oldenburg, of course, I had worked with him as head of the Publications department for so long. I'll tell you an anecdote that is very pleasant. I was always very apprehensive about sending memos to Dick because of his having been an editor. I remember -- I don't know if it was the first time or not -- but I sent something to him that I had to talk to him about, and I was sitting there at his desk and he had my memo. He had a pencil and he was editing it, and I was sitting there. Very intimidating, not because of who he was but because. . . once an editor, always an editor, you know. From that time on, until I retired, I was horrified of his pointing out grammatical errors, spelling, whatever, anything I sent to him. I usually had two staff members read them before I sent them in. But he did not do that in any kind of malicious way; he just couldn't resist. I do remember sending out a letter that I copied him on and his calling up and asking me, "I hope you don't have this in the memory of the computer, to be used again," because it was kind of a form letter and I had misused a word. It was a very complicated letter. It's funny, because I remember looking up the spelling of it, and I just used the wrong word. That's all there was to it. But he never held any of these things against you; he just pointed them out to you.

SZ: But you had a long, working relationship with him. . .

RT: Oh, yes.

SZ: . . . first as head of Publications, then as director.

RT: Yes. I, as well as so many people who had Dick's ear, tried hard to get him to be a little more forthcoming to the staff as a whole. They always felt he was aloof. I remember the first time that Mikki Carpenter had to talk to him directly about something, [she commented on] what a nice guy he was and how easy to talk to, and how he absorbs things. He listened when you were there talking to him. He paid attention to what you were saying. You were the center of attention sort of thing. I remember having to go to give him some information for a talk he was giving to the Museum Directors Association [American Association of Museum Directors], or whatever it's called. I met with him the morning of the meeting. I gave him all this information I had gathered, and I went to the meeting with him and heard the speech he gave from it. It was just astonishing. I could never have remembered half the stuff I told him, much less put it together in a lucid form the way he did. He again was somebody who spoke very well in front of an audience, clearly and succinctly, I always found. But he was never loved by the staff, because of his inability to. . . I remember. . . Who was the personnel director most of the time he was there?

SZ: Lyanne [Dowling]?

RT: Lyanne. I remember talking to her about Dick. She said to him, "Just have a staff meeting, a full staff meeting, once in a while," but she could not get him to do it. It was something against his. . . . I don't know whether he thought he would say the wrong things to staff or whatever, but she could not get him to just occasionally have a full staff meeting and just talk to them in general about how things were going. The big joke was when something important happened at the Museum, we'd always learn about it from *The New York Times*.

SZ: It wouldn't come from him. That's what you're saying?

RT: No. A day later you got the memo, and the memo came too late for the staff to feel as though they were included in what was going on. There was a strange reluctance on his part, for some reason, to show himself to the staff in that kind of way. But he and I, like I said, worked together very well. When I sent in my letter of resignation, he invited me out to lunch. I dumped my martini in my lap. What a way to end a relationship! I couldn't believe it. I had never had martinis at lunch anyway. Like I say, I enjoyed working with him, and I certainly remember his rapport with Mrs. [Blanchette] Rockefeller. I remember seeing them in the garden of the Museum at some opening there, talking together like college chums who had just met each other again going over old times. She was also a gracious lady, around the Museum all the time.

SZ: Again, she didn't really deal with you directly, did she?

RT: No. No. I remember after Pearl left, and I knew Pearl had dealings with Bill Paley's lawyers but I wasn't quite sure what it was all about. He was also a trustee of the Museum. Do you know who Bill Paley's lawyer is?

SZ: Ralph Colin.

RT: Ralph Colin, of course. He called me up and asked my advice about some letter that Mr. Paley had gotten, wanting to reproduce a painting [of his]; did I know the publisher or the author or whatever on it? I thought, "You're calling me to ask me this? Doesn't Mr. Paley. . .?" Anyway, the relationship with Paley, as you know, especially in the early days of the Museum -- and it probably still happens -- the Trustees use the Museum for their own personal ends many times. But that was my only connection with Mr. Paley and Ralph Colin. That was over Bates Lowry the division, between Mr. Colin and Mr. Paley. I read the book [Note: *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*. New York: Atheneum, 1973].

SZ: It's probably disappeared.

RT: Yes. But since I mentioned Paley, the exhibition of his collection after he died, I remember what a contrast it was to the Annenberg collection that was at the Met within short periods of time, where you had a very rich man who built a collection of masterpieces with advice from experts, whereas Paley's collection was obviously works he loved and lived with, and what a wonderful show it was. Of course, there were a couple of masterpieces there, but most of the things were not showy kinds of things. Another thing, to go back. . . In the early days of the Museum, Rockefeller -- not David. . .

SZ: Nelson?

RT: Nelson, was still active at the Museum, when I first went to work there, and he was around frequently -- another very personable individual who spoke to the staff and said hello and things like that. Just to show how different it was at the beginning, with people coming and going all the time. Was Louise Smith a Trustee? She was a Trustee. I wasn't sure. There were two Trustees -- three, I guess -- that I had gotten to know at work fairly well. One was Louise Smith, another was James Thrall Soby and the third. . .

SZ: Well, tell me something about him or her.

RT: Oh, he had Italian futurist paintings. . .

SZ: Eddie [Edward M.M.] Warburg?

RT: Edward, not Richard? Is it the third? Edward Warburg, the Third?

SZ: There was a Warburg for a while?

RT: Warburg. Yes, I'm sure it was Warburg. They had their own name. Yes, here. Let me look at the Trustees.

SZ: This is the list from '76. Maybe that will help. That's in the front.

RT: Edward. Yes, you're right. It was Edward M.M. Warburg. You were right. But for some reason those three people I remember standing out clearly. Louise Smith called one day and said she had a little Picasso drawing she needed photographed. This was a long time ago, when the photo lab wasn't always completely overworked. I said, "Oh, of course, we can photograph it for you. Just let me know when you want to bring it in, and we'll try to set it up." So, I was in my office and Linda Loving, who was my assistant at that time, came into my office and said, "What am I going to do?" I said, "What?" She said, "You'll have to come in here." Because I had told Mrs. Smith to contact Linda to get the photography done. So, at her desk was this Picasso drawing that Mrs. Smith had brought in and left. Linda was afraid to touch it. She said, "I'm not picking it up." So, we had to call the Registrar and they sent somebody to carry it away for us. But again, that was another example of the casualness of the workings of the Museum, that just can't happen anymore.

