DAVID HOFFMAN MOMA HISTORY INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW WITH:	**RICHARD KOCH (RK)**
INTERVIEWERS:	**RUTH CUMMIMGS (RC); CARL COLBY (CC); HARVEY ARDMAN (HA)**
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RK: The late 1930s fascinated me very much. And I wrote a senior thesis.

RC: Which film was that?

RK: No, I mean the medium.

RC: Oh, the medium of film.

CC: What was your thesis?

RK: "The Art of the Motion Picture;" I technically analyzed it as an artistic medium. And I did most of my research in the Library of the Museum.

HA: I see.

RK: It had just opened; this was in 1939, 1940. So I became one of its first real users in its new building. Then I was engaged interestingly for [INAUDIBLE: 0:00:44] in the industrial movie business after I got out of college and during the Navy in the second World War, and for about 10 years after that. And I lived in New York and worked in New York and lived around the corner from the Museum on 54th Street.

CC: Did you meet [Edward] Steichen when you were in the Navy?

RK: Only peripherally. We were in somewhat related areas, but he was mainly out in the field making aircraft carrier movies.

HA: Right.

RK: I was in Anacostia across the river from Washington making training films and indoctrination films, things like that. So, I was in the neighborhood and an avid enthusiast, constantly in the Museum doing that for 10 years. Then I went to law school and went downtown to Wall Street to practice law. And by an interesting coincidence, the firm I was with had been for many years general counsel for the Museum.

CC: Which firm was that?

RK: Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Robertson. And they [the Museum] began having various legal problems, and via the partner who was in charge of the Museum's account, I began working on the problems and renewed my acquaintance, and got to know a lot of the staff, especially René d'Harnoncourt and some of the Trustees. So after the fire in 1958, they thought they might improve legal affairs in administration and maybe save some money on legal bills if they invited me to come up and join the staff, which I did with great relish, figuring it would be much less work, which it wasn't, [laughter] than Wall Street, and a lot more fun, which it was.

HA: So that kind of balances out, I guess.

RK: Balanced out very nicely.

HA: Why was it not less work?

RK: Because there was an awful lot of work to do and I was not only a lawyer but also secretary and connected with administration. And the institution, as you have learned already, no doubt, was very complex.

HA: Yes, indeed.

RK: And I was sort of a jack of all trades, and there was a great deal that needed to be done. A lot of it landed in my lap, and they were understaffed and running budget deficits most of the time.

CC: What was the size of the staff when you came on as legal counsel?

RK: I don't remember.

CC: 50, or a hundred, or—?

RK: I have no idea. Including the guards and everybody else. What is it now?

HA: Four or five hundred, between.

RK: I've really lost track of the numbers. I think—I really can't say [INAUDIBLE: 0:03:58], I think it was about 250.

CC: The film interest, though, you've kept up pretty much.

RK: Oh sure; I'm writing a movie right now.

CC: Really? Terrific.

RK: It's nice to have some leisure in which to do things like that, that you always wanted to do.

HA: I'd say.

RK: And my wife [Joanne Godbout] runs the Film Society at Lincoln Center which is the New York Film Festival, so I'm up to my neck in movie business.

HA: I'd say.

RK: More than I was even at the Museum, which was considerable, as I was much involved in the affairs of the Film Department.

HA: Right. Well, that, I can imagine that there are so many legal things involved with the film rights and everything else.

RK: Yes.

CC: Which we're beginning to find out.

HA: Yes. We're thinking of using some old clips in our film and it's really—it's a rat's nest.

CC: You must have written the original contractual arrangement. They have a very long—we have to print double negatives of things that we're to use. It's very complicated but it preserves the film.

RK: Yes.

HA: You were involved, I believe, in the Javits Bill, the one that had to do with—the bill that—

RK: Oh, “bill;” I thought you said “film.”

HA: No, no, no; bill. The one that set up the IRS rules for donating works of art. Was that one of your babies?

RK: Mmmmm; wait a minute; which one are we talking about? I’ve forgotten which ones were sponsored by [Jacob] Javits.

HA: I don’t know if I’m going to be able to tell you. I’m really operating on—I think Dorothy Miller mentioned this to us the other day, that the object was for someone to be able to donate a work of art, retain possession of it during their lifetime—

RK: Yes.

HA: And still get a tax deduction from it.

RK: I was not involved in that, other than to oppose its repeal, which occurred in 1964, which was a very, very unfortunate event for museums.

HA: I’m sure of that.

RK: Nationwide, especially museums of modern art because it particularly affected the capability of gifts by artists of their own work. We leaned on that even further in 1969, which would have eliminated the value of—

HA: So an artist can’t get anything for giving his own work.

RK: —the value of materials, and not labor, just materials and overhead in the sense of [INAUDIBLE: 0:06:35], probated share of the studio rent.

HA: Wonderful.

RK: Preposterous.

HA: That’s right.

RK: Nevertheless, if he dies, the works are taxed at his estate at their market value.

HA: It’s a catch 22.

RK: It certainly is. Do you know this restaurant?

