THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**PEARL L. MOELLER (PM)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Pearl, tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family background.

PM: I was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1915, which I do not tell to everybody, and I grew up outside of New Haven and my family was in the real estate business. I went to schools in New Haven, the public schools--Hillhouse High School, which was very fine, one of the best high schools in the country. At that time, it was tops. I have two brothers. My father died quite early; he was in his fifties. My mother is still alive at age 101. She's in a nursing home in Connecticut, and she has all her marbles; she's very frail now, in a wheelchair, but her head works fine. That's why I've been away this summer, I've been back and forth, a lot.

SZ: Were both of your parents from New Haven?

PM: No. My father was from New Haven; his parents were both born in Germany, came over in that great German influx in the 1880s. My mother was born in upstate New York, and her people were early settlers. They were New Englanders originally and there's a big statue to a great-great uncle of mine who fought in the Revolution. Whenever we used to go through Westfield, Massachusetts, we'd say, "Hi, Uncle Shep"; he is on the main square of the town. After Hillhouse I went to a girls' private

school called the Gateway to get some credits; I needed some extra credits in math to get into Mt. Holyoke College. I went to Mt. Holyoke because a very dear friend of my mother's was Holyoke and also a teacher I had at the Gateway School had a great influence on me. I took the exams and went all through that horrible business of college boards, and I got in.

SZ: That's what you wanted, was Holyoke.

PM: Yes. I visited Smith, and I had cousins that went to Smith, but I really liked Holyoke. I was there for four years and I acquitted myself, I guess, fairly well. Actually, I majored in economics and sociology, because those were Depression days and people wanted to get a job when they got out. I minored in art and I always painted, always wanted to be a painter. Then, finally, when I graduated from Mt. Holyoke in 1938 I went down south to school, to William and Mary, and took two years there of studio art. I had all art history from Mt. Holyoke, everything I could get in.

SZ: As a minor.

PM: Yes, I minored in psych and history of art, really, but I didn't have any studio art because in those days they didn't have any studio courses at Mt. Holyoke; now they have them all over the place, you can take anything, major in studio art, but this was unheard of in 1938. So I went down to Richmond, the art school was there, and it was called Richmond Professional Institute of the College of William and Mary.

SZ: That was a big change, wasn't it?

PM: Well, I had friends in the South, and my two brothers' roommates were from the South--they both went to Princeton.

SZ: Are they both older?

PM: I'm the oldest; there's one year's difference between the three of us, but I was always

the older sister and I had to set the example. So I went to Richmond and I loved it; they were two of the happiest years of my life, and that's where I really learned about modern art, because in Mt. Holyoke it was all history and Renaissance art, that kind of thing. This is not to denigrate Mt. Holyoke, but the teachers that I had in Richmond had both studied at the Art Students League, so this was a whole new world to me, the world of abstract, the world of color, and I took all those courses. That's when I began to think about...well, my first thought was to come to New York and try and make it as an artist, ha ha, on my own. I visited the Museum in those years that I was in Richmond. In 1939, of course, the "11" building had opened, and I was very impressed with the whole place, and I thought, This is where I want to work.

SZ: Let's go back for a minute. You had an interest in art always, I would assume.

PM: My grandfather owned an opera house in New Haven; it was filled with the light opera's stars, like Victor Herbert and Franz Lehár. In fact, the piano that I learned to play on, which was an old upright, had been in the pit of this old opera house. The opera house burned to the ground. Fortunately, nobody was in it, it happened in the middle of the night; what was the cause, I don't know. But my mother tells the story when she and my father were courting and she had access to the family box there with the red velvet upholstery and all the elegant furnishings of the theaters of that time.

SZ: You mean it was your father's father who owned it.

PM: It was Father's father who owned it.

SZ: And he was musical, I assume?

PM: The whole Moeller family was musical. I had two aunts who studied in Germany. Then, of course, they had the opera house.... Lots of people, like Rosa Ponselle, a famous opera singer, and others all sang there. But it was light musical comedy, it wasn't like the Met. I started to say that the piano that I learned to play on, which had

been an upright piano in the pit, Victor Herbert had played on it and, I think, Franz Lehár, they were all alive then. But I never knew any of them; this all burned and my grandfather died before I was born, but of course these were stories in the family, naturally, and I was always very excited by them. I never saw any pictures of that opera house, because everything just burned, but they did manage to salvage some records, and my mother was for a while negotiating with the Lambs Club here in New York to try and maybe give these things to them.

SZ: What did your father do?

PM: He was in real estate.

SZ: Yes, you said. So, no connection to Yale, you were just in New Haven?

PM: Yes, but my grandfather had founded the Narragansett Brewing Company in Rhode Island and my father was president of that and traveled back and forth, but we always lived in New Haven....

SZ: Anything else from those early years? Sounds like you had a pretty happy childhood.

PM: Yes. I had a lot of advantages and privileges; I realize that now. You realize these things when you get older; you don't at the time, you're too young, but I had an inkling even then. It was fascinating, in a way. Of course, we had our usual family problems, too, as every family does. My father's early death was a terrible blow, he was 51.

SZ: How old were you?

PM: Twenty-three, 24. I was just out of school.

SZ: You mentioned school during the Depression. Did the Depression affect your family situation very much?

PM: It affected every family situation, because it was the days of "waste not, want not." People were just careful. Now, when I see this greed of the '80s, people of my generation just can't understand it. But things were much more reasonable then. Lunch was fifty cents, a dinner was sixty-five cents--that was a great dinner. If you had a date, the guy, for a dollar, could take you out and you could have a marvelous time. Movies were thirty-five cents. It was different, in every way, in those days.

SZ: But you could still go to school, obviously, and then think about graduate school and the rest of it.

PM: Yes, but I knew when I got out of graduate school that I was going to work. We won't get into the beaus and boyfriends and all that stuff. I don't think that has any priority, really I don't.

SZ: I would like to know, but we can do it off-tape. [LAUGHTER]

PM: Well, you know, I got around, I didn't sit home.

SZ: I'm going to ask you this question because I have a little personal interest in it; what life was like, the college life, then, at Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Amherst, whatever?

