

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: CAROLYN LANCHNER (CL)
INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)
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[Interview was begun but never completed.]

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Carolyn, tell me where and when you were born, and something about your family background.

CL: I was born September 30, 1932, in San Mateo, California. My family background is somewhat summed up by the fact that, whether we lived on the East Coast or the West Coast -- We lived on the West Coast (my parents were both native Californians) until I was about ten or eleven. It was the middle of the war, and we were transferred back here. But whether we lived on the East Coast or the West Coast, we lived in virtually all-Republican suburbs, and my parents were the only people who voted Democratic in those communities. But they thought it was a proper environment for a growing child -- which may explain why I've lived in Manhattan all my life.

SZ: Your maiden name was --

CL: Shur. But I would add here that my father's first name was Conger, which is of some significance at the Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: Yes.

CL: It appears that all Congers are descended from one John Conger, who came in 1740 or something, and had seven sons. My father discovered this. My father was orphaned very early, and didn't know very much about his background. He discovered this in the New York Public Library, and it was later confirmed by my son, on the internet.

SZ: That's very interesting. So we're talking about Conger Goodyear, I guess.

CL: Right. I'm trying to establish [inaudible]. That's one way.

SZ: So they were both born in California?

CL: Actually, not. My father was born in California. His family went to California during the gold rush. My mother was born in Luca, Italy, and went to California when she was two. I would like to go back to Luca.

SZ: But she didn't have much of an Italian background informing her, I guess.

CL: Well, she grew up speaking Italian. English was really her native tongue. But, yes, there was an Italian ambience. Her parents spoke Italian, her cousins, aunts and uncles.

SZ: She had a big, extended family out there?

CL: She was the only child in her family. She had I don't know how many brothers and sisters, but all of them died. She had a number of cousins, who had all come from Luca, which apparently is the only place in Tuscany from which there was any immigration. And they seem to have come because the family was there. I think, along with this Republican suburb idea, they kind of kept me out of the Italian thing.

SZ: They did?

- CL: Yes. My father was very scornful of it. My mother was a wife of the period and she lived in a Republican suburb, where you definitely weren't supposed to be Italian.
- SZ: So it was kind of quiet. Interesting. So you grew up, the first ten years of your life, in California.
- CL: Yes.
- SZ: You can remember back, but, obviously, those were Depression times, leading up to the war.
- CL: Subsequently, my parents spoke about it a great deal, but at the time I was completely unaware.
- SZ: Did they have a hard time with that?
- CL: I think that they may have. But it was not a problem, in any way, to me.
- SZ: What did your father do?
- CL: He worked at a copper company called Kennicott Copper. I think it's been absorbed into some British corporation.
- SZ: Was he a professional person?
- CL: My father? I'm somewhat prejudiced, but my father was one of the smartest men I've ever met in my life. He could write beautifully, and he only went through the sixth grade. His mother died when he was four, and they came from a very bourgeois family. His grandfather was a banker in El Paso, Illinois and a general in the Civil War. So my father, and especially my Aunt Margaret, deeply resented the fact that after their mother died, their father just disappeared; none of their very well-to-do relatives took them in, and they grew up in an orphanage. My father had a few mementos of the family (there's a picture, there, of them

together); he gave them to his sister for safekeeping while he was in the First World War, and she cut all the pictures of the father out. Dad was very upset. I mentioned before that he'd looked up the family, because, really, these children whom one would have expected to be cosseted and cared for were left in an orphanage. Dad was really half-educated, to a very high degree, as, also, was my aunt, self-admitting. She had a knowledge of literature, and she could also write beautifully.

SZ: She did it all herself, too.

CL: Yes. Whereas my father -- My father, immediately, after the war, went into business, because he felt he had to. My aunt wanted to be a dancer and an actress. Dad helped support her, and he felt she was quite frivolous.

SZ: But she did do that?

CL: She did do that for a while, yes.

SZ: And your mother? Was she educated?

CL: Yes. She didn't go to college, but she was very educated.

SZ: So you had an upper-middle-class upbringing? Or middle-class?

CL: Middle-upper, between --

SZ: Comfortable.

CL: Yes. Certainly.

SZ: You said you left the West Coast and came East because of the war?