Yes, Mrs. Smith was very nice. Mr. Warburg had a dragon of a secretary, who scared everybody to death when she would call the Museum, especially the Registrar's office, but I got along with her very well. I remember her calling me one day. She had ordered some photographs, some 8" X 10" glossy photographs, and when they came they weren't 8" X 10", they were 6" X 10," and she wondered, should she pay for a full 8" by 10" photograph? I said, "Well, occasionally photographers will trim them down to the proportions of the work of art, rather than leave all this white space. But she was concerned about whether she was really paying for her full, 8" X 10" glossy print. I will tell you also a little story about one donor to the Museum. I won't tell you who it was, but he was a donor and he had in the gallery a promised gift to the Museum. He called up and needed some photographs of it, and I told him they would cost $1.50 a piece. He said, "Why should I have to pay for them? I'm donating this to

the Museum." I said, "Well, I can't on my own authority do it." So, I called up Sara Mazo and she said, "No, there's no reason why he shouldn't pay for those. This is a promised gift. The Museum doesn't own it. This is the only work he's ever given." One year later, to the day practically, he called again. I told him the same thing, and he really got upset. He was a gallery owner in New York and he said, "I just don't understand why you can't do this." I told him, I said, "What do you want me to do? Tear off a little piece of the painting and sell it, so I can make this print for you?" I never heard from him again. But Sara had told me there was no reason to worry.

SZ: Did the Museum get the promised gift?

RT: Later on, yes, they did. He finally did leave it to them, but it was not a big work of art and it was not anything important. That's also one of the reasons I was never interested in rising in the ranks of the Museum any more than I did, because I'm a very military, "R.A." kind of person; I go by the rules a little too much. And when you're dealing with the politics of the Museum, you have to bend and roll and be a little more flexible.

SZ: You said a few times you stayed out of it, but did you feel the political nature of the place?

RT: No, not really. The only times when it came in, with reorganizations, when things were restructured and things like that, I, of course, got involved with it. But because of the nature of the department it was just not affected that much. Daily working operations were not affected. The union had more of an effect on the department, because it affected it directly. But the other parts of the Museum did not so much.

SZ: Now, what year did you become the director of the department?

RT: You tell me. I'm very bad with. . .

SZ: But once you were made manager, you were that for a number of years. I think you were director. . . . Well, I'll just. . . Well, it doesn't matter.

RT: Well, the thing of it is that even though my title was supervisor, I was treated as a director for many years before I got the title.

SZ: And why was that?

RT: Because Dick wouldn't give me the title.

SZ: And why was that?

RT: I have no idea. Oh, because he was reluctant to change anything that worked. That's Dick Oldenburg.

SZ: This is '87. You were still supervisor. Don't even bother looking.

RT: Okay. Because I tried to get Dick to do that for many years. It was only the last couple of years my title was director. [Note: Tooke was Director, Dept. of Rights and Reproductions from 1990 to 1992]

SZ: And it didn't have to do with money?

RT: No, it wouldn't have changed my money at all.

SZ: It meant not having the full appreciation of what your function was?

RT: I think probably so. I think probably so, because every time I was trying to get money for staff, that was another one of my things that drove Dick and Personnel nuts. I was always trying to raise salaries for my staff, always talking about doing more. Because I'm very egalitarian. I think the littler people always get paid too little for what they're

worth to an institution. When Cresap, McCormick & Paget did that survey, who did the Museum fire after it came out? The receptionist on each floor? People who were making $8,000 a year? I mean, what sense does that make? It just made for chaos in the hallways of the Museum. Doors opened all the time -- "Can you tell me where this is?" Lyanne, when the time came for salary things, hated seeing me because of my continuous fighting, trying to get more salary for people. I got rid of my secretary because of that. She was a secretary, she couldn't get any more money. I decided to change the title. I just reorganized the department, only to get more money for her. Then, from that point on, I never had a secretary, even though I used one of the staff as a kind of secretary. Of course, part of the problem was getting the union, too. I remember hearing a rumor once -- you can tell me whether it was true or not -- that the Trustees had no idea what a poor retirement program they had until Alfred retired, and they found out what he would get in their retirement program. Then it was upgraded for the entire staff. Is that true? Sounds reasonable, doesn't it. I will have to tell you one thing about the Museum's retirement program. . .

SZ: Which you now know intimately?

RT: Yes. Shall I give you my grievances, too? I retired at the age of fifty-nine. I got my retirement plus some subsidy of what they think social security will be. I get $700 extra a month; when I start getting social security, they stop paying that $700. It made it possible for me to retire. If I had just gotten the straight retirement, without that, I would have had to have waited until sixty-two. You can get social security at sixty-two. We can now. Pretty soon it will be seventy. But anyway, that was one of the things that made it possible. They pay my full health insurance and they don't deduct that from my retirement.

SZ: So what you're saying is it's really good.

RT: It's very good. Chuck, who retired from the Presbyterian Church, they deduct. . .

SZ: From what?

RT: Well, the Presbyterian Church. He worked for their national headquarters. They deduct his insurance payments from his monthly retirement.

SZ: Well, I think one of the things was you knew when you went to work at a place like the Museum, and the Museum in particular, that you were not going to be getting, in terms of salary, what you could get. . .

RT: . . .on the outside.

SZ: Actually, there were so many people there, who went to work there, who were not working for the salary. That was one reason they said things stayed so long for so long.

RT: For so long, sure.

SZ: That for people like you, who were actually there, and were having to earn their way, it was a big sacrifice to go work in a place like that.

RT: It really was. Well, not necessarily a sacrifice, but you just weren't making any headway. Remember when Sarah Rubinstein was finance director? I remember Pearl telling me they would talk about salaries and they would say, "Well, so and so doesn't need any more money. Her husband makes $3 million a year," or whatever. That's literally the way it was. And, as you said, the union came about mostly because the staff were suddenly 90% people living off their income, rather than 50% or whatever it was when I went to work there. That's really very true. The dollar-year-people. . .

