THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **LILY AUCHINCLOSS (LA)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

DATE: **MARCH 31, 1993**

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: The first question I always ask, and you can do with it what you will, is where and when you were born, and [tell me] just a little bit about your family background.

LA: I was born in 1922 in Newark, New Jersey, where my mother was at the time. I grew up in South Orange, New Jersey, went to a girls' school, then on to Radcliffe, where I went out with a lot of architects and got to know Philip Johnson and Marcel Breuer and so on. Philip was getting his degree or finishing his degree, I don't know which it was, and he had built as his thesis a house for himself, and he gave a lot of parties for mostly architectural students and people who were around. [INTERRUPTION]

SZ: Was architecture a particular interest of yours?

LA: No, I'd never heard of architecture before I met all these architects. I just never thought about it. I guess I thought that houses were just there, and buildings. Anyway, now I know.

SZ: So you saw and were in the house that Philip built in Cambridge.

LA: Yes.

SZ: So you didn't study architecture? You studied English?

LA: English and history, or history and literature, something like that. I graduated in '44, I think I told you. I accelerated to some degree, because of the war, so I got out in January instead of June. I had a very good time there. I liked it a lot. I also got to know the Boston Symphony orchestra. That sounds like a big order [LAUGHTER] but the year before I'd been to Tanglewood because the war had already started in 1940, or was brewing, and the civil war in Spain was on. I was supposed to go when I graduated from high school.

SZ: You were supposed to go to Spain but then you didn't because....

LA: I didn't go because of the civil war and then everything was in an upset already, wasn't it? Anyway, my mother and father had gone to the White Mountains and there was a little string quartet up there of some Boston Symphony members. I got to know one of them and he suggested that I go to Tanglewood, and though I was a year young, I wasn't a prodigy of any sort. I liked music very much and I'd taken piano lessons and went in to concerts almost every weekend -- went in to New York for concerts -- and that's how I got to know the whole Boston Symphony orchestra. Because -- did I say? -- [Serge] Koussevitzky invited me to go to rehearsals. I'd met him at Tanglewood. So naturally I went. There was a Friday rehearsal, I believe. That was a lot of fun.

SZ: Leonard Bernstein was up there too at that time, wasn't he, during the war?

LA: He was at Tanglewood and I met him. He was a wonderful, witty, complicated man. [Paul] Hindemith was teaching there, [and] Aaron Copland. So I got to know them all because it was a very small group at that time. It has since expanded a great deal; the whole place has expanded. I made scenery in the opera department and sang in

the chorus and got to know a lot of people and greeted a lot of people who came, because I knew a lot of the people who came. I'd spot them and show them around. I think that's how I first met Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller, because they were up there; also Mrs. [Margaret Scolari] Barr. They came for the concert, and I was standing there saying, "Can I show you around?"

SZ: And you knew who he was at that time?

LA: Yes.

SZ: Had you studied art, too?

LA: No.

SZ: Had any interest in it?

LA: Interest, yes, but very diluted, not focused. I never took any formal art course, the history of art or anything like that. So I'm not really so hot on that.

SZ: But Tanglewood was a real center of activity.

LA: Yes, it was great, because people came up to it, you know. It was really a wonderful experience. I went for, I think, three years -- I can't remember.... Everybody sat around at lunch. We had a little van that came in from the Curtis Hotel, which had wonderful food, and we all sat around at long tables. It wasn't a very big group, so that was another way we got to know each other. Lukas Foss was there, too. I still see him and his wife occasionally.... I loved Radcliffe. It was very stimulating in general. Then I came to New York, and I get a little hazy here, because I can't really

remember what my first job was. I think it was working with an organization that translated [editorial opinion in] foreign newspapers for things like the CIA and the OWI [Office of War Information].... The people who translated were sometimes a little crude but they knew the basics. I just sort of had to polish it up a little, type it up and they'd send it out to whoever they wanted to send it to. Then I worked for Jean Dalrymple. She was a publicist at that time. That was very interesting. My chief account was the City Ballet. It was a very small office, so they made me do the things that nobody else wanted to do. For instance, they sent me to interview [Salvador] Dalí for the program notes [LAUGHTER]. I got along quite well with him. What else?

SZ: That was for her firm?