HA: No, this one is new to me.

RK: Almost everything is [waiter speaks from 0:07:00 to 0:08:34; not transcribed].

HA: So you were at the Museum when there was a frequent changing of the guard, were you not?

RK: Mm-hm; yes, I was indeed.

HA: That must have been a discombobulating period, I would imagine.

RK: Yes, in many ways. D'Harnoncourt, Miller and [Alfred] Barr all retired almost simultaneously in, I think, 1967. And in spite of repeated urging by d'Harnoncourt and by me, the Trustees were very laggard in finding successors or even considering how the staff should be organized for the future. The organization that had been in effect since 1947 was functionally rather distorted, to take account of the presence of Alfred Barr as Director of the Collections. I don't know how much of the history you have studied.

HA: Oh, we know about that.

RK: And how he was fired by Stephen Clark in '43, [but] kept on.

RC: But d'Harnoncourt really brought him back into the center.

RK: Yes, and created the sort of amorphous portfolio of Director of the Collections with Dorothy Miller, which gave him a sort of jurisdiction, really, over all the curatorial departments, in a way. And in his quiet way he assumed a lot more jurisdiction—

HA: I'm certain of that.

RK: —de facto that he had been charged, so it was very interesting.

RC: I'm wondering, how did the staff feel about that? Was that okay by them?

RK: By the time I got there, they had pretty well accepted it as a fait accompli. I was not there until 1959.

RC: But is there some doubt as to whether people really were in there for Barr? I mean, the early people, it seemed like, it was almost a religion and Barr was the priest, and they said no ideas different from his, and they all agreed straight on, and that's the impression we got from talking to—

RK: You mean up to the 1940s.

HA: Yes, that's right.

RC: Right.

RK: I think that was the case. I have it only second hand, as you have. In fact, you've probably discussed it more with those early people than I have. Have you got Eliza Parkinson on your list?

HA: She's on our list. We're going to be talking to—we're going to be calling her very shortly.

RK: Tell me your respective roles.

HA: Well, I'm the writer, if indeed there's going to be much writing. I don't know how much there's going to be because we're going to be using interviews, to a large extent. Carl is the producer and Ruth is also a producer. Those are our roles. The missing party here is the director. He's not here right now. His name is David Hoffman.

RK: How long is the running time?

HA: It's going to be an hour. And currently, the general format that we're thinking of is one that's—well, did you see the movie, *Reds*?

RK: Sure.

HA: Remember the witnesses?

RK: Yes. Very good.

HA: We're going to do a lot of that.

RK: I thought the witnesses was a marvelous idea.

HA: If only he'd identified them. I wonder why he didn't. I still don't know.

RK: No, I think that was a great leap.

HA: It made no sense.

RK: Because to know who they were, made it doubly interesting.

HA: That's right.

RK: I did know some, and was fascinated to see them, and hear them, and the context, and it was ridiculous not to have subtitles identifying them for the benefit of the mature number of the audience who would recognize it.

HA: That's right. So our movie is going to be the witnesses, as much as we can make it so, with a kind of a very sparse narration to tell some of the factual material, so that we don't put too much of a burden on the people who are giving their feelings and their—

RK: I gather the orientation will be historical.

HA: Yes, it's a film about the history of the Museum as opposed to the history of modern art.

RK: Quite rightly [waiter speaks from 0:13:00 to 13:55; not transcribed].

CC: Would you characterize the Film Department under Iris Barry or just the Film Department alone as being probably one of the most extraordinary creations of the Museum?

RK: I certainly would.

CC: And the great legacy, really.

RK: Yes.

CC: Even Lincoln Kirstein couldn't take a pot shot at that.

RK: Really? Nice.

HA: That's right; that's right.

RK: Well, as you have surely heard in abundance by now, since you've talked to people in and around the Film Department, it was totally a pioneering venture. And as I told you, I wrote a thesis on the motion picture medium in 1939, and at that time, there was hardly any literature, there were hardly any courses. There was none at Princeton where I invented my major. And with the exception of southern California, there was almost no way in which the medium could be studied, except at the Library of the Museum and on 42nd Street in the books. But courses just didn't exist. Nobody took movies really seriously as an art form,

and the whole thing was just created, almost, by the Museum, as far as the United States was concerned. In Britain and Canada it had begun to be taken seriously, too. And then the preservation programs, of course, which got underway gradually and haltingly, and did not really get that going full steam until the middle 1960s when I persuaded the Board to appropriate three quarters of a million dollars I think to really get it launched, and then worked on the federal government through the National Endowment to get continuing funding. Had it not been for that, most of the movies we see on television would simply not exist.