PM: We studied very hard, because the pitch was, you got through school and then you were going to go to work, because it was the Depression. But there were still a lot of social things. We had wonderful dances and wore long gowns, and you borrowed dresses sometimes from your roommates. But you see, we were all young, so it wasn't as if we were depressed, it was a lot of fun too. There were all kinds of activities. That's one of the things that I regret, because I got good marks and I studied very hard and I graduated with honors, but if I had it to do over again, and I tell young people now: "Go out for as many activities as you can," don't worry about the average, get through with a C-plus, because when you get out, as long as you have that degree, nobody's going to go back (unless you're going to become a

professor or something) and worry about whether you got an A-minus average or a C-plus; all they want to know is that you got that degree in good standing. Those other activities--there were a lot of extra curriculars--I would have loved to have gone out for. I was very musical, and I was in the glee club and the choir and all that, and I took whatever sketch club was offered, but there were other things that I would have liked to have participated in, but I always felt my marks would suffer. There again, I felt I owed my parents because they were putting me through, and I felt I should get good grades.

SZ: And so you did.

PM: So I did. But I made some wonderful friends. Many of them are gone now, but I still have three very close friends that I keep up with from college, and also from Richmond, from graduate school.

SZ: The major in economics, that was tied to the Depression too?

PM: It was really sociology that I majored in, but it was one department at that time, and I don't regret that major. I learned a lot about the history of business and the history of all social mores and everything. I had wonderful teachers. Also along the way, art customs were brought into these various courses, so I don't regret that. I think it was an excellent background, and considering the fact that I did a lot of business work in the Museum later on--I had to do budgets and so on--it was very good training, I don't regret it. The art courses, I took whatever I could, but you have to learn by doing in art. In museum work you have to learn every day, about new artists and everything, especially in the contemporary field.

SZ: When you went down to Virginia, you went down because you wanted to get the studio aspect of it?

PM: Yes. I wanted to get the studio aspect of it. In the back of my mind, I always had New York in mind and I always had painting [in mind] and I always knew that I needed

training, and I just loved it. Every time I had a chance to come to New York I'd be in the Metropolitan. I had an aunt who lived here for a long time and I used to visit her. Then I had this European background, you see, with my grandparents and the opera house, and the music, so I was in a family that was artistically oriented. My mother, even though she had had no training, had a feeling for it; she still does to this day. Whenever I send her cards from the Museum or anything, I bring up stuff all the time, she just loves it, even though she doesn't understand modern art. She says, "That's not the point, you either like it or you don't." Now that's very sophisticated, really.

SZ: So it wasn't anything that she followed, in your early years?

PM: Not formally, but she was always interested and alert to it. I remember the first museum I ever went to was the Peabody. "Peabuddy" they say now, but we said Peabody in New Haven. They had all those dinosaurs and all that stuff, and of course I was fascinated as a child. I also went to the Yale Art Gallery early in the game, and after all, New Haven is a cultural town. Then they had the concerts at the famous Woolsey Hall.... So I had all these opportunities, and I was taken to these events; my mother was very good about that. I remember there was a place called the Old Morris House, and this was my first introduction, really, to history, and to the sense of history, because so many young people today don't have a sense of history. A great pity! She took us there. This was a house that had been completely refurbished and they put all the furniture of colonial times in it...and it was fascinating, we spent the whole afternoon there. My mother was very history oriented, I would say, for a country woman. She was born and raised in upstate New York on a farm; they were country people, but she had a great love of antiques, particularly early American furniture, and is very knowledgeable on the subject to this day!

SZ: What about New York? Did you get to visit it often when you were in New Haven or at school?

PM: Yes, every chance I got I would come down, because in those days it was a dollar and a half roundtrip. I remember my father would give me ten dollars or I would take

ten dollars out of my bank account, and for that I had a roundtrip on a train that arrived on time, it was clean. I would go the Metropolitan and meet my friends and have a lovely lunch in a nice restaurant--not "21" but a nice restaurant--I would see whatever the current show was, and of course I'd come here [The Museum of Modern Art]. Then I'd get back on the train around six o'clock, buy presents for the whole family, a little something for everybody, and come back and have enough money so that if somebody couldn't meet me, I had enough money for a taxi to come home, and I always had, like, three dollars left over. I never came back with the ten dollars completely spent. I just felt that was not right; you see, that's that old New England training.... And now, when you think of it, I tell people this today and they don't believe me! Of course, that was a full, lovely day, and ten dollars was a lot of money in those days. But I saved it up, you know. I worked at Yale at one point, doing a summer job, typing. You know, here and there, odd jobs.

SZ: The program in Virginia was a two-year program?

PM: It was four years.

SZ: But you only stayed two.

PM: To get a bachelor of fine arts degree, that was four years, but I had a Mt. Holyoke degree, and so in the two years of concentrated study I got all those painting and composition and color and sculpture courses to qualify for a B.F.A. I couldn't qualify for a masters down there because I would have had to stay longer and get all those additional art history courses.

SZ: And you didn't want to do that?

PM: No, I'd had four years at Mt. Holyoke and I had two years of studio work and I wanted to come north and get on with my life, either work or get married--you know, make the next plan. I loved the South and I've been back there several times, over the years.

SZ: It's so different, though, isn't it?

PM: Yes, the school has now, of course, become part of Virginia Commonwealth University, I'm very happy to say. My diploma is from William and Mary, but if I wanted to, I could have that changed to the Virginia Commonwealth University, because the school is now under that aegis and they got a load of money from all sources, and the place extends way down the street now. What was a small little art school, but very good, is now a major university. They combined with the Virginia College of Medicine and other schools in the area in 1968, and they're a big deal now, they have thousands of students. But I loved it, I loved the South. It was a whole new vista to me, which I never understood before.

SZ: I would assume that the majority of students was from the South?

PM: Yes. There were a few Northerners. I had two roommates and they were both Southern ladies. Both of them had graduated from Southern colleges and they were doing graduate work there, as I was; they both had B.A. degrees, one from Randolph Macon, which is one of the best girls' schools in the South, as you know, and the other from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I was the "damn Yankee," except they never made me feel that way. It was also nice, it was a change for me, because I'd been in a girls' school for four years, and this, of course, was coed.

SZ: And you'd been to a girls' school previously, as well, right?

PM: Only for one year to the private school The Gateway, but I was four years at Hillhouse Public High School, and that was wonderful. My father was right in that. He said you should go to public school some time in your life, as you meet all kinds of people to prepare you for the future. And that was, of course, a splendid school then; people got into Yale and Princeton and Harvard just like that, from that school. Next to The Boys' Latin School in Boston, Hillhouse had the highest scholastic rating in the country at that time and for many years thereafter.

SZ: It was a suburb of New Haven, the town?