SZ: . . .had changed.

RT: That did make a lot of difference. As I say, the union did many good things. Adding a dental program onto the insurance would never have happened without a union there to push it. Two years after I retired, I wrote to the Director of Human Resources -- a title which I find offensive -- and to Beverly Wolff, just a little letter of inquiry. I said, "Is there an active Trustee committee on pension and retirees? Is there any review of the retirement funds, etc? Is there any plan to look over whether there should be cost-of-living increases for retirees or not?" Well, I didn't get any direct answer, but the next year we all got a 5% increase on retirement. Because there is no interest in the pension fund, there is no activity going on. After the first year I called up and said, "I didn't get a copy of the. . . " What do you call it? It's a scaled-down version of the annual report for the pension fund. They send it to staff every year; you get a little notice about how the pension fund is doing. They didn't send it out to the retirees, and the benefits clerk at the Museum said, "Well, we're required by law to send it to staff members." I said, "Look. People drawing from the pension fund are, in essence, staff members, and they should be getting a copy of it." I'm still fighting them to send it out to everybody who's retired, because nobody's interested in doing it. And, of course, the benefits clerk changes once every six months at the Museum. So, I'm still fighting for us people who work at the Museum.

This will tell you a little bit about Pearl -- when you were asking me about working for her. It's all coming back a little bit. She said, "Working at The Museum of Modern Art is really a very wonderful thing. People there are very nice, but do not sacrifice yourself to The Museum of Modern Art because you'll never be credited for it, you won't get any recognition. If you want to work overtime you can work overtime, but you're not going to get paid and nobody's going to say thank you for it." That's why I say she's very realistic about the situation at the Museum. And once you retire, it's the same way, she told me. She said, "You don't get anything from the Museum except your monthly check. No newsletters, nothing. Join the Museum as a regular member, and that way you'll know what's going on." And it's really true. You still have to light a fire under them to get them to pay attention to you. It's really dumb. Chuck gets printed newsletters, updates, every time anything happens, from his pension

fund. They tell him what's going on. The pension fund at The Museum of Modern Art is incredibly heavily endowed. I can't remember figures, but I finally got a copy of an annual report last year, and there are millions of dollars in the pension fund and only a handful of people drawing on it.

SZ: That's great.

RT: Oh, it is very good. And when you get the précis, it only tells you how many people are eligible for it, not how many people are drawing on it -- which can't possibly be very many. So, it's really very good. And when I go on to social security, the Museum will pay the supplementary insurance, too; your supplementary insurance for the Medicare. So they're still. . .

SZ: So, you have Alfred Barr to thank for this.

RT: Absolutely. Absolutely, yes. But the worst thing is that the HMO they are on is not in Florida. They have no doctors in Florida. They do have a deductible; they will pay 80% of cast over the deductible, so it's not really that bad, except that Oxford is in a little trouble right now. Are you eligible to collect? I didn't know whether you worked long enough to become vested or not. That's why the fund is so high, because so many people don't work long enough to become vested in the Museum. Therefore, they pay into it all these years, then they never can draw off of it.

SZ: But, see, a while ago I was trying to ask this question. I think it has to do a lot with your attitude as a manager and stuff, but you've got so many people now in that department who started working when you were there, who have been there forever, right? You've got Mikki and Tom. . .

RT: Kate [Keller]. Well, Mali Olatunji retired. But you were asking. . .

SZ: It was just an observation.

RT: One of my problems with the staff is that we all knew each other too well. It's much easier dealing with a new person every five years or so. It really is. Kate and I had the worst time in the early days, or about mid-career with her, because we're exactly alike. We think the same way, we avoid conflict, and she would come up to me to talk about problems in the photo lab and studio and I said, "Kate, tell me what to do. I can't do it. I'm not there. If you don't deal with it directly. . ." Then I thought well, I know how it is; I do the same thing. We work the same way. I guess one of the worst things, part of my job there, was hiring people. I never had to fire very many people.

SZ: That I can see.

RT: Although I had to, I guess, three times. Well, I only actually fired one person. The other two people got themselves fired by the Museum. But one person was a psychotic and I didn't know it. I was the last person in the office to know it. This was a real psychologic problem. But the longer you work with somebody. Look, you know how it is in an office. You spend more time with the people in the office than you do with any of your relatives, friends or anybody else. You're with them all the time. So, we got to know each other too well. When I left, to recommend a successor was really very hard to do. But I refused. . . When the Personnel director talked to me about bringing somebody in from the outside I said, "No, I don't want you to do that," because that happens so frequently.

SZ: And they let you place that?

RT: Place that thing, yes. Which was through Dick's intervention. And I think it's fair, because I know all those people's faults just like I know my own. And I said, "You hire somebody from the outside and, of course, they'll look good. And you know what you'll do? You hire them from the outside, you paint the office, you give them all new furniture. You bring somebody in from the inside and they get nothing. Hardly more money, even, on it." I did get Dick to do some very good salary things, but I

remember at one time when Dick Oldenberg was head of Publications and I was trying for a raise for a staff member and Dick said, “It won’t matter what we pay her she will think she is underpaid.” Where can you go from there? Tom Grischkowsky, was certain the Rights and Reproductions staff was underpaid. What was it? About five years before I retired, after my trying all the usual avenues through the Museum to increase my staff’s salaries, it was Tom’s initiative that we do a survey of all the other museums and the different jobs, similar jobs; what they're getting paid here and there, to prove how low we were paid. My staff and I composed a survey, which I sent to other comparable museums and we got together the results, which were very convincing. Dick did recommend increasing our salaries after reviewing this. Of course, when we did the survey I didn't include myself in it. I can't believe nobody said, "Well, why don't you write yours?" So, Dick asked me to do that for my position, after I did it for the staff; then he increased my salary, too, after seeing the results of the subsequent survey. So, like I say, I had a fairly good working relationship with my staff. So many of them had been there so long that it makes it harder in some ways, because you know each other too well. I think Mikki is very good as a head of a department, because she doesn't let sleeping dogs lie. And I think it's easier, whether you like them or not. . .