LA: Yes. I did the Stadium Concerts, which was nice. In all, it was a marvelous first job. I count that as my first job rather than the other one, which I can remember only dimly.

SZ: You were in publishing.

LA: I worked at Look.... [INTERRUPTION] Where was I? I'd got through college, was working for Jean Dalrymple -- that kind of opened some horizons, like in ballet. Oklahoma! opened in Boston.... I remember thinking that it would never go on Broadway [LAUGHTER], so that shows you how astute I was about this. I think then I started working for Look magazine, and I can't remember how I got that job. I was in charge of all kinds back-of-the-book things, including art. By that time I knew quite a lot of people in the art world. I knew [Alexander] Calder, who I met through the Breuers. Through the architects at Harvard I also met, knowing Breuer, everybody that came over from Europe, all the refugees, who came right away to Cambridge to

get in touch with [Walter] Gropius and Breuer. I met [Josef] Albers there. Calder was not in the fore, but he came, too; he was a friend of the Breuers. That was very interesting.

SZ: It must have been very lively.

LA: It was. It was wonderful. I met [Sigfried] Gideon, the art historian. Are you familiar with his work?

SZ: A little bit.

LA: I called him Dr. Pep. I stayed for reading period out at the Breuers, and one day I got very bored and Gropius came by for some reason, and I said, "Oh, gosh, I'd just love to read a nice sexy book instead of all this stuff." And he said, "I have just the book for you." It was The Fountainhead [LAUGHTER]. So that was interesting.

SZ: You were in the middle of a lot.

LA: I was. Almost everything I've learned I've learned from people, I mean aside from going to Radcliffe, but even there I learned a lot from people and from hanging around.

SZ: Was there a lot of interchange between Harvard and Radcliffe that time?

LA: Radcliffe girls had the reputation for being ugly and bluestocking, but inevitably you got to meet a lot of Harvard guys, and I had about three beaus [from Harvard]. It was fun.

SZ: I was thinking specifically also of classes.

LA: We also had the same classes and the same exams, but the poor professors would have to go to Harvard first and then over to Radcliffe to give their lectures. Then, with the war, they merged, more or less. We had joint boy-girl classes, or man-woman classes....

SZ: Knowing Breuer, Gropius and Philip [Johnson], did you have a taste for modern art or architecture before that?

LA: Not before that, no. I just fell for it. It was a great revelation to me. It was a nice way to learn, too. Most of the things I've learned, as I said, were through people that I met. You can learn quite a lot that way, let it seep in. Then I came to New York, worked for Jean Dalrymple and got a job on Look in which I did art.

SZ: You mean writing.

LA: I was writing all these little paragraphs and picture captions, but I was writing. After I'd been there about a year, Mr. [Michael] Cowles married Fleur. I don't know whether you're going to want this or not.

SZ: We can look at it and we can decide what to do with it.

LA: Anyway, since I was doing art at that point -- whenever we did it, which wasn't very often. Their idea of art was bathing-suit pictures at that time. She got married -- Fleur got married to Mike. She moved in and I was assigned by the editor-in-chief to take care of her, to show her around, etcetera. She decided she wanted a mobile and asked me what she should do. She was thinking of mobiles she'd seen at Lord

& Taylor. So I said, "Mrs. Cowles, you can't have a mobile except one by Calder." So I called Curt Valentin, who by that time had become a good friend of mine. In the art world, I learned a lot from Curt and from Sidney Janis...[INTERRUPTION] [Reading from her biography] It says here "graduated from Radcliffe College. Mrs. Auchincloss worked for fifteen years as an editor of Look, Harper's Bazaar, the Herald-Tribune and various other publications." I worked for the Herald-Tribune magazine section, which was then run by Oliver Jennings and someone else. So that was interesting.... "For a number of years she has been...affiliated with The Museum of Modern Art and has served on various committees. Currently, she is a trustee of The Museum of Modern Art..." For a long time I chaired the annual fund -- for too damn long.

SZ: We'll get to that.

LA: I'm a trustee of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and chairman of the arts program. "Mrs. Auchincloss is also an active trustee of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Additional responsibilities include trustee of the Cooper Union, the American Academy in Rome and director and vice president of the van Ameringen Foundation" -- that's our family foundation. We do mental health, basically.