PM: No, Hillhouse was right in the main part of town, next door to Yale. We lived out in a place called Westville, which is just a little bit outside the city, but they had trolley cars in those days, and we were very near the Yale Bowl, three blocks from the Yale Bowl, so I always had a date to the football games because I was a "handy date" [laughter], because they could pick me up and walk me, they could park the cars in our yard as a matter of fact, which they did. Then after the game we used to have a party. In our house I can still see that big roaring fireplace; we'd all come home from the game and it would be cold and we'd have hot cider or hot chocolate, and supper. It was great fun.

SZ: When you decided to come to New York, you went right from Virginia to New York, is that how it happened?

PM: No, my father died in the summer of 1940 and I stayed home that winter with my mother. I felt I should stay home and not start out for New York just then. I also wanted to get this secretarial course under my belt, because I had inquired around and I knew that I couldn't get into an art museum without a specific skill, because while I was well-educated (I also knew French and Spanish), in those days typing and shorthand were essential.

SZ: Had you been abroad?

PM: Yes, two trips abroad, 1936 and 1938. I went with my family in '36 and as a graduation present I went in 1938.

SZ: Without them.

PM: With a group of girls; we went chaperoned, but we had a wonderful time.

SZ: The 1936 trip with your family....

PM: With my two brothers.

SZ: ...where did you go?

PM: We went to England, France, Belgium and Holland. The second trip, we went, oh, all over, five or six countries: Italy--the first time I saw Rome was in 1938; I've been back since, a couple of times....

SZ: Did you sense on either of those trips the rumblings of what was to come?

PM: Oh, yes, we were in Austria in '38, and Hitler had already taken over that country. There was a girl on our trip, a lovely woman, who couldn't go into Austria; she was Jewish and they wouldn't let her in. It was terrible, and those swastikas were hanging all over the place....

SZ: How did they know--just by the name?

PM: I don't know how that was, but, anyway, she was a New Yorker; I kept up with her for a long time. That trip didn't take us into Germany, but I've since been to Germany, well after World War II, because my people, my father's people, were from there. They were from the eastern part of Germany, which of course at that time I never

could go to. But in Germany in 1938 there were all these marching troops all around. I remember going from Austria to Italy through the Brenner Pass, the famous pass, and there were all the Nazis on the trains in uniform; they were all young boys, they were kids, really, seventeen and eighteen; it was frightening. I never saw Hitler but I saw Mussolini. When we were in Rome, we went out to his forum, the famous Mussolini stadium, which is still there, I think. We went out to one of those evenings

of military demonstrations and I saw him, in a white helmet and a white uniform, and all the troops were in solid black. It was astounding. I never saw Hitler, but some people did see Hitler, people who had been to Germany. As I said, I didn't go to Germany until well after World War II. In 1938 in Austria we, of course, were told very firmly not to engage in any political talk, which we never did. I'm sure that many people that we met there went into the army; if you were a young man in Germany, you were shot if you didn't go into the army. But I remember the Austrian Alps and how beautiful they were, all that end of it, but, yes, there was something hovering over all. Then I remember in London they had these signs under our hotel doors about what you do in case of an air raid and then they had a picture of a gas mask, and that horrified us. This was in 1938. I felt that there was definitely something brewing, and you could not see that army in that stadium of Mussolini's without thinking something's going to give, something's going to explode. People that went to Germany in 1938 said it was much worse there, the feeling and presence of the military.

SZ: You had a chance to look at the wonderful art that was there?

PM: Oh, yes. We went to the Louvre and to the National Gallery in London and all the Shakespeare country and down the French Riviera and all through Provence (Avignon), and of course [Henri] Matisse had not yet built his beautiful chapel there. But I knew that area, and that stood me in good stead later on when people would want to know about the Vence chapel, because I had driven all through that area. In Venice...of course we saw all the treasures of Venice. One of the highlights of the trip were all those hill towns of Italy, particularly Siena. All these slides and the Alinari prints that I had had at Mt. Holyoke--that's how we studied in those days, with Alinari prints. Remember now, we didn't have videos; only black-and-white slides, no color slides. These came to life, all of these masterpieces, and to see them in color and to see the size and the scale was fascinating. I'm sure you've had this experience.

SZ: When you think about what that must have been like, the difference must have just been astounding.

PM: To see the Sistine Chapel in color.... I'd like to see it now, after they've cleaned it; I know there's been a lot of criticism of that. Well, everything, no matter what it was, from London to Paris to Rome and Venice, Milan. To see the famous The Last Supper in color, even though it's deteriorating, outside of Milan.... Of course Titian, there were beautiful Titian portraits in Venice. I later saw those in the Brera in Milan, but many years later.

SZ: I interrupted your story. You were telling me that you had to take a secretarial course.

PM: It was because some of my friends who had graduated from Mt. Holyoke were looking in various places for jobs, publications, museums, etc., and they all got in through the secretarial route. This is something that absolutely amazed me every time I've gone back to Mt. Holyoke for a reunion, and I've been very active in Mt. Holyoke events, both in the New York club and South Hadley. I was on the board for ten years here, the club in New York, and worked hard to raise money, really did a lot of donkey work, too. I resigned from it, but, as I said, I was on it for ten years. But I used to go back to college, and one of the things that absolutely amazes me to this day is really the opportunities for women today. If you were born in these times you don't think about it, but compared to my day, there were only three alternatives, four alternatives then: you could either go and get a Ph.D. and teach, get married and have two children, and I'm not damning that.... I think I had one job offered me--there again, this was still the Depression--and that was teaching eighth-grade arithmetic in Springfield, in a high school. That was it; I mean, there were very few courses. So the only way you could get into things was through the secretarial route. I still do not criticize that route. That job I had here when I first started was a wonderful secretarial job; I worked for a marvelous man--Edward F. Kerns was his name. He was educated at Annapolis and M.I.T. and was the technical director of the Film Library. He had worked for RCA, and helped design the sound system for MoMA's auditorium.

SZ: That was your first job?

PM: My first job was I was hired as a secretary in the Film Library.

SZ: At The Museum of Modern Art.

PM: At The Museum of Modern Art. I had tried to get in here. I had sent all kinds of resumes and I had had interviews and everything, and the reason I got the job was because I had had this secretarial training. You see, in those days, Sharon, if you had a B.A. degree from a good school, they were a dime a dozen; you had to have a specific skill. I got in also because I knew Spanish, and at that time the Museum was engaged in a big Latin American contract.

SZ: Because this was 1941.