CC: Yes, which is an extraordinary thing to say. What about the—? We're planning to, as Harvey was saying, include a lot of interviews in the film and really make the meat of the film in a sense be the interviews and attempt to—at the present, we didn't want to fill the—first of all, we wanted to avoid showing too many of the artworks themselves, because it's not really a history of art and a history of modern art, it's more the Museum as an institution, how it got started. And in the same sense we wanted to probably tell the factual material about the evolution of the Museum, perhaps with a narrator [speaking] very succinctly, very sharply, and then go to various opinions of things, to the faces, and have those faces speak. At the end of the picture we were thinking that we might supplement the film by including tributes or plugs or I don't know how you would say it, but from almost the most unusual sources, and we were thinking in this regard after talking to Mary Lea Bandy, about people like, who's to say? I mean, Clint Eastwood, or Lillian Gish, or someone like that, to really jar the viewing public, in a sense, of the picture, to realizing who the hell is affected by this, and who, in a sense, is involved. Because rather than it being a very small coterie of New York collectors, artists, and art enthusiasts, The Museum of Modern Art in all of its scope includes, obviously, people such as Ansel Adams, European museum goers, European museum officials, Clint Eastwood, Vincent Minelli, Lillian Gish, of course. Are there particular people that you think we might approach who would be more than apt to participate or who have a particular affection for the Museum?

RK: You mean in the film area, or in fact the whole area?

CC: Yes, the film area, or even—

HA: Any area, really.

CC: Even in the broadest possible scope, if you know some spokespeople.

RC: We've been talking to outsiders to the core of the Museum

CC: Robert Hughes, for instance, is somebody we saw on our own and he turned out to be very, very good about the early period. Well, he was good, too, because he's a dyed-in-the-wool modernist and he, coming from Australia, the almost outback, as he puts it—although he's not, he's from Sydney. But he didn't know modern art, nothing, zero, no courses, nothing.

RK: How is he au courant with the early period?

CC: Well, only in terms of being able to describe that what they were doing in the early period was the proselytizing mission.

RK: Oh, I see.

CC: He is someone to speak to that.

RC: He also gave a sense of how important it was for somebody that didn't have a [direct] contact [with the Museum], to have [it] and he really spoke emotionally about it.

CC: A proper base of the influence and how pervasive the influence was and how he, considering himself a hick out of the wherever, got a few catalogues and [INAUDIBLE: 0:18:50].

RK: And the Publications program is something that is not generally appreciated and was, and still is—although now relatively less so—an important part of the outreach in the proselytizing. You're obviously aware of the International Program.

RC: Right.

HA: Yes, we saw Waldo Rasmussen.

CC: Are there any other people you can think of? Lillian Gish, we heard, is very close to the Museum.

RK: Mm-hm. Well, I will have to—let me think about it, make some lists. What is your timetable?

HA: Well, we expect to begin our actual filming sometime in the spring.

CC: I'd say by April we'll probably be shooting. And then, we hope not to—since it's not a location picture where you have to get all sorts of people all set and ready to go, we thought we'd begin and then carry it through April in terms of seeing maybe one or two people a day for a certain amount of days, and then maybe hold off for a week, and start getting the interviews in. Because obviously, we have to build our story that way and—

HA: There'll be a lot of intercutting with these interviews.

CC: Interviews, back and forth, telling the story.

HA: So we'll be adding to the [INAUDIBLE: 0:20:09].

CC: If we feel that we've missed something, for instance, then we can go back and pick up something, let's say, with Philip Johnson a second time. Or, we might, towards the end, feel we've really told the story, we don't need a lot of extra people. Or we might say the very opposite: we've got a lot of holes here; we need to fill this; we need to have someone comment on this and this. And then it becomes very precise and particular, because, just like talking to you for an hour and a half about the Museum, or Dorothy Miller, it's pretty rough. It's like asking you about the United States of America; it's a pretty broad subject.

RK: [Laughing] Exactly. Well, I wondered how you planned to pick on various brains.

HA: Well, what we've been hoping to do—

CC: We've built a chronology of what we feel are the—

HA: The key points.

CC: Key points and impact areas, and not simply Museum events. They figure here and there: the *Machine Art* show, that sort of thing. But I'd say, just in the very beginning, what we want to do is, we have something like 40 or 50 categories, and those will be whittled down, but, it begins with the atmosphere of the time, the late twenties, the idea of when the Harvard Coop and those things were

going on. That's maybe the first bit. What the atmosphere, the mood of New York and the east was like, and there being really no modern art museum, there being few galleries. And the next category would be the three ladies [Abby Aldrich Rockefeller; Mary Quinn Sullivan; Lillie P. Bliss] advise and it sort of proceeds from there. We're mostly down to a whittling process now, saying to ourselves—

RK: Squeezing it into an hour is no small job.

HA: It's not going to be easy. That's true.

CC: Also, some things, I think, are going to fall by the wayside only because they can't be well told.

RK: A lot of it is too complex and conceptual to—

CC: And too inside.

RK: And too inside to lend itself to—to film it in a compressed way.

CC: In other words, who really cares about the fact that [William] Lieberman doesn't like [William] Rubin or something, I mean, that may be a big concern but it's not chapter 12 in the film.

RC: Our job, then, is to find people—the hard part of our job is also to find the best people to really set off some sparks. Because Russell Lynes [with *Good Old Modern*] did a wonderful job of telling each thing as it happened, and of course we're not going to duplicate that, but we need to make it human. It is a human story. I mean, now it's an institution, but there are people very much there who represent the different periods and the controversy and the values. And so we're hoping to find those people that can speak to each other, almost in dialogue, throughout the film, and that may come to about 12 or 15 or eight or, I don't know.