CL: Yes. The copper was deemed essential to the war effort, and the headquarters, I guess, moved from San Francisco to New York.

SZ: So that's what happened.

CL: That's what happened.

SZ: So you were translated without family?

CL: How do you mean?

SZ: Well, I mean you came, but was the extended family all out in California?

CL: Not really. My father had one sister and she had two daughters. I have two first cousins. I adore both of them.

SZ: That's right. You said your mother was an only child.

CL: And my two first cousins have about ten first cousins on their father's side.

SZ: So a little bit about growing up, and what you liked to do. Did you like school? Did you take dancing? Did you take piano?

CL: I loved school. I had a good time in school. I took piano, I hated it. I have absolutely no musical talent. My piano teacher in California was named Miss Renoir.

SZ: That's pretty prophetic. [Laughter]

CL: Miss Renoir, when she wasn't teaching me (and I suppose other people) piano (and she wasn't teaching me, because I was unteachable), she gave French lessons. I begged my parents to let me take French and not piano. They thought it was going to be much more of an asset for a young lady to play the piano than speak French. As it turns out, I never did learn to play the piano --

SZ: -- and you did learn French.

- CL: -- and I did learn French. But I took tap-dancing lessons, which I think I took because, at the time, there was Fred Astaire and all that. I took them with my mother, which strikes me something quite strange to do. But at the time I didn't question it. I was no good at that, either.
- SZ: Okay. You have siblings?
- CL: A brother, who was conceived on the West Coast and born on the East Coast, so he is younger than I am, and ten times as big.
- SZ: In which way? [Laughter]
- CL: Oh, all. It used to be only vertical. He just turned sixty, and his girth has changed.
- SZ: Time can do that.
- CL: Yes.
- SZ: But you're close to him.
- CL: Yes. Although we didn't at all grow up together. I went to college when he was in second grade. We always felt close but we weren't really, until my mother went into the nursing home and we had to talk to each other all the time.
- SZ: Sometimes those things pull you together. One last thing about being in California. You might have been too young and not remember, but anything about the beginning of the war? In particular, I'm thinking about all the Japanese who were --
- CL: I was unaware of that totally. There were a lot of Japanese gardeners, and then there weren't a lot of Japanese gardeners. What I was aware of was the outbreak of the war because that was dramatic.

- SZ: You remember that.
- CL: Oh, yes. It was a Sunday. We were going to church. I also, of course, remember the air raids. They weren't air raids -- the black-outs -- and I lost my cat. Things like that. And my father thinking he should join up. He had, in fact, been in the First World War, and he was by then in his forties.
- SZ: So he was really too old. Did he serve overseas in the First World War?
- CL: Yes, he was in France.
- SZ: Did he ever talk about that?
- CL: Yes, but he wasn't really at the front. He was in France for a good while, but the war was over before --
- SZ: So how did you travel from the West Coast to the East Coast in 1942?
- CL: By train, which was quite fun, in a roomette, or whatever you called them, which I thought was really -- In those days I think one would say "cool" -- which I thought was really "cool." The train had maybe us and, I think, maybe, William Holden's daughter or something. Other than that, it was soldiers, from one end of the train to the other. But that's how the streets looked then. Every other man on the street, if not more, was in a uniform -- West Coast, East Coast.
- SZ: At the age of ten, did you mind moving, or did it seem like --
- CL: Oh, it was glorious. New York!? That's really glamorous. On the other hand, my father screwed that up (excuse me). We were on the train and he said, "We're going to arrive in Newark." I said, "You mean New York." He said, "No. Newark." At that time I had no conception of Newark. Nothing attached to it for me, as it never does, but it's just not New York. Why is my father mispronouncing it?
- SZ: So you did, indeed, land in Newark.

CL: We did. We spent a couple of weeks there. I don't remember. I know we came to New York, and we stayed in a hotel in New York. It was called the Shelton. It was opposite the Waldorf, and we stayed there for maybe a month. Then I started going to fifth grade. I went to about ten fifth grades.

SZ: In Manhattan?

CL: No. We left that hotel, and they started looking for a Republican suburb. I went to all the different schools, wherever we landed.

SZ: You mean you moved around from house to house for a while?