PM: This was 1941, and Nelson Rockefeller had been appointed by President Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, to be the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and that started about 1940. The idea was to have this exchange of culture between the two Americas and tighten it, make it more cohesive, closer. I was hired in October of 1941, October 11, 1941, actually, and I might add I was hired for six months at the maximum...in the Film Library. Of course, the Spanish was a big plus, because they needed someone who could read and translate Spanish; in fact, they gave me a test on it, and then, of course, I had the secretarial skills. They said the contract would keep renewing from year to year. So they said, "Miss Moeller, six months is all we can guarantee you." Six months in my young life, that was a long time, and I thought, Anything can happen, and it lasted thirty-nine years! [Laughter] So I always say, instead of The Man Who Came to Dinner--you know, that famous movie--I was "The Girl Who Came to the Typewriter" [laughing] and lasted thirty-nine years. We had those great big old typewriters and everything had to be done in quadruplicate copy for the government, you know. Nelson Rockefeller was running in and out all the while, plus we had all these wonderful writers and talented people from all over--very international group--and I was just catapulted into this. Other key staff members were

Arthur Krows, Forrest Izard, writers; Paul Falkenberg, Helen Van Dongen, cutters/editors; Gustave Pittaluga, music.

SZ: This was called the War Services Program?

PM: No, it was an Inter-American Affairs Cultural Program, and they not only sent art exhibitions to South America, but they also made films. What we did was, we screened films here in English on all sorts of subjects--health films, art films, sport films, just fun films, travel films--and then we put the soundtracks on them, in Spanish, French and Portuguese, because if they went to Haiti they had to be in French. We had all these writers, translators, people who were famous or who later became very famous. But at the time, we didn't know they were famous, because we all worked together. There was a marvelous esprit de corps at the Museum in those days, and there were only forty people on the staff, Sharon, just about, and that included everybody, from the cleaning lady right up to the chairman of the board, who was Stephen C. Clark, at that time.

SZ: You mentioned before that you had come to the Museum previously, you had visited before.

PM: Oh, yes. I saw the Italian show, the famous World's Fair [exhibition]. Nineteen thirty-nine was the World's Fair, and after the World's Fair closed, they brought all those pictures from Italian museums here. I saw that here. I don't think I saw Art in Our Time. I came after [the new building at] 11 West 53rd opened--that opened in May of 1939--and Art in Our Time was the show that opened that.

SZ: So you don't remember the Museum from your college days?

PM: No, I didn't know the Heckscher Building, I did not know it when it was in the Rockefeller homes on 11 West 53rd and I did not know it when it moved over to Radio City while the "11" building was being built. But I'm very sure of my history because, after all, I did all of that later on in special collections, that was part of my

job. Even in Mt. Holyoke, we heard about the Modern. It was very exciting, but there was also something very scary about it, very mysterious. I remember I had an aunt, when I finally got a job here and of course I was thrilled to pieces, she said, "You're not going to work in that strange place with those strange people?" There was a certain, I won't say suspicion, but it wasn't on the map, you see. This was one of the exciting things, to have been a part of how this thing moved on. Now, of course, you mention The Museum of Modern Art and everybody knows it all over the world, it's a magic word, but it wasn't when I started, or when all of us started.

SZ: But you wanted to work here.

PM: I wanted to work here. I went into MoMA and I said, This is it, this is it. I heard Ruth Olsen, who at that time was one of the docents, lecture, and I saw those Cézannes and I saw the Matisses. Remember now, I had been to Europe, but I hadn't seen too much modern art in Europe because we had concentrated on the old masters. That was it, I just said, This is it!! That was in late 1939, but then I knew I had to get those secretarial skills, because I had inquired around and also, I went to a lot of galleries on 57th Street to try and get a job, and it was tough. It was also tough because war was imminent and a lot of these galleries were closing, particularly the ones that had European connections. They didn't know whether they were going to be able to get the stuff from Europe, and, indeed, they didn't during the war. It was a closed situation. Remember, there were no planes flying anything over; you went to Europe in those days, you went by ship.

SZ: It was too dangerous to transport things.

PM: Yes, and don't think there weren't those German submarines all around because they were; those U-boats were everywhere. So things stayed where they were. That's why so many of the paintings here, starting with Guernica, were kept here; they couldn't go back. People were delighted they could be in America and be safe. But we didn't really know how safe we were either, because we had a complete blackout for four or five years. You couldn't light a light at night, everything was

blackened out with curtains and everything. We had air raid wardens.... I worked briefly in the Red Cross, typing names and stuff, and everybody went to war, the whole place went to war, including the Museum.

SZ: When you came to New York, I guess war had not....

PM: No, because I came in early October of '41, and I was hired within two weeks. I was terribly lucky, because I kept coming back to the Museum, and this woman who was head of personnel at that time, I think she kind of liked me.

SZ: What was her name?

PM: Florence West. Lovely woman. She did a lot of things, but she interviewed me. I did have pretty good credentials. She had said earlier, "When you get that shorthand and typing, we can do something." So then this opened up in the film department, Mr. Kerns needed a secretary.

SZ: Where were you living when you came to New York?

PM: I lived with three other girls--we were girls in those days--classmates from Mt. Holyoke up on Riverside Drive when it was lovely. We would sit out on Riverside Drive at night, it was gorgeous, no crime or anything. You would sit out there at eleven o'clock at night and never give it a thought. In fact, the whole of New York was glorious. I remember working late in the Museum because we had these reports to get out, walking at eleven o'clock at night down Fifth Avenue, and it was alive with throngs of people.

SZ: I was going to ask you, how did you get here from there?

PM: Took the subway. Then I moved. You know how those roommate things break up. Two of the girls got married and the other girl went back home. The apartment was sixty dollars a month, if you can imagine. We had three bedrooms and three baths

and a living room and a kitchen for sixty dollars a month, and I couldn't swing that [LAUGHING]. I think I started at the Museum at eighteen dollars and fifty cents [a week]--no, maybe it was twenty. But everybody else I knew was making eighteen. But you could do an awful lot on that money.

SZ: But not pay for an apartment for sixty dollars a month.

PM: Sixty dollars was too much. So then I moved to a little hotel on 39th Street called the Allerton House, which was very nice. It was a residential hotel for men and women both. I met some very lovely people there, nice people, I had a good time. They had parties, tea dances--thé danses, they were called. I just had a nice room there and then I ate out all the time. It was cheap to eat out, as I had told you earlier. Then, eventually, I got into Tudor City later on, where I still live.... That was all after the war.

SZ: That was where they used to pack meat.

PM: Yes, before Tudor City was built that was the meat packing district. Are you a New Yorker, Sharon?

SZ: Yes. I'm an historian, too.

PM: Do you ever remember that area before Tudor City...?