SZ: It was Look, Harper's Bazaar and the Herald-Tribune magazine. The Herald-Tribune, of course, was an active paper in the city at that time. We were talking about the mobile you helped Mrs. Cowles buy.

LA: Yes. I said, "You can't have anything but a Calder." So I went back to my office and I called Curt Valentin. He said, "Oh, really? It's funny that you called because Sandy [Alexander Calder] is right here in my office and I'll send him right down." So I said, "Fine." I went into Mrs. Cowles's [office] and said what he'd told me -- an evidently

fool-proof loop. He went in and looked at the space and said, "I'll get you something in two weeks" and left, after having said, "How do you do." Have you ever seen Calder? You know what he looks like.

SZ: Yes.

LA: So he goes out and she sends for me and says, "I've never been so insulted in my life. Anybody who's going to do anything for me, they're going to jump through hoops." She was very irate. So I rushed back to my office, called Curt Valentin and said, "My God." Told him what had happened. He said, "Lily, he only came over because of you. Don't give it another thought. He has plenty of work" -- which he did have. The ironic thing is that when she did Flair, the first issue featured Calder. That was some years later.

SZ: Sort of makes a nice ending to the story. Curt Valentin was involved already at the Museum at that time, no? Or did that come a little bit later?

LA: He wasn't involved. He was a very well-known dealer.

SZ: People have told me stories, that he would come in, would visit a lot....

LA: I suppose so. You know, the whole world was different then. It was in the '40s. I just got to know him quite well. Dorothy Miller and Alfred saw a lot of him. Peggy Guggenheim knew him quite well. I heard the news of his death when I was in Venice. I was over at Peggy Guggenheim's and I guess she heard. It was a terrible shock to everyone. I think I got that Matisse lithograph from him, because he called me up one day while I was at Harper's Bazaar and said he'd just gotten this portfolio from Matisse and he wanted me to see it. He thought I could afford it; I think it was

fifty dollars at that time. So I rushed over and got that, which I love.

SZ: It's wonderful. It's so simple and penetrating, it's really wonderful. So when and how did you get drawn into the Museum?

LA: I was a friend of Mary Barnes's, because her husband, Ed [Edward Larrabee Barnes], had been in Cambridge during the war. She and Elodie Courter were both getting married at the same time and Elodie worked at the Museum, and so did Mary, I think [Note: Mary Barnes began working for Philip Johnson and stayed at the Museum until _____]; you'd have to check on that. They were working like mad trying to get something out and I came in one day just to visit around, as you say, and they said, "Lily, you can help us." They wanted me to help them, something like stuffing envelopes, something simple. So I did that.... I'd known Mary very well, then I got to know Elodie. She was married to [Robert] Osborn, the cartoonist. So that was fun, to know them. They both became very good friends of mine. I have a feeling that Elodie died, but I'm not sure. [At the time of this interview, Elodie Courter Osborn was living in Salisbury, Conn.]

SZ: ....That was how you first came in, stuffing envelopes or whatever. What was your impression of the institution at the time?

LA: I just loved it. It was marvelous. As I said, at college I met a lot of artists and architects because they all drifted in, so I felt very much at home right from the beginning. It was very open then. The director had his door open and you didn't have to make an appointment.

SZ: The director then was....

LA: René d'Harnoncourt. Then Blanchette Rockefeller started what was then called the Junior Council. Dorothy Miller suggested me to her, so she called and invited me

over to tea and I got on the Junior Council, one of the first series of new members. That was quite interesting at the time.

SZ: It was new.

LA: Yes.

SZ: And what was the sense of those that were participating about what it was and what it was going to do?

LA: In a way I always had a feeling that unofficially -- so I don't whether you should quote me on this -- it was kind of a training ground for trustees, and a lot of people who are now trustees were on the Junior Council: Joanne Stern, me, Mrs. [Beth] Straus...and Celeste Bartos. I think that's almost all of us.

SZ: So the acceptance of membership I assume on some level implied that you were accepting a future relationship [with the Museum]?