CC: It's a tough job, in a way, because, if you think about it, if we had just yourself, or one person, or an unseen narrator, tell the story of the Museum in an hour with a lot of film clips, it could be insufferably dull. Or it could be—

RK: That would [INAUDIBLE: 0:23:20].

CC: Or [*The*] *March of Time*, just plodding along, one point to the next. If you had two or three people speaking about it—

RK: There are some spectacular visuals available. I wouldn't worry about it being dull in such a format. But go ahead.

CC: Well, we're just concerned about making a story having—rather than simply being a celebration of what's there, what the Museum did create, that it, in a sense, continually sets off little sparks of interest as you go along, and even address the questions that perhaps even the Museum hides or doesn't want addressed, or that are tough questions like: How can you continue to be experimental or avant-garde or serve the avant-garde, if there is indeed one, and still be a museum? How do you, in a sense, operate as an institution?

RK: I think that's a false problem.

CC: Yes, that's kind of a false [problem].

HA: In what way is that a false problem?

RK: It can perfectly well be a museum in the sense of a collection of masterworks and less-than-masterworks, and still function with contemporary exhibitions, as the Museum has certainly demonstrated.

HA: Right.

RK: With the avant-garde as no problem, no contradiction, it seems to me.

HA: Mm-hm; I understand what you mean.

RK: And that has always been, from the very beginning, a basic concept of the Museum. I think it works perfectly well, and I think they prove it.

RC: So you see that it set a course that it's basically stayed on that course, even though there's been internal shifts and growth, and that's fine. You don't have any problem with that.

RK: None at all.

RC: Of course, there are different camps, and people say that it should be more this or should be more that. But you're in the camp that—

RK: Mm-hm. Well, from time to time, it generally does all of those things, actually. I don't know offhand now of anything that it should have been doing—whether I thought so or not, whether anybody thought so—that it didn't occasionally do.

CC: We also felt that—

RK: Have you come across anything; any demand that was unsatisfied for very long?

HA: We've come across people who dislike an emphasis, perhaps.

RK: Oh sure.

HA: Or who think that it's waited too long to do one thing or another.

RK: An emphasis on something else, yes.

HA: Or they think that it dwelled on one thing or another for too long. But those are the disagreements you would expect, as long as people are different.

RK: Well, Barr didn't like Abstract Expressionism.

HA: Right.

RK: And a consequence was [that] the Museum dropped the ball during the fifties to a considerable extent in collecting at a time when the collecting was easy and cheap.

HA: Right.

RK: And wound up—the Museum wound up remedying that at very high costs in later years.

HA: What artists are you talking about?

RK: [Jackson] Pollock, for example. I forget now. We bought—

RC: And who was it that brought you back to that realization?

RK: That was Rubin.

RC: Oh, Rubin; aha. So there was a—?

RK: To a considerable degree, although Rubin's specialty was much more in the earlier period.

RC: Surrealism?

RK: Surrealism, among others. [INAUDIBLE: 0:27:17] [Pablo] Picasso and—

RC: So was Rubin making noises about this while Barr was still on? I mean, how did that happen?

RK: Mm-hm.

RC: Were there other voices raised against Barr's about this but nobody transcended his authority? I'm curious about how these changes—the dynamics of these changes.

RK: Rubin really did not come on board until Barr had retired.

HA: I see. So he came in and he could be a fresh voice and a kind of corrective, if you will.

RK: Yes, and he will tell you that. [Laughter] At great length.

HA: Uh-huh, well, that's alright.

RK: And with tremendous enthusiasm.

HA: Uh-huh, that's okay.

RK: Have you met him yet?

HA: Not yet.

RK: Well, you're in for an experience.

RC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:28:11] tradition, he saved the ship, right? The sinking ship.

HA: Is that his view of it, that he—?

RK: I suspect so.

HA: [Laughing] I see.

CC: In your own pantheon—

RK: And Dorothy Miller will give you the contrary side of that.

HA: The opposite. Yes, that's right.

RK: Barr also did not like Pop art.

HA: Right.

RK: Except later. He didn't like it at first. Later on he began to.

RC: He liked [Jasper] Johns, though, but Johns wasn't quite Pop.

RK: Johns is not exactly the Pop. And he liked Andy Warhol, oddly enough, sometimes. Sorry, we're going in too many directions at once.

HA: That's typical of these interviews, I must tell you. There are so many things to say and there's so much going on.

CC: You mentioned before the collections and how superb the collection obviously is, and that we shouldn't trouble ourselves about visual material. The only problem with that is that we want to—it's as if you have a little prize, and you only pull it out once in a while. So we felt that if we inundate the screen with pictures of the masterpieces, we really should only do that—you'd have to do that and have an attendant critical opinion of it running alongside. Someone would have to say perhaps something about it. We felt—

RK: I don't think so.