SZ: No, I just know what it was.

PM: It was all meat packing, and they say that in the early days there, you would get a whiff from time to time....

SZ: It used to smell so bad. That's what people have told me.

PM: I've been told that too. I never experienced that, because by the time I moved there, Tudor City had been established for a good twenty, twenty-five years, and the meat

packing plants were gone.

SZ: But, apparently, when it first was built, people would....

PM: Yes, because I think there were still remnants of that. Then, of course, I was there when the whole United Nations complex was built, suffered through all of that, when all the water was turned off and all the uproar and noise and everything, and when Mr. Rockefeller Senior gave the land. We went through all that, have seen all those changes in the area, to become the world center it is today.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: Then let me just ask you--you started to talk about what this place was like when you first got here--what the ambience was. You mentioned a little bit, certainly, about what its reputation was or wasn't....

PM: The minute the war came, that was a black day in New York, December 7, 1941. That was a Sunday.

SZ: You'd only been here for two months.

PM: Yes, I came in early October 1941. Then boom!, Pearl Harbor. That was on a Sunday, then on Monday I came into the Museum, where I had been working for two months.

SZ: Where were you when you heard?

PM: I was in this hotel, I was in the Allerton House. There was no television in those days. They had a great big radio, a very nice radio, downstairs in the main lounge. Of course, that kind of news spreads very fast, you know. We heard it on the radio that

the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, and we knew that was going to mean war. It was horrible. The next day was one of the blackest days I've ever spent in my life. I came to work, as usual. The whole town was bleak; it was like the day after [John F.] Kennedy was shot. Everybody spoke; strangers embraced each other. I get tears thinking about it. It was so emotional. And then, of course, everybody you ever knew, every brother, every father, every sweetheart, you knew what was going to happen: they were going to go to war. It was horrible. Then the Museum followed pace, immediately. I'm sure the trustees and Mr. Barr [Alfred H. Barr, Jr.] and all of them, the first thing they thought of was the safety of the works of art, because we did not know, Sharon, whether Hitler was going to come and bomb us. We did not know. We knew that there were submarines all over the place and we had heard of these long-range bombers, so we did not know. So every precaution was taken. Another thing that happened during the war was that all the social classes sort of disappeared. I remember working with people and you could be next to somebody in the Red Cross and they washed dishes at some honky-tonk restaurant in Brooklyn, and it didn't matter. On the other side of you was the chairman of the board of General Motors. It was just a mélange of people, and it didn't matter. Then when they had that famous stage-door canteen in Times Square for the men, you know, all the Broadway actors and actresses went there and worked; they washed dishes.... The town was just alive with servicemen in no time at all. This is what I'm going to speak of now, because the Museum, in addition to taking extreme care of the works of art and worrying about what was going to happen to them--and, indeed, having exhibitions about wartime projects, like Airways to Peace and Power in the Pacific, all those wonderful shows--they had these parties in the garden, because the trustees felt that the men who were in New York ought to be entertained. Many of them were on their way overseas and would never come back; others were here on their way to something else, or they had come from Europe to America. All the women on the staff were supposed to come to these parties, were asked to come, and it was like fifty men to every woman.

SZ: Sounds great [LAUGHING].

PM: It was great, it was great. They were all in uniform and they had music in the garden and dancing. I remember the first time I went, I wore high heels and a silk dress, I was all tooted up, and the second time everybody was practically in saddle shoes, which is what they wore in those days, and moccasins, because you were on your feet from nine til one o'clock in the morning. It wasn't that you were the belle of the ball, it was just a question of supply and demand [laughing]. And you felt so sorry for these men, because lots of them just wanted to talk to you. Most of them were enlisted men, Australians and English, Canadians, Americans. But, in addition to the music and the good food--and the garden was lovely, it was like a German beer garden, almost, in those days (it was before our formal Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden was made). They had top talent. They had Hildegaard, who was the famous singer, and I think Gertrude Lawrence came, all these people to entertain the troops. In other words, to make their time in New York happier. They could get tickets to anything, the best Broadway shows, like Oklahoma!; just show up in uniform and you would be given a ticket. And those tickets were hard to come by. In other words, New York went all-out to make it easier for these men who were defending us, who were going to defend our liberty against Hitler and Mussolini. Believe me, we knew what they stood for. There was no question about that.
But then at MoMA we had to continue our work. In fact, we doubled, tripled our efforts, because now we didn't want to stop. Then, this Latin American program, it was all gung-ho, because then, suddenly, North American and South America were the Western Hemisphere, we were isolated from everyone else, and then it was all the more reason to keep the culture and keep everything going, to preserve what we had, as we were now one, more than ever.

SZ: So at the Museum, this program did exactly what?

PM: As I say, it was to foster better relations between the two Americas in a cultural manner. This has been written up in lots of places.

SZ: I'm just wondering what you saw.

PM: Also, Mr. [René] d'Harnoncourt, he was the head of the art section in Washington, and he came to the Museum in 1944 as part of this program. Then, you know his history, he stayed and of course became director of the Museum in 1949. One thing I do want to say is, when I started as a little secretary in the film department--the Film Library, as it was then called--I never in my wildest dreams ever thought that I would screen and organize the papers of René d'Harnoncourt during his nineteen, twenty years of directorship, for filming by the Smithsonian in Washington. That's what I did after I retired in 1981; I was asked to do that by the trustees, Mrs. Parkinson Cobb [Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Cobb], specifically. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think.... First of all, I didn't think I'd last six months, and secondly, I never thought that I would end up, after thirty-nine years, and then do this. All the time I was doing these papers, which were a joy to do, but also problematical, too, because there were things that could not be screened--it's a mammoth archive--but all the time I was doing that, I thought, My God, am I really doing this? To go back now to when the war ended and the Latin American contract ended, I was asked to go into the library, which was on the fourth floor. I don't know if you want to know about the early days of that.

SZ: I do, but first I want to just stay with these early days. As you said, you've described it a bit, it was a staff of forty, so it was close, it was a close-knit group.