LA: No, not at all...the participants of the Junior Council weren't aware of that, but later on.... Now Barbara Jakobson, who became the president after Joanne and I left...I was not the president; she [Joanne] was the president and I was the secretary, which is not like being a secretary, it's just a title. We made a lot of decisions together. She was very active and very good. We were in that for about twelve years. Then I thought it was better by that time -- we weren't all that junior -- I thought it would be best if we retired and let someone else take over....

SZ: The Junior Council -- my impression is that it was a very exciting place to be at that time.

LA: It was, it was great fun. They started the Art Lending Service.

SZ: Did you have something to do with that?

LA: I don't remember who was the initiating force. I don't know exactly what's happened to it now. I don't think it's still in operation because the canvases got to be so huge you couldn't really have anything in the house.

SZ: And there was a calendar.

LA: We did the calendar, yes.

SZ: What about the contact between Junior Council members and staff. I guess Alfred [Barr] had something to do with it?

LA: Yes, and Dorothy Miller. He didn't have anything official to do with it, but in those days it was all very free and easy. Now, if you wanted to see Bill Rubin, you'd have to make an appointment. I still see, and so does Joanne, a lot of the staff members, but that's because we've been around for so long -- Kynaston McShine, John Szarkowski, who's now retired; Peter Galassi's taken over. We have a new guy in the architecture department, Terry Riley, and I'm the trustee head of the architecture department. It's great fun with him there. He used to be the dean at Columbia.

SZ: In the early days of the Junior Council you worked essentially with Dorothy Miller and....

LA: It's hard to say "worked with," because I don't think they really had anything to do

with the Junior Council. I just got to know them, because I'd known them from Tanglewood.

SZ: I thought I'd read that Bill Lieberman and Wilder Green had some kind of....

LA: That's right. We had sort of like a faculty adviser, Lieberman and Wilder, and now it's Riva Castleman. I can't remember even what they call themselves now [Contemporary Arts Council], because they always hated being called the Junior Council. It didn't bother me....

SZ: But when, for instance, you were choosing artworks for the calendar, would they in some way counsel on that?

LA: I think so, but they were all things from the Museum, you see, so there was no real problem. It wasn't as though we went out and got things from dealers that hadn't been accepted by the Museum....

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SIDE 2, BLANK

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INTERVIEW WITH: **LILY AUCHINCLOSS (LA)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

DATE: **APRIL 7, 1993**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: What I didn't get to ask you about last time was a little bit about the International Council and why that appealed to you.

LA: I was invited by...I can't remember whether Mrs. Rockefeller asked me or.... I think she asked me to be on the Junior Council early on. Then almost everyone who was very active on the Junior Council was invited to be on the International Council in due course. I can't remember when I became a trustee, but you could probably find that. Seventy-one, was it?

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

LA: What appealed to me about the International Council?

SZ: Do you remember some of the trips that were particularly meaningful to you?

LA: They were all fairly interesting. The thing I don't like now about it is there's so many people. I think I told you that before. Now when we go on a trip it will be a hundred if you count the curators that will come and the travel agency, which is very nice,

they're wonderful, so they're an asset really, but it's a lot of people and there are a lot of things we can't do as a result, because these trips are just too popular. We're going to Paris in about a week.... We have a spring trip every year. Once it's in America or Canada, the following year it will be some foreign place. We've been to Australia and to a lot of places. We haven't been to India and I don't think we'll go to India because I'm not sure whether we have a member right now from India. We may have someone. [Anand] Sarabhai is, I think, an Australian, isn't he? No, an Indian. It's hard to manage in that country. The airports are crazy.

SZ: You've been.

LA: No, but I've been to Bali and it's sort of the same disorganized atmosphere.

SZ: Plus, I think, the political problems are enormous at the moment.

LA: Yes. Plus you have to take a lot of shots and I'm not really in the mood to take a lot of shots. I'm sort of afraid of it because I've been having so many tests. I had a head scan. They couldn't do a CAT scan because of my pacemaker. It was just a grueling day. Luckily, my daughter was home with me so we had a little fun. Which ones did I think were particularly nice?

SZ: I just threw that out as a way to talk about...the council really began with a specific mission in mind.

LA: It did, and I think it's been very successful from that point of view. We send shows now all over the world. Let's see if there's going to be one in Paris. There's their version of the Matisse show [the 1992 retrospective], I think.

SZ: That's right.