CC: Well, it's tough just to put that on film, though, and have it sort of speak for itself. We wanted to zero in, let's say, on specific stories such as—

RK: Well, you're making this film, not I, although as Luisa [Kreisberg] may have told you—

HA: We're open to suggestions; believe me.

RK: I was the earliest advocate, virtually, of such a film being made.

CC: Let's hear your scenario.

RK: I've bothered [Richard] Oldenburg for many years to—for chrissake, let's make a movie about the Museum, for a variety of purposes.

HA: In a lot of ways, it's a shame that it's being made as late as it is, and I think—

RK: Oh, it's long overdue.

HA: Not only is it long overdue—

RC: A lot of the main characters aren't here anymore.

HA: Some of the greatest players are dead, unfortunately. If it had been made in 1965, then it would have been—

RK: Yes, then you would have had d'Harnoncourt.

HA: D'Harnoncourt and Barr. It would have been wonderful. It's too bad that it wasn't done.

RK: Yes, it would make a great change. No, if I were doing it, and I'm not, I would not hesitate to just impressionistically slam a series of the masterworks on the screen one after another without any narrative or comment at all with the music, because they are all, after all, pretty much familiar to your audience. And all you're doing is reminding them that this is where they are and that this is the institution that gathered them.

CC: I think that as punctuation, that's what we're doing.

RK: And you can count on a recognition factor of a very high level.

HA: That's true.

CC: I think we were planning on using it as a, like you say, [to] do that sort of thing as punctuation, particularly to illuminate, let's say, if someone talks about Picasso or whatever and if it's a particular acquisition or how they [INAUDIBLE: 0:31:50] or whatever, and then show something. And also there are terrific stories attached to some of the pictures.

RK: There certainly are.

CC: Give the story, and then you show that, and it's probably one of the most commonly seen paintings in the United States.

RK: *White on White* being smuggled by Barr out of Germany wrapped in his umbrella.

RC: Oh that's really a miracle, oh my.

HA: Out of what?

RK: Out of Germany.

RC: This; [Kazimir] Malevich's painting. That we didn't know.

HA: He smuggled it out? How did he do that?

RK: He wrapped it around his umbrella, as I remember. I think it's in one of the books.

HA: I don't recall that particular story.

RK: The whole Malevich situation remains to this day an interesting mystery. I'm not sure this goes into the movie, but... [laughter]

HA: That's alright.

RC: Still haven't legally figured out the...

RK: No. We researched it several times, I think. Oh, I know, some European institution wanted to borrow it for an exhibition. And we were a little bit afraid—in fact, I think we declined to lend it finally—that some self-styled owner might turn up in Europe and seek to attach it. As you know, the Museum's title is not exactly as clear as it might be. [Laughter]

HA: You mean, there are no documents to support it. [Laughter]

RK: No. As I said, this is not—it's off the record. But.

HA: No, I understand that. How did Barr get a hold of it?

RK: That is one of the things—

HA: I see.

RK: He bought it for about a hundred dollars from somebody in Munich—

RC: From a fence?

HA: Who may or may not have owned it?

RK: —whose title was itself not very...

HA: I see. [Laughter]

RK: Not a fence, exactly, because nobody suggested that it had been stolen.

RC: So Barr knew of the work, then; he was going on a mission to get that work.

RK: No, he had been over there anyway, and I think it was brought to his attention.

CC: The Soviet Union?

RC: Yes, that's right.

CC: Was there anyone who went to the Soviet Union with him who is [INAUDIBLE: 0:34:15] around now?

RK: I think Bill Burden went with him.

HA: Bill Rubin?

RK: Burden.

HA: Burden, oh.

RK: William A. M. Burden.

HA: Yes.

RK: One of the early trustees who was still around [INAUDIBLE: 0:34:25].

HA: I understand he's very ill, yes.

RK: I don't know whether he was—I haven't seen him for a couple of years—whether he would be an appropriate person to interview, but it might be worth scouting it out and one of you at least go talking with him and not overwhelm him.

HA: Yes.

RK: And then make a judgment as to whether or not it would be [INAUDIBLE: 0:34:50].

CC: The mandate of the Museum in terms of the Trustees' views of the Museum, is it very, very different than what it was 15, 20 years ago? Or is it very much in keeping with its older tradition of—?

RK: Well, I can't speak for the present board, but as of three years ago when I retired it was very much on the same track. Every so often, people would say, really we ought to—is this what we—the building; shouldn't we be doing other things, and so forth. And then committees would be formed of trustees and curatorial staff and the like, and they would ponderously sit around for a while, and come back

and say: well, we can't really think of anything that we ought to be doing that we're not doing already.

CC: We're going to see a couple of the characters on the [INAUDIBLE: 0:35:50].

RK: [Who] particularly came up in 1966, '67, and so forth, [when] everybody was screaming about the establishment and they had the Art Workers Coalition picketing.

HA: Right.

RK: But we were already doing most of the things they said we should be doing, but hadn't had the sense to realize it. [HA laughs]

CC: We're going to be seeing Donald Marron on Friday.