PM: Very close-knit, as I say. It was a staff where there was tremendous accountability. This is one of the things that I notice now, it's so huge--I mean, the Museum is big. There was a tremendous accountability, Sharon. Everybody knew specifically what everybody else did, and you all helped each other out. If Alfred Barr was desperate for someone to help with labels downstairs in the gallery, you went down there, you helped. You did all kinds of things, junky jobs that you had to do. Now you have so many machines. We didn't have fax, we didn't have xerox, we didn't have telex; if you wanted to send a telegram, you had to go to Radio City, practically, to send it. We all did errands, we did everything. Famous people, people like John Ford and Kenneth MacGowan and these famous film producers, they were lugging 35mm cans of film around New York. The day of the assistants and the assistant assistants

didn't exist, and people also did their original research. This is a thing now that I think is good but it also distresses me, because there are so many layers. If you were a curator in The Museum of Modern Art or you were a director, sure, you did have help, but you did a great deal of your own research. For example, Philip Johnson used to do his own research in the library. Alfred Barr did his own research. They didn't have this extra staff around all the time, the assistants and the assistants as I say.

SZ: Talking about Barr, when you got here, what kind of a presence was he to you?

PM: I was terrified of Mr. Barr, as we all were. We had heard about him, we had read his books. He was a tall, thin, commanding presence, and everybody, including all the bosses, were terrified of him, and I was for years. It wasn't that he was unkind or anything; he was very nice to people, he always spoke to you on the elevator, and was unfailingly courteous, a gentleman. But he was so powerful, and his knowledge was staggering! Then, of course, when I got to know him very well, I could call him Alfred, it was a different setup. He was a great help to me, he took my part in many things; he was one of the ones who first saw the need for the Department of Rights and Reproductions and appointed me to that job, to set it up. It's the department that Richard Tooke now runs, and I hired Richard Tooke and trained him. I must say, that the Film Library was not involved in the painting and sculpture end of the Museum, but the minute I hit the library in 1944, I got to know Mr. Barr, who was <u>there</u> every day.

SZ: I was going to ask you about what's been called a number of different things, but certainly, his demotion, about what you knew personally about that.

PM: I really didn't know too much about that, I really didn't. I know that they made an office for him in the back of the library. I remember James Sweeney coming to the Museum; he was then the director. And, of course, Mr. Barr was in the library every day then, and he did all his writing in the back of the library in a little office and used the library and was very, very helpful to all of us. I remember one time I had a

dreadful man come in and he wanted to know all about these Russian painters, and the only Russian painter I knew was [Pavel] Tchelitchew. Maybe [Kasimir] Malevich, I might have learned of him. He rattled off all these names to me, and I didn't know one from the other. I said, "Well, just a moment, I'll try to look them up in the catalogue." I didn't even know how to spell them. Alfred came out--and this man was terrible, he was really nasty; I think he was an art dealer--and I remember Mr. Barr appeared from nowhere, though he'd heard the conversation, and he told this man off in no uncertain terms and rattled off these Russian names. The man said to him, "Who are you?," and he said, "I'm Alfred Barr" in very measured tones. I thought the guy was going to faint dead away, because of course he knew his name. This was the power that he had. Then, of course, shortly thereafter, happily, he became Director of the Museum Collections. Then I had even more dealings with him, because I was in the library to work with the photographs of the collections and of the loans. After the war this whole thing just burgeoned, because everybody wanted to publish works of art in books, there was a lot of money in it after the war. These publishers who had held off during the war--abstemious times--immediately wanted to publish art books and all kinds of books dealing with modern works of art. Then Europe opened completely; as you know, from the Marshall [Plan] onward, everything was very prosperous. The Marshall [Plan] set everything up, so then we began to have correspondence from abroad. Three out of every five letters had foreign postmarks on them or were in foreign languages, because English was not that prevalent worldwide as it is now. They all started to come to the Museum, and that led, then, to [the Department of] Rights and Reproductions, because we had to have rules and regulations, to have that set up properly and legally. I was the logical person to go into that. I want to speak about Bernard Karpel in these years, because we worked very closely over many years

SZ: These are the years before you went to work for him?

PM: No, Bernard Karpel was the head of the library. He was my boss when I went to work there, when I left the Film Library and went into the library proper, Bernard Karpel was my boss. He was back from the war; he had served in the Signal Corps.

Beaumont Newhall had gone on to become the head of the Department of Photography. He was replaced by [Edward] Steichen and Beaumont went up to Eastman Kodak [George Eastman House]. I knew the Newhalls very well, both Nancy and Beaumont. Karpel was a young man, but one of the things about Bernard was, he was not only a word man, a book man, he was a visual man, and he saw the combination of words and pictures early in the game. He was a very unusual librarian. You see, now you have all these videos, all these visual things, Sharon, in every library in the world. We didn't have those then. Bernard also thought up various cataloguing ideas for pictures. Books had been catalogued, the Dewey Decimal System had been perfected and our system was based on that, but they did not have picture codes. Of course, Alfred Barr was very interested in this and Karpel was very interested in this. I'm still a member of several library associations and I keep up with all these computer indexes. Before Bernard died, I think he knew this was happening, but the things that he advocated are now in computer form, you see, and he was thirty years ahead of the game. He was, as we were in so many things in the Museum, far-seeing. I mean, just the idea of a television department in the '50s--unheard of. All those things that we now take for granted. Then, in the Department of Rights and Reproductions, another big thing that really changed things was mass color reproductions. I saw the first color negative, which is now just ordinary and is used for everything--slides, color transparencies, video, everything--I saw the first color negative in Steichen's office. A scientist from Eastman Kodak brought it down and Steichen, whom I knew very well and learned a great deal from, said "Pearl, I want you to see this, because it's going to revolutionize color photography. It is known as the color negative."

SZ: I want to just go back just for today and work a little bit more on the war years. I was going to ask you if there was anything else about the war years that you specifically remember.

PM: Well, I remember there were a lot of reports we had to do for Nelson Rockefeller that went to President Roosevelt. We often worked far into the night.

SZ: Rockefeller was not a presence, really? He was in Washington and he didn't really....

PM: He was in Washington, but the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs had an office on Madison Avenue, 444 Madison Avenue, and they were back and forth all the time. They had all these writers and people over there, and there was this constant traffic between 444 Madison Avenue and the Museum. That was the New York office for the Coordinator. It was a big, big project, which President Roosevelt was gung-ho on. He got Rockefeller to be appointed, and then the Museum immediately came into this under contract. Then René d'Harnoncourt. Monroe Wheeler was another one who was very active in that. Then, as I say, all these people who were trying to spread this gospel of North American culture to South America, and back and forth.... We shipped films down there to the American embassies in all these countries who distributed them. Lots of times they had terrible trouble with the electrical equipment; they weren't prepared. A lot of the letters I did were technical letters, because Mr. Kerns was technical director of the Film Library, as well as technical director of this Latin American program. And, of course, Iris Barry was right there and I knew Iris Barry very well; she was very interested in this program because it was international, and so important in wartime.