CL: Oh, yes. Ten is an exaggeration, but I must have gone to five fifth grades. The first one was in California, then the next four were [Inaudible], Maplewood. I forget. In Jersey. I got asked questions like --

SZ: -- who are you? [Laughter]

CL: "I don't know. I'll go home and ask." And I never heard of being Jewish. I didn't know what it was.

SZ: You mentioned before that you were going to church on the morning of December 7th. Were you fairly practicing?

CL: Yes and no, more no than yes. We went to church every Sunday. We went to a Christian Science church. My father came from a Presbyterian background, but he was married in a Catholic church.

SZ: Because your mother was --

CL: Right. My mother was not very much of a practicing Catholic, and they were married in some remote part of the church, because of the "impure" nature of their union. But they did promise that their kids would be Catholic. However, I

went through Christian Science church when I was three, which is great for your vocabulary. By the time you're five you know about necromancy.

SZ: So what suburb did they finally choose?

CL: Chatham, New Jersey. I went to high school there.

SZ: Actually, that's sort of far out, right?

CL: It isn't, really. It was under an hour to get to New York on the train. And at that time there was a ferry. When you got off the train you took a ferry across the Hudson, to Lower Manhattan. My father was working at 120 Broadway. He subsequently worked in the Chrysler building, at which point they moved to Connecticut, to Riverside, which is part of Greenwich. [Inaudible] But I was in college by then. My brother grew up there.

SZ: So Chatham -- were you there four years, six years?

CL: Oh, from the end of fifth grade, through twelfth.

SZ: You went to public school, the whole time?

CL: Yes.

SZ: I know Chatham was an upper-middle-class --

CL: I don't think it was too upper-. It certainly yearned.

SZ: Did you like it?

CL: Yes, I liked a lot of things about it. In retrospect, I don't like it at all. I think it was really a stultifying atmosphere -- homogenous, especially in high school. I think I got a reasonably good education, but I do think it catered to the middle. It didn't want really dumb kids and it didn't want really bright kids.

SZ: It wasn't tracked?

CL: I don't even know what that means.

SZ: It means that a lot of times, in public high schools, they'll stratify the classes in terms of how kids score on certain kinds of tests.

CL: No, they didn't do that. They did that when I was in Maplewood. They put me in the dumb class, then they moved me to the not-dumb class. I was unaware. I was a dumb kid.

SZ: Did you like to come into New York while you were growing up, in your teenage years? Did you use the city at all?

CL: Not really. I was a mad baseball fan, so I often went to Yankee games. My close friends in high school (all girls), we were all nuts about baseball. One of those friends, who later got a Ph.D. in Musicology from Harvard and promptly died, at age thirty-five -- anyway, she was one of my best friends -- we came into the city and saw the "Diablo [inaudible]" and the Van Gogh Museum exhibition at the Met. This was an epiphany. [Laughs]

SZ: Truly?

CL: Truly. Truly. It was just so sophisticated, wonderful and stunning, both of those things.

SZ: Did you have a particular interest in things visual, while you were growing up?

CL: Yes.

SZ: Always.

CL: Yes.

SZ: Could you draw?

CL: Not as well as I would have liked. I liked to draw. I still sort of do, but I'm not particularly talented. It's not like music -- I'm not an idiot -- but, yes.

SZ: What do you think accounts for that? An early-in-life interest in things visual?

CL: I can't really account for it, it was just there. My mother could actually draw and paint quite well, but she never did it. I remember I used to bother her, until I was around six or seven, with, "Why don't you do that anymore?" She never came across with an answer I accepted, and then I stopped asking her. But I don't know. My brother doesn't -- no one else in my family seems to, except for my son.

SZ: Was that your first museum visit, that Metropolitan show?

CL: It's the first one I remember. My parents didn't take me to museums.

SZ: So this was something you did for yourself.

CL: Yes. I don't even know how to explain them. If I had lived with my aunt, I would have been in the museum every day, and at the theatre. But with my mother and father, there was something puritanical in them, which, I think, is explained in their backgrounds. They didn't do what was frivolous, and I think they thought that was frivolous.

SZ: Did you think it was frivolous, when you started thinking those were things you liked?

CL: No. They were things I liked, frivolous or no.