RK: Yes.

CC: Would you tell us a little bit about him?

RC: He's been variously described; that's how we'll put it. But...

RK: He is not one of the most admired people in my roster.

RC: Oh; oh. That's consistent with [INAUDIBLE: 0:36:36].

HA: Any words of why not?

RK: Oh, quite a few, but I don't think it's relevant here.

HA: From what we gather though, he is one of the coming powers of the Museum, at least as far as the Trustees are concerned.

RK: I think he thinks so. I'm not sure whether the Board in general agrees with him.

HA: Uh-huh.

CC: What does he do? Is he a financier?

RK: Oh yes, he's now the chairman of Paine Webber; very much Wall Street. He has had a whiz-kid career. He is I guess only in his mid-forties. Well, Luisa can give you his bio.

HA: Right.

RK: But he is now very well established in Wall Street, as is Paine Webber.

HA: Well, we obviously would like to interview William Paley, and David Rockefeller is also on our list.

RK: By all means.

HA: And we have been told that Beth Straus is another one we should talk to.

RC: Beth Straus and Joanne Stern.

HA: Joanne Stern is yet another.

RK: In relation to the International Program.

HA: Right.

RK: Yes. Both of them. And Eliza Parkinson.

HA: Yes, she's very high on our list, of course.

RK: She has been a trustee, and her aunt before was one of the founders, as you know.

HA: Yes, of course.

RK: Her son, John Parkinson, who is I think still a trustee himself, chairman of the Finance Committee, is an extremely nice, bright, amiable guy. I don't know that you would find him colorful, but you'll find him very solid and sound, and I think it would be worth your while talking with him.

HA: Is there anyone else among the Trustees who you think that it would be good for us to speak to?

RK: Have you got the list with you, perchance?

HA: No.

RK: Well, let me think about that and let you know. You've probably got most of them.

CC: We have that master list that you—

HA: Yes, but the reason I ask the question is because he knows these people personally in a way that we can't possibly.

CC: You don't have the annual report with you?

HA: Not with me.

CC: In your opinion, if there were particular people, since we're seeing obviously Marron, and we've already mentioned a couple of the other trustees, there might be people that you'd pinpoint as someone who might be able to speak on the future of the Museum, as antidote or as a differing opinion to Marron or whoever. There just might be people that you could point a finger at and, if you didn't do that, then it's very hard for us to suppose.

RC: Yes, for a different point of view.

HA: They're just names on a list otherwise. For example, is there on the Trustees, opposite members of Donald Marron, who has an opposite view, another man who is a kind of power center or—?

RK: I don't know what the current lines of force are.

RC: But there usually are—

RK: I've really been out of touch with it.

CC: We're really not trying to set up personality clashes because that's wasteful, and it's rude.

RC: It's a waste of thinking.

RK: I understand.

CC: We really—if it's expressed in ideas, just like if Rubin speaks his mind, as I hope he would.

RK: He certainly will.

CC: Well then, let's say, someone like Bill Lieberman who we're seeing next week, speaks his mind, then someone else says something else; terrific. If it's really a clash of what to do with the collection, to preserve what you have and build on that; other people who want to forge ahead in a new direction, or fill in gaps.

RK: Of course there's the constant argument [that] maybe we should unload some of the older works and so forth.

CC: Especially in the days of the crimped finances. Would you say that when you first came to the Museum in the early forties or—?

RK: No; late fifties.

HA: Late fifties; '59.

CC: Late fifties; I'm sorry. No, but when you would visit—we're trying to find a period of time that, not only did the Museum become institutional at a certain time, but when was it that you became very much dependent on government NEA funds and government relations and all, as opposed to simple trustee benevolence?

RK: With the inception of the NEA, really, and the New York State Council on the Arts, which actually was the forerunner of the NEA and was organized by Nelson Rockefeller when he was governor, at a funding level that was in about 1963 perhaps—I'm a little vague on the dates—of maybe two million dollars at the outset, which occasioned rather a row in the legislature because they regarded it quite correctly as Nelson's personal baby. But Nelson knew the legislature pretty well at the control, so, it was enacted. And it was organized and this was the first state council on the arts anywhere in the United States. A few years later, the funding level jumped markedly from about two million dollars to about 18 million dollars.

HA: Still under Nelson's guidance?

RK: I think Nelson was still there, but it was shortly before he left. And then there was another big jump to about a 32-million-dollar level a few years later.

CC: That's pretty extraordinary for a state.

RK: Yes. And it's still by far, I believe, the best funded of all the state councils. Every state now has one.

HA: How much of that was going to the Museum?

RK: Well, when the funding level reached the 30-million-dollar area, between 30 and 35 year to year, the Museum was getting about $600,000 for general support

plus another maybe $125,000 or thereabouts for the Film Department, which was under a separate department of the state council.

HA: I see.

RK: So overall, it was about three-quarters of a million dollars, and I believe it's probably still at about that level. The NEA, from the time that it was organized, and in both cases, the Museum was a heavy lobbyist, obviously—

HA: I'm certain; yes.