LA: It's a lot of fun, really, except that it's so big, because you get into places that you could never go into as a private citizen. I remember one London trip was very interesting because we got into the civic libraries....the British Library, isn't it? We saw these Michelangelo drawings, these things that are just not on show hardly ever because of fragility or something like that, various reasons. We had a show at the British Museum that year, as I recall, a show of drawings. But they're pretty strenuous, because I've noticed that these people -- not the travel agent, but whoever's doing it from the International Council -- they try to jam too much in. It really takes its toll. There was one year when we were in Spain, and everybody got sick. In Seville everybody had a bad cold because it just went through the bus; whoever started it, I don't know, but it was bad. So that part I don't like.

SZ: Do you think it still plays an important role in the Museum's...?

LA: Yes, because it's important that we have an interchange with museums all over the world. And they like it, the other museums like to see us, and they're very cooperative. There's a lot of entertaining. I've persuaded them not to have any black-tie things. I don't know how that's going to sit, because they're kind of a dressy crowd. That's kind of off the record.

SZ: I want to go back to something else that you touched on a little bit, to get more of a sense of René d'Harnoncourt and how he bridged the trustees and the staff -- what kind of an administrator he was and what you as a trustee felt about him.

LA: I adored him. I think a lot of people did. He was a lovely person. It sounds like a cliché -- it is -- but he was. It was never hard to get in to him. He had a divine

secretary and she'd just tell you whether he could see you or not, but most often she'd make room for you. He had a kind of open-door policy, I would say. At that point I think Barr had resigned -- somebody must have told you all the real facts about that -- but he kept coming in [LAUGHING]. I loved Barr too. I got to know him. I'm sort of the kind of person who gets to know everybody, in a way. But I think it was difficult for René.

SZ: To have him there?

LA: Yes. It would be, really. René was Nelson's person, you know -- Nelson Rockefeller. He'd met him, I think, in Mexico. He [d'Harnoncourt] came to Mexico from Austria and got into the United States. He was very big on the American Indians, which was his great love. The red Indians, they called them in Europe. People are calling them Native Americans now. It was very cozy in those days. It was shortly after the war that I started there. I told you that I was helping Mary Barnes, so all the guards thought I was on the staff. Then I finally did get...connected through the Junior Council, as it was then called.

SZ: You said it was hard for René to have Alfred Barr around. Do you think it was hard for Barr?

LA: Yes, it was hard for both of them. I don't think it was hard for René. He was very tactful and very diplomatic.... I think all the staff loved him. It's hard to tell, but don't you get that impression?

SZ: Yes.

LA: He was a wonderful man. Of course his daughter [Anne] is now director of [the]

Philadelphia [Museum]. But I'm sure I'm telling you things that you've already heard.

SZ: Your perspective has got to be somewhat different. I'm thinking in particular of the trouble that came after [d'Harnoncourt's retirement] and then the role of the trustees, how it was impacted and how and if it changed.

LA: Then we had a bad period...I can't remember the chronology of it but John Hightower was there.

SZ: First there was Bates Lowry, who René d'Harnoncourt had some hand in accepting.

LA: I'm sure he did. And then Hightower.

SZ: After Lowry, there was the three: there was Walter Bareiss, Dick Koch and Wilder Green. For about a year they ran then Museum, and then Hightower.

LA: But Walter Bareiss was never involved with that, I don't think. He's not on the board, really; he's on a lot of committees. He's very, very bright and has a tremendous collection of drawings -- very erudite.

SZ: For you as a trustee, what was that period like? There was a lot of upheaval. There was upheaval in society and....

LA: I don't know whether I was a trustee then.

SZ: It was right around that time. You would have come right in the middle of it. You were a trustee by the time Dick [Oldenburg] was appointed, I'm sure.

LA: Yes, I think so. How long has Dick been there?

SZ: Twenty-one years. He was appointed in January of '72 as acting director, then he became director in June of '72.

LA: Yes, I think I was then. The main difference between the Museum the way it was when I first got involved and the way it is now is like all other places: it's just gotten bigger and therefore more impersonal. I make an effort to get to know as many people on the staff as I can, but it's much harder; there are just so many of them. I know all the heads of departments but I don't know as many of the sub people. Each department is bigger.