SZ: It's better to have it out there.

RT: You always know where you stand. If you do something, you're going to know about it right now. Not tomorrow, not next week, but right this minute, and then it's done and over with. I had a tendency to put things off like that; then they became a small crisis. I'm not a very good administrator in that kind of way. That's her biggest difference from me. I felt very comfortable turning the department to her. Other institutions will always come to the Museum, to find out how we function. We don't go to them to find out what's going on. We set the standards. The Museum is such an innovator in so many of these things. It was just like Dorothy Dudley, who wrote the bible for registration of modern art [Note: Dorothy H. Dudley, Irma Bezold, and others.

Museum Registration Methods. Washington, American Association of Museums, 1958]. You know about her life, don't you?

SZ: A little bit, but if there's something you can tell me. . .

RT: No, I was just surprised at what happened when she retired. Do you know what happened when she retired? She married the sea captain she'd been living with all those years. Here's this little lady – “a librarian type” -- what one used to think of as an old maid. I will tell you a very good story. When Sunami died and they were having a wake, I went with Monawee Richards, Dorothy Dudley, Pearl and Sara Mazo to the wake. It wasn't a wake; it was a memorial service. We left the Museum and we stopped at Stouffers, which used to be in the 666 building, to have something to eat before we went. We were sitting around the table and all these ladies ordered. . . "I'll have a double scotch with water on the side." "A martini, up. . . " And it got to me, who was not much of a drinker, and I said, "I'll have a whiskey sour," a little old ladies drink with the “little old ladies” all order these good, strong “men’s” drinks.

SZ: That was a big thing, lunch time, I think.

RT: Oh, it was. Lunch was very. . .

SZ: Richard. Maybe we should stop. I'm not done yet. If that's okay. [Interruption] We are continuing now. It is after lunch.

RT: Don't forget about George Riabov.

SZ: Oh. What about George?

RT: Yes. He was a Russian with a collection of icons, Russian icons, and religious paintings. He actually did a show at the Gallery of Modern Art [Note: at Columbus Circle], after it changed hands. He did a show there. Alfred Barr was sort of his

mentor, and he recommended him for a job at the Museum. I don't know what that connection was, but because of his attitude toward the public he didn't work out downstairs as a ticket seller or in the bookstore. So, he was made head of the photographic archives, under Pearl, for a short period of time, running it. He finally, fortunately, left, because he knew nothing about running an archive. You should just sort of look up and see if you can find out something about him. That's all. He was a character, yes. Now where were we?

SZ: Well, I wanted to just talk about each department, mention the head of each department and just see if it brings up anything for you. You obviously had to work with these different people different times. If not, that's okay too. So, we'll start with John Szarkowski. You told me the two of you came to work at the Museum the same month, same year?

RT: Same year, same month. Yes. Well, I didn't have too much direct connection with him. And mostly at the department head meetings, I got to hear more about him, because he certainly was an outspoken person at the Museum, who didn't hide his feelings about things. The only thing, my taste in photographers and his taste in photographers were two different things. I was always surprised at the kind of people he championed. But I remember. . . . Who was there before him? Was it still [Edward] Steichen?

SZ: Yes.

RT: It was Steichen. Yes. Well, somehow I remember him more clearly. John and I only had a few conflicts over the years, because he was just a very opinionated man.

SZ: Because you were dealing in his medium.

RT: I was dealing in his medium, in a very different way. I always had to explain to people that I had the photographic archive, which is photographs of works of art, not

photography as a work of art, the Photography department. So, there were entirely two different perspectives on the kind of photography. But it was. But John did listen to you when you had things to discuss and everything. His voice just got very loud. I remember the first time he called me to complain about something. I said, "Well, you don't have to yell at me," and he said, "This is just the way I talk." And it was. It was like Helen Franc. She was just a very difficult kind of person. Once you recognized the fact; that you were not being treated differently from anybody else, it was okay. It was very easy to deal with.

SZ: Well, we could follow John with Painting and Sculpture. Well, when you first came. . .

RT: Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller were there. That was during the small days of the Museum, too. Alfred Barr, as I'm sure everybody has said, was a no-nonsense person. If you asked him how he was that day, he told you how he was that day. He didn't answer questions that weren't relevant or talk to you about things. I always found him really very nice. And, of course, Dorothy Miller was a very, very pleasant person to deal with, very calm and easygoing. Although I've heard other stories, too. But it was my perspective of it that she was really very, very good. As was Sara Mazo. I always liked her very, very much. Because she was the one who arranged for the photography in the painting and sculpture department. I got to know her very well. What about Bill Lieberman?

SZ: Well, yes. Bill Lieberman and Bill Rubin.

RT: Well, Bill Lieberman, of course, was there when I went to work at the Museum. When the Drawing department and the Print department were together, at that time, and he was head of Prints and Drawings. Bill Lieberman was only in Prints and Drawings, and it was after Alfred was retiring that Bill Lieberman wanted to become head of Painting and Sculpture. I only know peripherally about that conflict. I know that Lieberman moved up to the Painting and Sculpture Department for what seemed like an hour and a half; then he was back down in the Prints and Drawing department,

afterwards. But Lieberman was really one of the most enigmatic people to work with at the Museum. He was never direct about anything.

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RT: He would call up to ask you a question about something, but it took forever to find out exactly what he wanted out of you. He was also, I think, one of the most innovative installers of exhibitions of anybody I worked with at the Museum. His installations were the most visually stimulating and informative without being academic. They were always visual things. You could learn from them if you knew nothing about the artist or the time or works at all. He did really a superb job. As did René d'Harnoncourt. Lieberman's installations were almost like an intuitive kind of thing, in contrast to Mr. Rubin's, whose were academic, dry things. Rubin changed his approach to his installations while he was at the Museum. His first shows were visually deadly, like the Late Cézanne [*Cézanne: The Late Work*, MoMA Exh.# 1188,October 7, 1977-Jan 2, 1978]. It was one of the most boring installations I think I'd ever seen at the Museum, of an artist that I love very, very much. But he did not have that visual feeling. His things were all intellectual. They were probably very, very good from a certain point of view. I'm sure they were very good from a certain point of view, but from a visual point of view, they did not tell you anything about what you were seeing. They were hard to see, whereas Lieberman's were really wonderful, really very, very good. But I always had a very good working relationship with Mr. Lieberman.