SZ: So how big was your high school?

CL: Pretty small, and the classes were small. Latin was a subject I loved, and at that time you couldn't get into college, or a good college, without two years of Latin. So everybody took the first two years of Latin, and nobody gave a damn about it, and nobody learned anything. But my third and fourth year of Latin, there were three of us in the class. It was wonderful. I've now forgotten it all, but at the time I loved it.

One time, when I was young -- in my early twenties, in France -- at some kind of party there was a German, a Russian, French, I was there, I forget what else, and we all -- We certainly didn't speak Latin. I remember being told, in high school, that I could get around by speaking Latin, which is kind of ridiculous [laughter]. Nobody really knows how Latin was pronounced. So we all said the same thing, as we had been taught, and you would have sworn the Russian was speaking Russian, the French speaking French, etc. That stayed in my mind, just because it was so funny.

SZ: So you were good in school, you liked it, and you studied Latin. Did you study French in high school, too?

CL: Yes, but I couldn't speak it. I could read anything I wanted, by the time I finished high school. I could read very well.

SZ: It wasn't an intellectual exercise.

CL: Well, there was very little practice with pronunciation. I've longed to listen to French [inaudible], and since I didn't have any kind of ear, I didn't pick it up.

SZ: You graduated from high school what year?

CL: Nineteen-fifty.

SZ: Was there ever any question that you were going to go on?

CL: No.

SZ: Your parents had those expectations?

CL: Oh, yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. I applied to two schools, Radcliffe and Wellesley, and it was a period in my life when, if my parents gave me good advice I didn't listen to it, and if they gave me bad advice, I did. They said, "Go to Wellesley, it's prettier." I would have been happier at Radcliffe, I know.

SZ: Why, do you think?

CL: Well, it was like an extension of the Republican suburbs [laughs]. And in those days you were doing this to join the Junior League, and be a contributing member of the Republican [inaudible].

SZ: There were women at Radcliffe who were that way, too.

CL: Sure, but it was less so. Much less so.

SZ: But it had a whole different atmosphere. But this is what you chose to do.

CL: Yes.

SZ: So did you know what you were going to study? Did you have an idea what you were going to do?

CL: Well, I wanted to do art history and my parents didn't want me to. So I did French.

SZ: You took some art history classes?

CL: Yes.

SZ: And you did French. Why did they not want you to do that?

- CL: They didn't see any use for it. When my parents went to school, educated women could teach, be nurses, secretaries. This was not on my agenda, the third one. Any of them, actually.
- SZ: Tell me a little bit about Wellesley from 1950 to 1954, what the atmosphere was like, what you thought about it.
- CL: Oh, I think my memories are very unfair. I would love to go back, presently. If what I had to do was live on that gorgeous campus and study what I wanted to study -- row boats on the lake, play tennis on the tennis courts -- I don't know why I didn't think it was a great place to be. Actually, I do know why. I did not properly use it. I became offended at certain things. There was a complacency to it.
- SZ: But you were a kid.
- CL: Everybody seemed to be from Republican Ohio.
- SZ: But those were complacent years, also.
- CL: That's true. That's absolutely true. It was a sort of microcosm training ground for a certain culture in this country, which is upper-middle to upper-class white. The values that prevailed in those circles were pretty much the values that prevailed at Wellesley. That's not necessarily much of the faculty, but I didn't give into that. I was pretty blind.
- SZ: It was pre- the women's movement, it was pre- a lot of things. You were there because you were supposed to be there.
- CL: This past summer, for reasons we shall not go into, I found myself in the midst of the highest WASP group I've ever been in, out in the country, and they had this, I thought, rather interesting habit (if you want to call it that). When one was introduced to one or the other of them, they would always ask you, "Where did you go to school?" I haven't known anybody -- I'm seventy years old, and I

haven't known anybody in thirty-five years who makes that their first question -- if I knew anyone thirty-five years ago. It seemed to matter to all these people, who were approximately my age, and it was absolutely -- I started to laugh. I passed.

SZ: Yes, that's right.

CL: Right answer.

SZ: That's right.

CL: It was really strange.

SZ: College. You majored in French. What extra-curriculars did you do? Did you have a good time?

CL: Actually, I had a really good time junior year, in France. I had a really good time.