SZ: What was she like?

PM: A fascinating woman. She was very tiny, and she wore suits. She had very few clothes, but what she had, she knew how to accessorize. She never missed an opportunity for anybody on the staff to go to a party or an event because she always felt you might meet some important film people. Then, you know, we weren't on the map completely, and Iris needed every penny she could get from anybody who was connected with the film industry. I remember there was a very pretty girl in the film department and she was invited to a party at the Waldorf. She said, "I don't think I've got a dress to go to that really." Iris said, "What do you mean? We'll fix you up so that you can go to this party," because she knew there might be film people there, and there were. So she never missed an opportunity. She was fun, she had a wonderful sense of humor. I never worked for her directly, but I know Mr. Kerns

thought highly of her. She was very well respected. She had a clipped British accent. But also, I must get into the glamour now of those years, to get off from the Latin American program for a minute, because you must remember that the Film Library itself was going full speed all this time and carrying on its regular program, in trying to get films. Famous stars would come to MoMA--Mary Astor, I remember seeing her, and [Marlene] Dietrich, [Greta] Garbo. I remember when Tyrone Power came in a Navy uniform (wow!!), and we nearly fell over. Gene Kelly, Charles Laughton, Elsa Lanchester, Sir Cedric Hardwicke--all these people were making a parade back and forth to Iris's office, making these contracts for the films, to get the films here for our archives. Then, on the other side of the hall, there was all this Latin American traffic back and forth, equally famous people, like [Luis] Buñuel was here. I knew Buñuel as well as his secretaries, Mercedes Megwinoff and Grace Ortiz, who all spoke ten languages. It was a very moving cosmopolitan life. Then we screened films in that little screening room down there; I don't know if that's still there now, on the fourth floor. They'd all come in from the coast and they came in on the Twentieth Century Limited with the red carpet rolled out. I once saw that train; it went into Grand Central. And of course they'd pay you if the train wasn't on time. I remember seeing it with that red carpet rolled right out. They'd come with these great big suitcases. Gloria Swanson was another one--all the big stars. And you never knew when you picked up the phone there who was going to be on the other end of that phone. I remember I picked it up one time and a voice said, "This is Jean Arthur." I knew who Jean Arthur was, happily. So you never knew.

SZ: So it was exciting.

PM: It was very exciting.

SZ: Were there the same kinds of openings during the war that they have now?

PM: No formal openings. That was another thing: people did not dress during the war; this was a concession to the war effort. People didn't feel that it was proper to dress during the war or to show any ostentation of any kind. We all wore very simple

clothes, very plain. You had maybe a short cocktail dress or two. After the war, I remember, in 1946, overnight everybody wanted everything to the floor, formal, and the silver slippers and the gold slippers and the jewelry came out. Then, when the new look came in in 1947, oh, the style was absolutely revolutionary. We were ready for a change.

SZ: What was the new look?

PM: During the war the dresses were subdued--there weren't many, but they were short, as I said. There again, I remember we didn't wear any stockings during the war because there were no nylons; the nylons all went to parachutes for the air force, and it was considered quite acceptable to come to work without stockings. Elizabeth Arden came out with this awful leg makeup in three shades which you could wear, and this was acceptable; it stayed on for two or three days. Even after the war, nylons were in short supply. I was here in 1945, when [Dwight D.] Eisenhower went down Fifth Avenue, when VE Day was declared in Europe, in May of 1945. I'll never forget it, we all ran out of the Museum to see this. The war was over.

SZ: But it was after VE Day when Eisenhower came down Fifth Avenue?

PM: Yes, it was right after VE Day. Remember, we still had the Japanese to defeat, which happened in August of that year, the atom bomb.... That's another story. But he came down in an open green Cadillac, standing up, and of course with all the medals and everything. He was the hero, he was the European commander in chief during the war. Everybody followed every aspect of the war because everybody had somebody, you see, in the service, and people were terrified to get a telegram because you'd think "that was it." It was horrible. Then, I was up in the country in August when the Japanese surrendered on that famous ship, the Missouri. I thought of that when we had the Persian Gulf war, because anybody seeing that Missouri coming up the Persian Gulf would know that the Iraqis would be finished. You just had to take one look at that ship, that was it [laughing]. There again, I was up in Rockport, Mass., painting. They had all the church bells tolling and we danced on the

green and everybody got out the whiskey and Champagne they'd been saving for ten years and broke it open. I want to say another thing about the Spaniards, when the Spaniards were all here during the war years, they'd have sherry at eleven o'clock every morning, in their offices, they'd bring it out; that was the custom, to have a little nip of sherry. Can you imagine doing that now [LAUGHING]?

SZ: You called your first boss Mr. Kerns. How did that go at that time? Was that the proper thing to do?

PM: No, no first names. Miss Barry was Miss Barry, Mr. Kerns was Mr. Kerns, I was Miss Moeller--absolutely formal. Yet within that, there was an informality. I can remember going out to lunch with people and you'd call them "miss" and "mister." It was very, very formal, and it wasn't for a long time after the war that people began to be on a first-name basis.

SZ: I guess that was just an extension of what was societal.

PM: Yes, societal. But also--and this is another thing that a lot of people in the Museum never understood and they got into trouble--there was formality within informality within the Museum. For example, there were no nicknames used. Alfred Barr was never Al Barr, Andrew Ritchie was never Andy, Arthur Drexler was never Art Drexler. It was Arthur, it was Andrew, it was Dorothy Miller, never Dotty Miller, never. There were no nicknames used; first names, yes, but no nicknames. So there was formality within the informality, and a lot of young people didn't understand that and they got into trouble. I used to tell the kids on my staff, when I finally had a staff, I'd say, "Now remember: be careful."

SZ: Who were some of your friends? Did you have friends when you first came into the Museum?

PM: You mean my Museum friends?

SZ: Yes.

PM: Oh, sure. One of my dearest friends, and still is, was a girl by the name of Olga Gramaglia Canale, and she came into the department. Her brothers had been in the filmmaking industry in New York. Remember, not only were we screening films that were already made and putting soundtracks on them, but in a way we were almost producing films; there was a fine line there. Olga was a lovely girl; she came in as a secretary and then stayed for many, many years, and then married and became involved in the technical aspects of film. Margareta Akermark was there. I knew Margareta very well; we shared an office for a long time. We weren't close friends outside the Museum, but we were very good friends and she died much too early and could tell you so many things now. When I was getting some notes together over the weekend I thought, Margareta would just be able to tell you so many things. Richard Griffith was here; he was Iris Barry's assistant, running up and down the halls. Allen Porter, of course, he handled all the circulation of films, and then he went to war. Frances Keech was there, working for John Abbott. We became close friends. But I can remember in Allen's office the cocktail invitation, started at two o'clock, and he had a very pretty secretary by the name of Ann Warren, blonde, who later married Richard Griffith. There were a lot of romances in the Museum.