I'll have to jump forward a little bit. When I became a recognized director of the department and went to department head meetings and would meet with Dick Koch and other people, I guess I'd been doing it for probably about a year and I was at some meeting with Dick Koch, with a lot of people from outside of the Museum. We had a short break and Dick Koch grabbed a hold of me and said, "If you call me Mr.

Koch one more time, in front of these people. . . We're supposed to be peers. My name is Dick." This was my southern thinking, you know; he was my superior. You called him “Mr.” I needed things like that to help me. Anyway, Mr. Lieberman was always exciting to work with because you never knew quite where he was coming from. But after he left the Modern, he continued to invite me to many of the things at the Metropolitan Museum -- openings and things -- because he remembered me and was really very nice about it. Then with his successor at the Museum, Riva Castleman, whom I got along with very, very well, I learned very, very quickly that her bark was much worse than her bite; that all you had to do was say, "Just tell me what the problem is,” then she was very easy to deal with. I have always also felt that she treated her staff, professionally, very, very well. I'm just remembering the kind of people who worked for her and the kind of responsibility she delegated to them, to let them grow in their job, which always seemed to me so wonderful a way to deal with things. However, she did keep the office in a state of tension when she was present. You could walk into the Prints and Drawings department and you knew whether Riva was there that moment. You knew because she kept things on a higher tension level. [Note: In 1960 a Department of Drawings and Prints was established under the direction of William S. Lieberman. In 1969 the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books was formed. Riva Castleman was named Curator in 1972 and Director in 1976. An independent department of Drawings was established in 1971 with Lieberman as Director].

SZ: We skipped over Bill Rubin.

RT: Well, Bill Rubin, I never had too many dealings with. He delegated a lot of things. By that time the department was so large that you didn't deal directly with Painting and Sculpture director anymore.

SZ: Did you just deal with the curator whose show it was or whose inquiry it was?

RT: Yes. And even before that, you see, there was somebody in Painting and Sculpture who dealt with the photography of the objects on it. He was, in today's vernacular, a male chauvinist pig, however. The first time he came down to oversee photography of sculpture with Kate [Keller], who was the chief fine arts photographer, he directed all of his statements to her male assistant and didn't recognize her existence; she had to keep reminding him, all the time. However, all his staff was very loyal, he would say, "jump" and they would say, "how high?" So, it was different. He was an autocratic kind of person, which I didn't deal with. Also, I never got to see any rages.

SZ: Oh, you didn't.

RT: No. I would ask his staff to, "Call me up sometime. I don't believe it happens. It's just rumors." My mother had a very close female friend who would have rages occasionally, and my father never believed my mother. He said, "You're just making that up. Marian is such a nice, sweet person." And he finally got to see one. I never did see Mr. Rubin throw a tantrum. Then Kirk Varnedoe. I thought he was probably very good for the department because of the point of view he brought which was different from Mr. Rubin's.

Arthur Drexler was very easy to deal with, as long as you let him get his way. There again, because that's the way he was, he hired his own photographer for many years -- George Barrows – who did all the photography for the Architecture and Design department. Therefore, for many years I had no direct dealings with him because he did his own thing, as he was wont to do -- fountains in the Architecture and Design galleries. Remember those? Was it the 64 building? Which one was it? Oh, no. It was the Pelli building. There were pools of water in that big room in Architecture and Design, with fountains. They lasted, I think, about a year before they took them all out again. It was not practical. But that was Arthur. I remember doing the Beaux Arts *show [The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, MoMA Exh.# 1110, October 29, 1975-January 4, 1976; C/E 75-76] that he directed. Dick [Oldenburg] pressed relentlessly for curators, or directors of exhibitions, to get the catalogue written and

printed before the show opened so it would be available in the bookstore. Otherwise, the sales were not what they should be. I remember Arthur calling up, outside the department, and saying that he needed twenty-five plates photographed in color immediately, "because we've got to get this book out, Dick is really pressing." He hired Malcolm Varon, the most expensive and best color photographer in New York, who came in on a weekend, so that meant there were staff there and did all these color transparencies for him. And do you remember when that book came out? A year after the exhibition closed. That was Arthur. But since I was fond of architectural things, I was up there looking in their files and their galleries. Who else is there now?

SZ: Film?

RT: The Film department. The guy who was head when I was there was Willard van Dyke. An entirely different world. Of all the curatorial departments, I had the least to do with them because they had their own archive, their own film/still archive. Then Mary Lea [Bandy], whom I knew when she was an editor in the Publications department, and then as head of the staff union before she was elevated to higher things. Mary Lea, I always liked her very much. I'm sure there are different things. It's always surprising to see her being interviewed on TV.

SZ: I don't know whether you want to comment on this, or could -- and this is just an example -- but when Bill Rubin did his Picasso show [*Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, MoMA Exh.# 1290 May 16-September 30, 1980; C/E 1980] and that book came out, I personally happen to remember this, the reproductions, the color was so off. Was that an example of just not. . . . I know it was a different publisher, so I don't know. . . . You would only be, I guess, responsible for doing color on the stuff that belonged to us.