RK: —for the establishment, and thereafter for the continuing funding of these agencies. The NEA was not, and I think is still not, set up to simply provide general support, but rather support for particular programs and projects. So that the funding that we would get from the NEA would vary from year to year, depending on what exhibitions, publications, and other things were scheduled. I really can't remember the magnitude of the numbers, but some years were very, very high indeed. Then we got the National Council for the Arts and Humanities; the umbrella organization for those endowments, authorized by Congress to indemnify museums for insurance liability, which I'm sure you know about that.

HA: I see; yes.

RK: Which, at no cost to the government, saved major museums such as the Met and the Modern and the National from bringing in 100-million-dollar exhibitions, virtually all of the cost of insurance [INAUDIBLE: 0:45:29] the government instead would underwrite any loss that might.

HA: So there was no cost to the government so long as there was no loss.

RK: As far as I know there has yet to be a loss, so it's a program that works really marvelously.

HA: I'll say.

RK: To the slight chagrin of some of the insurance underwriters—

HA: Uh-huh.

RK: —whom we however made quiet by telling them that they could not get this indemnity from the government because there wouldn't be the exhibition anyway.

HA: I see; so they weren't really losing anything.

RK: So they weren't really losing anything either.

HA: Well, that was a very clever idea.

RK: Yes.

HA: Who came up with that idea?

RK: Dan [Daniel] Herrick of the Met and I. And we lobbied that [Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act of 1975] through Congress.

HA: Who were the congressional representatives who helped?

RK: Javits was one, and I can't remember now. All of the—[Claiborne] Pell, [INAUDIBLE: 0:46:38]. Sorry.

HA: So you were constantly looking for ways to reduce the overhead—the costs of the Museum, without reducing the activities.

RK: Oh, sure. Nobody ever wanted to reduce the activities.

HA: No; I understand. So you found ways, and this to me is a very clever idea.

RK: Ways of adding to the funding; sure. And ways in which to beef up the earned revenue by amplifying the membership program and persuading a diffident Oldenburg that we really should raise the admission price. Nobody would mind if it was more than $1.75. Everything else was going up and up and up. Sure enough, [INAUDIBLE: 0:47:22] did.

RC: Do you think that the Museum is on its own track now, or does it respond to the leadership of Oldenburg and the Board of Trustees? Are they as strong in directing as, let's say, the original group or past groups? And I don't mean this so much as value judgment. If the Museum has kind of [INAUDIBLE: 0:47:42], solidified in its [INAUDIBLE: 0:47:46] these people who are attendant but not giving big directions [INAUDIBLE: 0:47:51]?

RK: Well, I think this is variable from—depending on the enterprise of the curatorial staff, primarily. I think it's they that have to generate the program ideas. And to me, it still seems, if you're saying, has it become a caretaker administration, I

would say not. I think they're still generally quite enterprising. Somebody who is more familiar with the art scene could give you a better judgment there.

CC: Would it be unfair, for instance, to characterize the Museum as being overly concerned with the commercial, overly connected to corporations? Or is that just the facts of life now? For instance, Mary Lea Bandy outwardly saying she's glad of her associations with Universal and with corporations, Warner's, et cetera, that they have this close communion and relationship, and really if they didn't have that they couldn't exist, and just being very frank about it.

RK: Well, it's indispensable.

CC: But have they now taken the place of the early trustees?

RK: Warner's and Universal and so forth stand instead, in the shoes, of the other departments.

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:49:37].

RK: No, no; no. Of the artists. If you're going to get films, you had better be friendly with Warner's and Universal and UA and MGM.

CC: What about in terms of funding film, I mean, that's really a fact of livelihood.

RK: You don't get much funding from the film industry ordinarily. They have been notoriously antipathetic to [waiter speaks from 0:50:05 to 50:15; not transcribed].

HA: The big corporations.

RK: If you're asking whether Philip Morris and SCM and corporate sponsors of that type, then that's different from having friendly relations with—

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:50:27] that's the point we want to make. We want to—because as you go through the ages, through the decades, it'll obviously appear that what once was the product of a terrific [waiter speaks from 0:44 to 51:05; not transcribed] what once was the product of a great personal benevolence of a few great families, now of necessity becomes dependent on corporations and government subsidy. That'll be, I'm sure, even in the film; it'll be interesting. There'll be a reaction against the big money, the big this and that, but then it's

just a matter of record that you need to have that. I think that's going to be an interesting part because—

RK: It's become a fact of life, a fact of survival, and I don't see anything the matter with it, provided that you're not a lackey to corporations. I remember, René d'Harnoncourt, in the mid-1960s—and you've already began to get for instance corporate funding at all or any corporate funding, really, other than what they called corporate membership for 500 or so dollars per year, which would enable a certain number of employees to come for nothing. Philip Morris through public relations [INAUDIBLE: 0:52:35] approached the Museum wanting to know if we would like them to sponsor an exhibition, I can't remember if it was a specific exhibition or if it's something, a general idea.

HA: Right. That was the first one?