SZ: You've been so involved in so many areas, too. I was going to ask you how you could compare your trusteeship there to some of the other institutions for whom you served the same function.

LA: Again, it's a question of size. The American Academy in Rome is quite small; there are only about a third [as many trustees as at the Museum]. Several of them are out of town. It's just more intimate; still is. I was taken out for a birthday lunch yesterday by Jack Hyland, who's the president, and John Sargent, who's very active at the academy, and Frank Gilligan. They're all very jolly and they sent me flowers for my birthday. Actually, so did [Kirk] Varnedoe. That had nothing to do with my birthday, he was just thanking me for something. I'm not complaining about that. It's just that the whole atmosphere is just much more businesslike and so on. I told you I had to give a big party for Riva Castleman's department about two weeks ago, because she's trying to start a print endowment. She's the head of prints and [illustrated] books. So I said I'd give a dinner party for eight and she insisted I give it for twenty-three, which I thought was a little much. But I did it anyway [LAUGHING]. I said,

"How come I have to have so many?" She said, "Well, there were so many requests for you." I had Chuck Close, who's very popular, so I guess that was a good combination. Anyway, it's over. But I had to have a lot of people that I didn't know. I had some that I did know. I had the de Menils, and I threw my daughter in and she didn't pay. But I think all in all it was very successful. I mean, all the parties were successful. So how did we get onto that?

SZ: I was asking you if there were things about being a trustee at the Museum were different than at other institutions.

LA: Mainly it's just bigger. There are over forty members of the trustees' board now. It's funny (this is also off the record), if David [Rockefeller] isn't there -- as we call him, Mr. David -- it's much more relaxed and there's much more intercourse between board members, and conversations.

SZ: That's another question I was going to ask you, and we can decide what's on and off [the record] when we see the transcript, but the Museum's been called a Rockefeller institution -- I don't know whether that's something you've felt from your point of view but....

LA: It gradually seeps in. You're aware of it gradually.

SZ: Do you think that's still true?

LA: I think so, in a way. I think David got in just recently some kind of a group to analyze finances and made Dick very nervous. It's just a whole kind of different world in a way. It's not really against him so much; he's just complying with the way the world works now.

SZ: If that is to some degree still true, what does that mean for the future of the Museum?

LA: That's hard to say. I don't know how old David is. He's about my age, I guess, which is seventy-one now. I think it's one of his favorite things, because his mother was deeply involved and they all felt very strongly about that. Now Rodman, who is Nelson's son,...[is on the board and is] on the International Council and comes to those meetings occasionally. He married a girl, Sascha, who worked at the Museum. He's very retiring, very shy, and they don't have much impact, those two. David's son, who is also David, is very attractive. [He] lives in Boston, though, and his main interest is music; I don't know whether he's started to collect or not, but I think he's interested in education because he's on the education committee -- a very pleasant young man. So I think there will always be a Rockefeller. David has thousands of kids, but they're all pretty diverse. There's one that's up in Boston that's kind of crazy, invented some kind of a toilet [LAUGHTER]. Did you hear about that? Have you talked to Porter McCray?

SZ: Yes.

LA: Good. He has lots of stories. I don't know whether he's giving with it or not, but he's been with them for a long time. He got kind of a bad deal when he retired.

SZ: You were around for that.

LA: For his retirement? Yes. He became a very good friend of mine. I think it was because of me that the Rockefeller ladies -- Blanchette and Tod [Mary Clark Rockefeller] -- started giving him money, because I'd been giving him as much as