RT: To us, yes. The thing that happens by that point in the publishing world, especially of art catalogues, and especially a show of that magnitude. . . . The color transparencies come from the owner of the object, and, therefore, you have no

control over what you're getting. That one came out on time, but only because you had to drop a lot of steps. When Monroe Wheeler was head of Publications and Françoise Boas was working with him, he did the Bonnard show [*Bonnard and His Environment*, October 7-November 29, 1964; C/E 1964-65], I remember, he got the transparencies from the places and the decisions were made about what was going into the show so early that the color proofs she got, she could travel to Europe and check them against the original works of art and do really fine-tuning to it. Like the Picasso book. . . . There was no chance to do it that way. The Cézanne book. . . . Well, it was awful, too, for many of the same reasons. It was a big show. Also, there was a new head of production, Steven Baron, in the Publications department. It was his first big art book. He came from the publishing world, but not art books. He didn't quite know how to handle it, so the color plates were particularly bad. So Dick Oldenburg and Bill Rubin demanded that Martin Rapp, who was head of Publications then, reprint the book as quickly as possible. I and Monique Beudert from the Painting and Sculpture department went to the printer in Richmond, Virginia for the reprint. We took the first printing, which we had marked with corrections made in the galleries from the original works of art, then we went down for the reprinting of that book, so the second printing was much superior in color than the first printing of it. It is really just endemic to the changing of the times in printing methods; of how much air you had in an exhibition, the reason it turned out so badly. It was really a number of things. The printing was often done at night, so our days were mostly free. So, one day the printer's salesman took us down to a private men's club for lunch. We could only enter through a side door because Monique (a female) was with us. Ah, the old South. But Bill Rubin, as curator, was very interested in color and the quality of things, so I'm sure he was very distressed with the Picasso book, as he was with the Cézanne, which we then corrected. I was trying to think of somebody else, another curator. What other department is there, now? You've got exhibitions, you see, which is not a curatorial department. But there are other curatorial departments.

SZ: Oh. And education. Those are all support.

RT: That's really all the curatorial departments. That's all there are. I ran into J. Stewart Johnson, formerly design curator in Architecture and Design, the night before last, in a theatre lobby.

SZ: In the city?

RT: Yes. We'd gone into see a play, the three trials of Oscar Wilde. I can't think of the title.

SZ: Gross Indecency.

RT: Did you see it?

SZ: Yes,

RT: Well, it was a very good play. I was surprised. I didn't think it would be that good. The other one that's on now, on Wilde, is not good. The Judas Kiss, or something like that. Actually, movies are my thing more than stage stuff. That was something else that I used to take advantage of at the Museum, seeing movies in the afternoon. Pearl would give me permission. If there was some old movie I had never seen before, she would let me make up the time and go see a movie there. You can't do those sort of things any more.

SZ: Another thing I have not asked you about is the '84 expansion. We were talking a little bit before about the architecture and what happened to the building. But I think it was a hard time for everybody.

RT: Oh, sure. That was the first time people were actually housed outside the Museum during a construction, and when you were not working in the main building, along with everybody, you really felt like the stepchild of the Museum. I'll give you one example of something that happened. Inadvertently, these sort of things happen. There was

some big event at the Museum and there was a lot of food left over. It was announced to everybody who was in the Museum that in the staff lounge, you could go in at lunchtime and you could just have lunch there because there was so much food. Well, we were five doors down from the Museum. Nobody told us anything about it. They forgot about sending somebody over with a message or telephoning us. I called up Ethel [Shein], who was completely devastated by this lack of communication to us, and sent us over some catered platters of food the next day, to make up for it. It's just what happens when the Museum is spread out that far. It's one of the reasons I remember Dick not wanting to have a satellite Museum, preferring to keep everything at least in connection with each other, rather than spreading it all over the city. The most luxurious space my office ever had. . . . At lunch I was starting to talk about it. It was when we were housed in the mansion, attached to the Museum. We had the ballroom. Rights and Reproductions was in the ballroom, and Dick Jansen was the architect to make a work space for us there. The ballroom had two huge, marble fireplaces on either end, oak paneling, carved oak paneling with musical instruments and everything, and eighteen-foot mirrors in between the French doors. So Jansen had to deal with office furniture, file cabinets and everything, and he came up with a wonderful solution. They built these birch plywood enclosures for the file cabinets and put them all in the center of the room, facing toward each other, so that the files didn't reflect in any of these glass panels, so you just saw files forever only the wooden covering. Then our desks were in the corners, so we were in like big, open spaces. That space had been used by the Finance department of the Museum before we moved in, and there were these hanging fluorescent tubes, the regular egg-crate things. He wanted to get rid of those and put indirect lighting on the tops of the filing cabinets, which would then light up the ceiling of the room. But it was a cost factor that he couldn't follow through with. But anyway, he made our working in that space less like an office feeling, and it really was a wonderful space to work in. It was the most square footage we've ever had at the Museum, to work under. The archives, the photographic archives, were back behind, in a smaller sort of a salon, behind that big ballroom. Unbelievably luxurious office conditions at the Museum. It was very pleasant working there. And then, like you said, even though we were in and out,

there was that direct connection, that we didn't have to go out on the street, so you still felt as though you were working in the Museum. In '84 we were in that next building, the very far one that's just now used for storage, next to where the [American] Craft Museum. . .

SZ: That's the 39 Building, I think.

RT: That's the 39, yes. We were in that. That was the one we went to, and that was completely disconnected. They were very unpleasant working conditions over there. It was dirty, and you really felt as though you had been forgotten, although the Museum tried as much as they could to not. . . . But it's just a problem, when everybody doesn't work in the same unit, that's all. I think the new building looks like it's going to work out.

SZ: The new new building.

RT: The new new building, yes. The opening party for. . .

SZ: . . .the “old new building”.

RT: . . .the old new building was very grand. That was really quite an exciting time. The openings at the Museum have always been, or used to always be very, very nice. I don't go much anymore, although we did go last year. I can't remember what that was for. Oh. It was for the Picasso portraits show [*Picasso and Portraiture: Representations and Transformations*, MoMA Exh. #1743, April 28–September 17, 1996]. We did go in. I'd like to get in for the Bonnard [*Bonnard*, MoMA Exh. #1808, June 17(21) - October 13, 1998] but I doubt it. And I'm sorry I missed the Leger [*Fernand Leger*, MoMA Exh. 1795, February 11(15) - June 2, 1998].

SZ: So Richard, what you were saying before: After the expansion of the Museum, was it just too big?

RT: Not that it was too big. It suddenly became very big, very big, staff came and went and you hardly ever got to know a face with a name anymore. It's just the nature of what happens when an institution gets large like that.

SZ: And then one of the other things, which you alluded to before, was that a year or two after that, this new sort of management structure was laid down, with a lot of deputy directors. How did that affect you?