SZ: You went to Paris?

CL: Well, we began in Tours.

SZ: This was Wellesley's program?

CL: No, it was Sweet Briar's. Wellesley didn't have a program. Smith did, but you only went to Paris under the Smith program if you were doing, as I remember it, political science. You went to Geneva if you were doing French, and since I had no wish to go to Geneva if I could go to Paris, it was Sweet Briar. And Sweet Briar had everybody. It had Harvard, Princeton, Sweet Briar, every college you could think of.

SZ: So you went first to Tours?

CL: We went to Tours for six weeks, so you could learn to speak French, which I did. I knew French, on the page, and I could write it quite well, but I could not speak it

decently. But six weeks in Tours was fine. I remember endless "dictées," and I got so flummoxed in one, because the person who was "dictée-ing" said, vergule, right in the middle of nothing -- vergule -- what's that?

SZ: Is that a comma?

CL: It's a comma. Now, when a French person is speaking to me and suddenly throws in an English word, I never know what this is. This is really out of place on your machine --

SZ: That's all right.

CL: -- but when I first met "Eva Bizot," who was for years (you probably knew her) and years and years the Directeur [inaudible] of the Louvre, she came rushing up to me at some party and she said, "Oh, we have to know each other, je suis le Palmer du Louvre." I could tell she was telling me a joke, but I don't know what [inaudible] is. Then she starts talking about bunches of paper, and I realized that she was telling me that she was telling me she was the "Dick Palmer of the Louvre."

SZ: Oh, I didn't get that. [Laughter]

CL: I was laughing because I knew she was telling me a joke, but what?

SZ: Oh, that's so cool. That's funny. Le Palmer du Louvre. Oh, Carolyn.

CL: Later she told me she was a bit more than the Palmer. [Laughter]

SZ: That's cute. So what did you do? Did you live with a family in Paris?

CL: Both in Tours, and in Paris.

SZ: With families.

CL: In Paris it was pretty good. Well, I didn't like this woman. In fact, we disliked her so much -- I was there with two young women from Mt. Holyoke. We were billeted with this Madame on the Rue du Duannier, which is in the fourteenth, on the outskirts of Paris. The Rue du Dunnanier was named after Rousseau, of course. It's now the Rue du Bracque, because Bracque lived on the street while I was there. I didn't meet him. I was too lacking in initiative, and he probably wouldn't have been pleased to see me, anyway. But it's now the Rue de Bracque, and the Laurents live there, the inheritors, and across the street is Catherine [inaudible], who is Jacqueline Picasso's daughter. I visit her when I'm in Paris and it's always quite odd, because of that street.

SZ: All of this is interesting as -- I was going to say like an omen, but it's not really an omen. So you were in Paris. What about the interest in art history while you were there?

CL: I took every art history course I could take, which was great because you'd go to the Louvre. It was wonderful, on-site, and that was when, of course, all the Impressionist pictures, and post-Impressionist, were in the Jeu du Paume, which was just splendid. We had classes there, and in the Louvre. Another class was theatre. We were required to go to, I think it was, at least a play a week. I saw Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* --

SZ: You went to the Comédie Française, too, and all that?

CL: We went to Corneille and Racine. It was heaven.

SZ: Then you had to come back.

CL: Yes.

SZ: So by the time you got back, did you have a sense, at all, of what you were going to do?

CL: I got married very early.

SZ: I was going to ask you -- because, addressing that whole issue of what these women's colleges were preparing women for at that time -- my memory of it was just that if you were so unlucky as to have to work for a year or two, you could, but you were really being prepared to be an educated wife and mother.

CL: I think that's absolutely true. I'm not sure I would have gotten married so early, even though that was the cultural norm, but I married Europe. I met a man in Europe, who, in fact, was German, living in Paris. His French was perfect. You could hardly live in Paris, that early in the '50s, being German, if you had a German accent. He didn't. He was, to all intents and purposes, French, and incredibly glamorous to me -- fourteen years older than I am; great looking; spoke English as well as he spoke French; obviously German, and other things besides. He was just -- he was Europe. I wasn't particularly in love with him, but I was certainly in love with Europe, and this was a way to stay there.

SZ: So you married him after junior year?