the law allows for some time now, every year. He's a very valuable person. He's getting old now but he's very game, he gets out to everything. He had his leg amputated. Tod has been very nice to him. She's very fond of him and invites him all the time. She's getting old too. They have this woman, Sister McCormack or Mother McCormack [Elizabeth McCormack] -- nobody's mentioned her? In town there's a Dr. McCormack; he's a good friend of mine. Now I can't remember his first name, but he was Blanchette's doctor, too, right up the street. This woman was his sister and she was a nun, a big-time nun, a mother superior. Then she decided to jump over the wall, and she married a Jewish gentleman. She's extremely smart; I think she got a MacArthur something-or-other. I'm not sure of that. Maybe she's just on the board of the MacArthur, which is pretty hefty in itself. I remember when she first left the nunnery, her sister-in-law was a friend of mine since childhood, and she asked me if I'd help outfit her because she didn't have any clothes. So I did. We went around and got her some clothes that were kind of respectable. Then she got married. And she's a powerhouse, a real powerhouse, and she ran Blanchette towards the end. Not really ran her, but decided what she was going to do. She would have sent...I don't think she [Blanchette] ever went to a nursing home. I'm not sure about that; I don't think she did. But this woman would have, if she'd had her way. I think Jay [Rockefeller] stepped in and said, "Why should she go to a nursing home?" They have all these houses and she could have had round-the-clock nursing, which is what my mother had. It was crazy.... I don't know how she got to them [the Rockefellers], although she said she did. I think it began through David.... See if you can find out. Mother McCormack. She's also on the board of the American Academy in Rome and, as I said, she's involved in the MacArthur award.

SZ: So she's on the board [of the American Academy] with you.

LA: Yes. She doesn't come all that much, but enough.

SZ: I'm just looking at some of the other things: the fiftieth anniversary -- the latest expansion -- I know you were fairly active in that.

LA: What did I do, raise money? My last money-raising attempt, yes. I did the annual fund for too long. I'm through with fundraising, unless I feel like it and can do it without being asked. But if anybody asks me, I say no [LAUGHING].

SZ: So at this point you're really interested in what parts of it [the Museum]?

LA: I'm very interested in the Department of Architecture. I'm interested in [the Department of] Painting and Sculpture, too, because Kirk Varnedoe is such an amazing man. He's rather cold but he's extremely interested. You learn a lot at these committee meetings. It's a wonderful experience. You get a lot of insight into all kinds of things.

SZ: Do you feel the change from Bill Rubin to Varnedoe?

LA: I wasn't in [the department of] Painting and Sculpture then. I think I told you I stopped collecting, really. If I see something I like, I'll buy it, then give it to the Museum -- if they want it, you know. But it's usually something that I see at one of the meetings....

SZ: So when you said that it's interesting and you learn a lot, you're really saying that it's mostly for you.

LA: What do you mean?

SZ: For your own pleasure and edification.

LA: Yes.... I think that's what it's supposed to be. Then we have some scholars on these committees, who are very helpful and who don't contribute money but they contribute knowledge and expertise.

SZ: And that's how it's supposed to be also.

LA: Yes. Well, I'm sorry....

SZ: Had enough [LAUGHTER]?

LA: No, if you can think of questions.

SZ: I can just throw things out and see if it brings anything to mind.... I myself for some reason was remembering the visit of Jimmy Carter. I'm thinking of special events.

LA: I don't remember. I remember we were supposed to have [President John F.] Kennedy, but he got shot.... I don't know who we got instead. I think we got Lady Bird [Johnson].

SZ: You had Lady Bird for the '64 expansion [reopening].

LA: Yes, that was the year that Kennedy was killed, and she came. She's a very nice woman. Do you know her at all? She's terrific. When we were in Texas she invited us [the International Council] to her house, had a big lunch for us, which was damn nice of her -- you know, ninety people for lunch is quite an order. She has a fantastic memory. She's a very good friend of Molly Parnes, who lived in this building and is

now dead. She called Molly at least once a week and told her I had been out there with the council. So Molly told me in the elevator, "Lady Bird told me you were in Texas." Her apartment is still on the market. It's a terrific apartment but they're hard to sell now. It's smaller than this one, a lot smaller, two bedrooms, but beautifully decorated. She had a lovely Matisse that I think was in the Matisse show, I'm not sure.

SZ: Looking back, what for you has been the most satisfying part of your association with the Museum?

LA: I think just learning, learning to know people, which is the way I've always learned. I never took an art course in college. I just started learning through people like Josef Albers and Breuer and Gropius and all of them that were up in Cambridge.... So I'd just say it was a great learning experience, being around all those people and all that art, and being on all those committees and getting to know things. All the committee heads give talks at the acquisition meetings. They give sort of a lecture and then they all report at various times during the year to the trustees as a whole. So that's what's fun. All those things are fun -- less fun than it was when we were smaller. Because that's the way of the world; you can't blame the Museum.

SZ: Thank you.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2

SIDE 2, BLANK

END INTERVIEW