RT: Well, it didn't affect my department again, like I say, because we're outside of that. My dealings with Dick Oldenburg were still direct. There were no intermediaries between us, as it were. We've always functioned in a slightly different way. It helped a great deal that we made money for the Museum, at least covered our own salaries and expenses. In any structure, if you do that, nobody is going to say too much about you. If we netted $5,000 a year, fine. If we lost $5,000, well that's nothing, either. As Beverly said, that department is essentially an educational service; it's not a bookstore, it's not. . . According to our charter, we should not be making any money through the Rights and Reproductions. Because it's a service. It's an educational service for books -- art books, history books, whatever. It's part of what the Museum is there for; to disseminate knowledge about the collection.

I want to go all the way back to something I just remembered, that is very, very important. Alfred Barr had many innovative ideas, revolutionary and really important ones. But I mentioned about his calling up and you knew something was amiss when he was on the phone directly. Most of the time it dealt with credits for photographs of works in the collection. A reproduction is an educational tool, and without complete documentation -- artist's name, title of the work, medium, size and collection -- it's an incomplete tool to work with, and he was adamant about all of that information going along. Because the reproduction either reminds you of a work that you've seen, or stimulates you to go see it, and unless it says, "Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York," "Collection, the Guggenheim," you don't know where it is. And it

wasn't until about three or four years before I left the Museum that that began to erode seriously. His hold on that being an important thing was waning, and I finally had to give in and just forget it. It's just like bleeding a reproduction off a page. He said, "You can't do that." He wrote a letter to a magazine once that had bled a photograph of a painting off three sides of the top, cropping off pieces of it, telling them that you wouldn't dare print a sonnet and leave off the last line, whereas, you would reproduce a work of art and chop off three sides of it. That was his attitude toward them, and that's what I learned and what I thought was the important part of a reproduction and what it was there for.

SZ: Well, what you just said is that these things really started to erode the last two years you were there?

RT: Yes.

SZ: Because?

RT: Because Bill Rubin didn't care, because Riva didn't care and other curators were uninterested. They didn't think it was important anymore. The images, to them, became images to manipulate and used to make a book sell. The point of view was just very, very different. Probably it's not quite as important anymore, in today's terms, but. . .

SZ: You're still sorry?

RT: Still, the important thing a Museum can do is to educate people about looking at art. One of Alfred Barr's other things was that he really didn't like novels using paintings on their covers, or record covers. He told us to tell these people, "There are many active artists, in New York especially. If you want a book cover, commission somebody to do it. Don't live off the fame of somebody else and turn it into a merchandising tool." Also, in the very early days, there were very few color

reproductions of works in the collection available for sale; a very small number, and the main reason was because Alfred Barr wanted to encourage people to buy works of art by young, living artists and not a reproduction of an old master. He and Dorothy Miller both were interested in promoting artists and their works, not just a museum. The structure the department worked on. . . This is really very important. I guess it began with women artists, and the picketing of the Museum for "not doing this," or "not enough black artists" or not enough that. . . I remember the first time I went out there, they were passing out leaflets and they were saying the Museum of Modern Art should do thus and so. I looked at some of these things and said, "But this is what the Museum does. Didn't anybody bother to find out?" Whenever my department gave permission for a work of art to be used in any way other than in its art historical context, i.e.: in a book, in connection with the text, there was no reproduction fee. But if the reproduction was for a chapter opener, book cover, record cover, etc., then we collected a reproduction fee for that. If the artist was living and somebody wanted to do a book cover, the Museum wrote to the artist and got his permission to use his work as a book cover, before we would give permission. When we collected a fee, 50% of it was paid directly to the artist. We were never allowed to go through a gallery or a dealer or a representative. The letters went directly to the artist.

My most memorable response from an artist was from Man Ray. Somebody wanted to use one of his photographs on a book cover. So, I wrote to him and he wrote back and said, "I'll be glad to give permission for you to use my photograph on this book, but please send the money quickly because I'm very old and I may die soon." Although this policy was very fair to artists, it could be frustrating. There was a publisher who wanted to use an artist's work on a cover and we couldn't find the artist’s address. He was originally from Washington, D.C. I wrote all around. The publisher finally had to give up. My letter was still out there and finally it reached him. This was an artist who was in a state of decline in popularity, and he was very upset that his work didn't appear on this record jacket, because it would have given him a little boost. It wasn't just the money involved. It was a Beatles record, too, a reissue of a Beatles record. So, some artists are very pleased about having their works used

that way; other artists say no all the time. A painting is a painting and a sculpture is a sculpture, and dust jackets and record covers are not important. But the fact that the Museum, if the artist was living, never gave permission for these things without the artist authorization, is something that is I think really very unusual for an institution to do. Of course, with recent works of art, that's a moot point. Because with the new copyright law of '76, the artist has the copyright to their work of art and nobody can use it without their permission, no matter who owns it, unless he sells the copyright. You know that the Museum, when they acquire a work of art by a living artist, gets a partial copyright from them so we can reproduce the works without having to go back to the artists' authorization to reproduce their works in catalogues and things like that. The copyright law that was in effect up to the mid-'70s was never formulated to cover works of art. It came into being during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, so it had to be kind of scrunched around to cover it, and an artist could lose the rights to his work with no trouble whatsoever. Exhibiting in a public place was tantamount to publishing, under the old copyright law. That's how Robert Indiana lost the right to "Love." Wendy [Weitman] called me up about that the other day. She thought I knew what happened to the painting, to the "Love" painting. Because I had done some research for somebody, for Miriam Cedarbaum, at one time. But that painting was commissioned by the Junior Council as a note card. The "Love" painting? And usually the Museum would acquire that work, which went into the collection. This time Robert Indiana kept it, then he sold it to somebody and never copyrighted it. The only thing the Museum copyrighted was the note card. So, we had a copyright on the note card, but the painting itself was suddenly in the public domain.

SZ: But that can't happen now.

RT: Not now, no. No, the artist owns the rights. It's like a manuscript. The author-creator owns the right to it.