CL: That December.

SZ: Did you go back to Wellesley? You did.

CL: Yes.

SZ: Then you went back and married him? Then you went back to school, and finished?

CL: Yes. That lasted about three years.

SZ: Did you live over there for those three years?

CL: No, we lived there for about a year, and then -- I didn't do too well in this "marrying Europe" business. He worked for something called the EDC, which

was the European Defense Community. It broke up, and he decided to come here. And that was very terrible! Very terrible, indeed.

SZ: That wasn't what you were expecting. Yes, I see. So back to the question. So there was the marriage, but the question of thinking about -- Did you want a career? Did you think you would have one?

CL: Oh, I think undoubtedly I wanted one, but the times were not propitious. I didn't want it enough to -- I think of someone like Linda Nochlin, who knew she wanted -- and she's a couple years older than I am. She went to Vassar. She knew, and she went out and did it. But Linda came from a family where I think it was expected of her. It was also expected of her to get married, and she did, very early, but she did all these other things, too. I think, not to take anything away from Linda, but I think it's partially because she came from a family where that was -- She was the only child, and that's what she should do.

SZ: Have a career.

CL: They were Jewish intellectuals, and that was within their tradition. Which is not to take away from Linda that she did it. I admire Linda enormously, not only for what she's accomplished, but also because she is the only woman I can think of, of her generation, who's really hit the big-time, in terms of the "big boys," art historians. Linda's in there with them, and she is the only person I can think of, of her generation, who's a woman, who's done that.

SZ: She had some sort of inner staying power, or political savvy, or -- ?

CL: All those things, and she had an impetus. She had a clear goal.

SZ: And you did not. Is that what you're saying?

CL: I did not.

SZ: So what did you fall into? [Laughs]

CL: Well, when I fell out of marriage, my daughter was then about three, I guess. Something like that. My parents were living in Greenwich, Connecticut, in this big house. I didn't have any money. I had a teeny-weeny apartment in New York. So she lived with them until she was five, and I would go visit her every weekend. I worked in an art gallery, Knoedler, which was then on 57th Street, and had a fabulous library.

SZ: Was that a difficult job for you to get?

CL: No. I don't know why, but it wasn't. I was research librarian. I got paid \$65.00 a week, in cash, in a little, brown envelope. [Laughs]

SZ: But you had all those art history courses, and you had your French.

CL: They should have taken me up on Miss Renoir. [Laughter]

SZ: But that didn't really give you anything?

CL: Yes. I think it did give me quite a bit. They also had a conservation laboratory, and at that time conservation wasn't even a discipline. The only way to be taught it was as an apprentice. I certainly wasn't that, but I was around it a lot, and I did a lot of research. Nothing that led to anything creative -- provenance, that kind of thing -- it was the job. I was around pictures, art people, and that lasted -- I got remarried with Renata was about five. She came to New York and lived with us, and I stopped working when I was pregnant with David. I didn't work again until I had a terrible crisis in this marriage, which was not resolved until some sixteen or so years later, but was sufficient to send me back to work. Then I went to the Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: So for sixteen years, you did not work?

CL: No, no. For four. Then for some sixteen years I worked, being married.

- SZ: I did not realize you actually started your career that late.
- CL: I was thirty-five.
- SZ: I must have known that, but I'd forgotten that.
- CL: It was completely irrational. The career such as I had it, and the way I got it, is to be recommended to no one; and, in fact, I think is impossible to do, now. In those days it was a lot different.
- SZ: You couldn't do that.
- CL: I mention the conversation thing, because I remember when I interviewed for the job at the Museum, they were impressed that I knew about that. And they knew the people I knew because -- Jane and "Tosco" were great, but they came up --
- SZ: The "Kecks."
- CL: Yes. And the "Kecks" came up however they did. It wasn't -- It was long before you could go to the Institute and study to be a conservator.
- SZ: For a person of hearty intellect, how did you manage, for sixteen years, not doing anything?
- CL: Oh, but it wasn't sixteen years. Let me go over the chronology again. I quit working when David was born, and I did not work for the following four years. He was four when I went to work for the Museum of Modern Art. But I was still married. I had reached a point of terrible crisis in this marriage, which I lived with for another ten or twelve years, but that puts me at thirty-five. He was born when I was thirty-one.
- SZ: So it wasn't so long.