RK: Well, no. The point is, that I was coming to, is that René was very, very reluctant to entertain this proposal because Philp Morris, the name of the sponsor, was also the name of the product. And he considered that it would really be commercial advertising to even have a modest wall label if it said this exhibition has been funded in part by Philip Morris Corporation. And I think he declined. For that reason, Philip Morris went to the Whitney, and has since done shows at the Museum, too. Not even [INAUDIBLE: 0:53:56] in questionable taste to have a product identification.

HA: I guess Public Television has changed that a little bit with everybody with—

RK: Oh everybody; it's all changed now but—

RC: Everybody likes [INAUDIBLE: 0:54:15].

RK: [INAUDIBLE: 0:54:17].

HA: This whole film is one of the results of that, as a matter of fact.

RK: But certainly the Museum could not have survived without government funding, and without corporate support for programs it would be a very, very abject sort of institution today.

CC: It would be very difficult to create any sort of institute like MoMA is now, today, even on a smaller scale, extremely difficult, because of the—

RK: To start from scratch?

HA: Yes.

CC: If what they set out to do in 1929, they set out to do today, there wouldn't be the support or the money there.

HA: Well, the collection could never be acquired, of course.

RK: Not that collection.

HA: No.

RK: Well, you say the money wouldn't be there. The money who started it was pretty much entirely Rockefeller.

HA: Yes.

CC: Are there individuals who could afford—?

RK: The Getty Museum, for example, is an example of what you're asking about.

HA: That's right; that's true.

RK: And that is having some difficulty getting [INAUDIBLE: 0:56:02]. The Getty Museum has all the money in the world. I gather they are so embarrassed about that, that they're planning to start a whole new other museum downtown in Los Angeles or something.

HA: They're embarrassed by how much money they have?

RK: Yes. It's difficult to know what to do with it. Then you'd better do something with it so you will have tax parties.

HA: Yes.

RK: Screaming people on the sidewalk and everything else.

HA: And meanwhile, The Museum of Modern Art and the New York museums are being extraordinarily inventive in saving themselves, like the Museum Tower, for example. Were you among the Trustees when that idea was conceived?

RK: I was not a trustee. No, I was the person who did conceive it.

HA: You were the person who conceived that?

RK: Didn't anyone tell you that?

HA: No; no. I'm very glad to find we're talking to the person who thought of it. That's great! How did it happen? Tell us that story. That'd be a great story.

RK: Well, it occurred to me in [pause] about 1970 because the Museum was running into tougher and tougher [INAUDIBLE: 0:57:32]. Nevertheless, financially. And nevertheless they desperately needed additional gallery space and other physical facilities [waiter speaks from 0:57:50 to 58:05; not transcribed]. Getting water in New York restaurants...

HA: Not easy, yes.

RK: Ever since about four years ago when there was a water shortage.

HA: I remember. So all right, you saw that the Museum needed more galleries, and it needed more money.

RK: Needed more galleries.

HA: And those two things seemed to be at the opposite end of the scale.

RK: Definitely needed money. And they were having rapidly increasing deficits, and it was generally considered essential that there be a fundraising campaign, and for many millions; partly for endowment and partly for a new building.

HA: Right.

RK: And how to orchestrate this, [and to] understand the very difficult problems, especially since the then director very briefly, Bates Lowry, wanted the gallery space desperately but had no interest at all in raising money.

HA: This director was not a money-raising director.

RK: No; quite a story. But he loved to spend money. We had King Ludwig of Bavaria. [Laughter] Well, it occurred to me and to a young architect who was working with us developing programs of increased buildings, that here we were sitting in the middle of midtown Manhattan with an immense amount of unutilized real estate of obviously very great value. And that if we could find a way to liquidate that value and cash it in, that would quite possibly pay for a new building

and then some. So, we suggested this to some of the Trustees who were supposed to be focusing on the fundraising ideas, and they thought that it made very good sense. What we were talking about at that time was a tower which would be built either on top of the 11 building or to the west of it where exactly it now is, possibly on top of the North wing, which at that time was called the Whitney building; the Modern had recently acquired it.

HA: Right.

RK: And we knew that we had the minimum square feet of so-called air rights. Are you familiar with this concept?

HA: Yes.

RK: For the very high value—the problem really was where to put the buildings. And for a while we considered buying the Hotel Dorset for tearing it down and putting in a big tower there, while we considered building down the block on 53rd.

HA: Of course, that meant acquiring more real estate, when that's what you were trying to sell was real estate.

RK: Well, declaring more could then be more profitably developed—

HA: Right.

RK: —which, on balance, would be a plus. And while we were in the midst of trying to figure out where we would put the air rights, if we were to sell them to the developer—and we were thinking at that time in the mode of an office building rather than an apartment building. And that would have required a very considerable plot, because an office building, when you think about it, needs a very large lobby, needs a very large core of elevator shafts going up it because it's very tall. So that you have to have a plot of at least 20,000 more or less square feet if it's going to be at all efficient.

HA: Right.

RK: The only way to do that was to buy the Dorset. So...

END OF INTERVIEW at 1:03:16