RT: And assigned it. Like in literature, you can get partial assignments out. Under the old copyright law, if you sold the copyright you had to sell it entirely. But now you can

give limited rights without losing control of the whole thing. It made it much easier for artists, but it's much more difficult for our department now to deal with things, because some artists have agents who do all these things. The artists don't even get involved with it themselves. They delegate the decisions. But it's very good for artists. Especially your lesser known artists who might become known. It's really a very good thing. What the Museum does now, with our works that are in public domain -- like the Cézannes and the Picassos and things -- we copyright the photographs and not the art work. In other words, you can copyright your photograph, as a unique. . .

SZ: It's a photographer's work of art?

RT: It's a photographer's work of art. So, when I left the Museum, we were saying "Photograph: Copyright, The Museum of Modern Art." Not just the image copyrighted by the Museum. So, it was just another aspect of the department. We were continuously consulting with, first, Miriam Cedarbaum and Dick Koch, and then Beverly Wolff, with these sort of problems.

SZ: Have we left out any other aspects of the work in the department?

RT: I don't know. Well, the archive, the photo archive, is something we haven't talked about, the research material that's there. As you mentioned when I was talking about the works of art also, those installation photographs are really quite valuable. For anybody curating new shows, coming back to see how, or just to find out. . . . Sometimes when sculptures get damaged or you don't have everything covered, you can often find that particular view that you're looking for. The Conservation department was using us, of all the departments in the Museum, using us continuously to go back and look and see what something looked like in August 1952 or whatever. There was always an archivist who kept the photographs and recorded everything. I didn't have much to do with them. But when they were on vacation or something, then I usually took over that section.

I happened to make an appointment for Dominique de Menil to do some research on our Rothko exhibition [*Mark Rothko*, MoMA Exh.# 679, January 18-March 12, 1961], and not surprisingly, so when she came in I took her into the archive and set out the albums for her. I had a terrible time paying attention to what she was saying because she had this diamond ring on -- it was like ball of glass with mirrors on it. It was just sparkly. Every time she moved her hand, the room just went sparkling all over the place. In fact, her being there and talking to her, even though she said nothing about Schlumberger, it was the reason I have Schlumberger stock now. It's a kind of quirk on it. When I read about them and read about their life, I thought, "That sounds like a unique company that's always going to be good," so I bought some stock from them.

SZ: So, the archive and the. . .

RT: Well, the photo lab and the rights section of it.

SZ: The photo lab.

RT: Rolf Petersen, then Jim Mathews, and then Kate Keller.

SZ: So, Richard, why did you decide to retire when you did? You were not as old as you had to be.

RT: Well, for personal reasons, as they say. Well, really, it is true. Because my partner had been retired for four years, and at fifty-nine the amount of money I would get would be reasonable. Retiring earlier than that, being that young, it cuts down on how much you get. So it came to a point where it was practical for me to retire. And as I said, I had become exclusively an administrator those last several years and it wasn't as joyous an experience as it had been. We had also gotten tired of New York. That was the period when New York was at its dirtiest and most unpleasant -- panhandlers everywhere. I walked to work every morning, from 123rd Street to 53rd Street -- six miles -- and those last two years walking the streets of New York was abominable.

When I first started walking many years ago it was dirty on Monday morning, after Sunday, and things had not quite been cleaned up; by Tuesday it was clean. By the time I retired the streets were dirty all week along and not just with papers but with food and stuff. Panhandlers were every other block. So, it was a combination of things. Then when I decided to retire. . . . I actually made the decision a year before I actually retired, so it gave me a nice, long period to talk with Dick and to talk with Janice [Magid Davidson], the Personnel director, about what should happen to the department. Should it be reorganized, should we do this? So, we did some reorganizing with the department. I delegated some. . .

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: You delegated some. . .

RT: What happened was. . . . Every department works in a certain way, depending on the interest and skills of the head. Every curatorial department, when a new director comes in, changes in some sort of substantive way, because that person is more of an administrator, more of a curator, more of a scholar or something like that. So, I came through the Museum from the Library to Publications to Rights and Reproductions, so I had a certain bent and interest that I preferred to do. So, I did a lot of those kinds of things that, when I decided to recommend Mikki Carpenter for my job, she knew nothing about.

SZ: Give me an example.

RT: Like in the Rights and Reproductions section. She knew very little about permissions and everything.

SZ: But that was really something. . .

RT: That I did. I knew less about the archives, although I always tried to learn as much about the photo lab. . . I knew, because I had studied photography, I had photographed works of art and developed and everything, so I really had some insights. Mikki's husband is a photographer and in fine arts so she knew about that, but she did not know as much about the permissions section of it. So, in discussing this with Dick we changed some of the responsibilities I had directly into the permissions officer's job -- Tom Grischowsky -- so, therefore, we also raised his salary level by adding some things to his job.

SZ: Did you change his title, too?

RT: No, they didn't, but the job description changed. He wanted my position also, but I didn't think he was the right person for the job -- is that being discreet? -- and Dick Oldenburg would not have approved it if I had, because he knew the staff very well, too, and Mikki was the logical choice for it. She got a really substantial job plus the responsibility and the grandeur of being department head. I was at least able to give Tom some sort of recognition for his time and skills and knowledge about working with it. So, I think it worked out as well as one could expect of it. Because it's always difficult when the head of a department leaves and somebody comes in, or somebody is elevated into it. Sometimes it's worked out very well, and sometimes it's been a disaster. Most of the time when it's a disaster, it's because of the administration's inability to move. . . . I remember poor Inga Forslund, who took over after Bernard Karpel. It was really nice to make her head librarian, but she was really unhappy all that time, with all that responsibility and administrative stuff. It was really hard on her.

SZ: So, it was thirty years.

RT: Thirty years, yes. Very good.

SZ: Thirty years well spent?

RT: Oh, absolutely. Yes. Really, it's a great trip to see and visit. As I was telling you about the changes in the Museum now, I know that a lot of people may be unhappy about it, but unless it changes, it's moribund and becomes less than what it can be.

SZ: It's a generational thing, I think, as people sort of move up and out. They have a certain vested feeling that whatever has come after. . .

RT: . . .can't be as good.

SZ: . . . is not as good. It's just the way it is. Thanks, Richard. I can't think of anything else. Can you?

RT: No. If I can, I will tell you.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

END INTERVIEW