CL: It wasn't long at all. If I'd been planning things, I might have done that. When I did go back to work, when he was four, he said to me, "Mommy, don't you know that Mommies don't work?"

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

CL: This is easy, because I get to talk about me.

SZ: It's all about you anyway. I wanted to go back to this question of being a woman and wanting a career, or not. When you finally went to the Modern, were you thinking about that? Or was it that you needed to work, to get out?

CL: I think I was confused. I needed to work to get out. But I also really needed to do something that was gratifying to me.

SZ: And modern art? We really didn't talk about that, except that you studied art history. Was that something that you gravitated to?

CL: No. I wasn't unaware of it, but it was much more 19th-century, mostly 19th-century.

SZ: So this was serendipity?

CL: To go to the Modern? Well, 19th-century, plus what's become classic modern. So, no. No, [inaudible] was the place I really wanted to be.

SZ: Did you do reading on your own?

CL: A lot.

SZ: And that way, you were self-educated, to a degree?

- CL: Oh, no question. Bill never knew what to do with me. He valued my services, he wanted to keep me around, and he wanted to promote me, but he wanted me to have a master's, at least -- which I didn't. But it worked out.
- SZ: He got over that.
- CL: He got over that.
- SZ: So tell me how you got to the Modern, when you decided you wanted to get out and work. How did it happen that you ended up there?
- CL: I do not remember that anyone recommended me. I do not think that's so. I think I just went there, and was interviewed by Althea Borden -- if you remember her. She was personnel director. They called it personnel, then. She'd been there for a long time. And I remember -- The experience at [inaudible] counted for a lot. I remember saying to her that I didn't think I was quite qualified, and she said, "Oh, we care much less about that than General Motors." [Laughs] So much for Bill. Well, it was kind of funny, because I was hired by the Registrar's Department. At the time, all P&S storage was controlled by the registrar (it's a little odd, but that's the way it was), and they were just about to set up what was to be called the International Study Center. Until very recently, when the Museum took down the wing that used to be Whitney [wing], that was next to the Dorset, at the east end of the garden, you could still read, across the top of it, "International Study Center." This was this grand idea whereby P&S would eventually take over the registrar's function, which was not such a grand idea, but the grand idea was there would be open storage. And there was constructed a very large store room that was in the basement of the building that had been the Whitney. The screens that you hung the paintings on (there were a lot of drawings there, too) you could pull out, and not only could you pull them out -- which is normal -- but you were supposed to be able to wheel them around the room, and set up your own little exhibition if you wanted to. This was going to be available to scholars. There's a picture of me, looking quite unlike I look now, for [inaudible] -- pulling out one of these screens, to show what "little people can do with these big screens." But it was completely unrealistic. We were going to let people come in,

and even if a little person could pull them out, you really did need a couple of "preparatives,"

SZ: But there's a story behind that whole thing.

CL: It opened with a flourish.

SZ: This was '67 or '68, I can't remember.

CL: Sixty-eight.

SZ: So you arrived in '68.

CL: I think, yes, '68. I don't think '67.

SZ: No, it was '68.

CL: But it was a grand endeavor. It encountered all kinds of problems. For one thing, it was supposed to be ecumenical. If you remember, the departments in those days were unto themselves -- little fiefdoms -- and this was supposed to bring all the storage together. Needless to say, there was much opposition from all the departments, except Painting & Sculpture, whose domain it would be. On those grounds, it didn't work out, but before it didn't work out they made it even grander and [inaudible]. I was suppose to be head of this, but it got, really, quite beyond what would seem to be appropriate for me, so they brought Ann Hanson in from Yale [inaudible], but no one cared but me.

SZ: That was pretty short-lived anyway, wasn't it?

CL: Oh, yes. Six months, if that.

SZ: You were hired by the Registrar's Office, and the registrar at that time was --

CL: -- Dorothy Dudley, a blessed memory. I consider Dorothy Dudley to be one of the legends of the Museum.

SZ: Maybe you'll tell me about her next time. Now I have a framework. Sixty-eight. What a year that was.

CL: Yes, what a year that was.

[Interview incomplete.]