SZ: I want to hear about those [LAUGHING].

PM: I went to all those weddings. Not all of them, but a lot of them. Anyway, I was next door to their office. Mr. Kerns had one office and then Allen Porter had the next office; they were all connected with open doors. At two o'clock it started and naturally I could hear the conversation, and Allen would go to three or four parties a night, he was very social. Miss Barry, of course, stressed this and was delighted by this, because Allen knew everybody. I didn't. I was new to New York. One of the first Museum parties I was ever invited to was the Newhalls asked me to their home when they lived down the street here at 41 West 53rd, and I was thrilled to pieces because I didn't know anybody in New York. I had these Mt. Holyoke roommates and I knew people I'd met at the Allerton House, but I was new to New York, I didn't know

people. I'd never lived here, worked here. I remember going to that party and how impressed I was. Now, when I think of who was at that party! Paul Strand was there, Edward Weston was there, [Alfred] Stieglitz was there. But at that time, Sharon, I did not know how important they were to become. I knew they were important photographers, but now, when you tell people this, when you tell it to yourself, it's staggering, because they all became, of course, very, very famous people. They'd come into the library every day. Paul Strand used to come in to see Nancy Newhall and the Westons would come in from the coast. But we were all young and growing up.... But I remember that party very well. They were nice to ask me, because I was not a famous photographer. But I had a lovely time, and then of course there were more parties through the years, many, many Museum parties and openings, and I went to all those things. At one time I had several evening dresses lined up that you had to have, as you know.

SZ: Let me just see.... I have some other things, but I think I'll tell you off-tape and then we can do them next time if it strikes a particular memory. What about people like Monroe Wheeler?

PM: Oh, Monroe. Well, I had many dealings later on with Monroe because when the Department of Rights and Reproductions was founded in 1959. It was part of the library but I was really responsible to Monroe for that because that involved publications and rights and legal aspects. In fact, I had two or three bosses for many years. I had Alfred Barr because it was related to Museum Collections, and it was because most of the photographs we were selling were of collection works of art for these various publications of all kinds. That was another thing that I wanted to say here was that in my job, in charge of photographic services and the rights, I met everybody, because sooner or later, everybody needed a photograph. If you were a student at NYU, you needed a photograph; if you were the foremost living authority in Europe and you walked in the door and you were writing on the Bauhaus or whatever, you needed many photos. So I met everybody, and I never knew who was going to walk into the door next. I mean, I looked up one day and a man said to me, "I am Félix Klee," [Paul] Klee's son. Another time, I looked up and there was Mr. Barr

with Theo van Gogh's nephew, who was here for an exhibition at the Met. I met many famous people. You had to keep on top of everything to know who people were; you had to keep abreast of everything--the writers, the painters, everybody. Then I knew many of the painters before they ever became famous, which is important to stress.

SZ: As a Museum presence, was Monroe...?

PM: ...very important, yes, of course. Remember now, he had had a publications business in France, and then he came here and he was director of exhibitions and publications. You see, it was a triumvirate, really. When René was appointed in 1949, he was director of the whole thing, and he, of course, was that international presence, multilingual, he had all the European connections. Then you had Alfred, who was the scholar, the real scholar, and tremendously powerful. And then the third member of that was Monroe, who was the business end of it. I'm going to tell you something else which I discovered over the weekend: they all died within three days of each other in August--not the same years. René died August 13th, Monroe died August 14th and Alfred died August 15th. Of course, different years, but three days apart. Last night, when I checked these dates, because I wanted to be sure of my dates when I came down to see you. I did some work on this, as you can imagine, because you forget the dates of things. I haven't been at the Museum now for eight or nine years, and the dates, you know, get hazy unless rechecked properly.

SZ: They all retired within a few years of each other, too, that's another thing.

PM: Yes, and of course I went to those wonderful parties. They had a party for René--what a night that was--and for Alfred....

SZ: We'll do those later.

PM: Yes.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**PEARL L. MOELLER (PM)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
DATE:	**SEPTEMBER 19, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: Pearl, I thought we'd start today by picking up on a couple of things that we touched on before, the war years and your responsibilities here until you went to the library and started your real career here. One person you mentioned was Jim Soby and we didn't talk very much about him, and I wanted you to roll with that a little.

PM: Soby was such a delightful man and he and Alfred Barr were great friends. He was from Hartford and I first met him when I went into the library to work with the photographic collection, the works of art in the collection and the photographs of the loans for our shows. My job was to build that up and service requests, not only from staff, but from outsiders that came in as well. That service and that collection increased tremendously. Jim Soby was a handsome man, very debonair, and every time he came into the Museum all the women would just swoon. Not only was he good-looking, but he was also a writer of considerable note and well-educated. I worked with him on every book he ever wrote, because, there again, he needed photographs. He had a marvelous sense of humor, and he would write me these letters that were serious but always with a wonderful wit and comic comment. There was a story one time that his interoffice memos were so great that they made a collection of them. Where those are, I don't know; maybe Rona Roob would know. But they were marvelous memos. I worked with him all those years right up until the time he wasn't well. He died much too young, I think he was seventy-two. He was a very articulate man in that he knew exactly what he wanted, if he wanted a particular

picture, he knew what it was and what it was for. He never showed off his knowledge. He assumed that you knew a great deal whether you did or not; he always assumed that you knew more. René d'Harnoncourt was the same way; they were akin in that respect, which was delightful, because it made you work harder, and if you didn't know the answer to the question, boy, you found out very quickly. I remember one time Jim wanted some photographs on Renaissance church art. Well, I wasn't up on Renaissance art; I'd studied it in college, but needed review of it. I remember that I worked hard on that to get those pictures for him. He was doing a comparative study on contemporary painting and Renaissance art. He was also marvelous to the library, and I think this should be very seriously mentioned here. In the early '60s he lent his collection to the Knoedler art gallery and it was a benefit night and the proceeds went to The Museum of Modern Art Library, which was a wonderful thing to do. I remember it was a formal opening and everybody was dressed and we all went and Champagne flowed. It was the first time we had really seen his outstanding collection en masse. But the main thing is that it was for the benefit of The Museum of Modern Art Library. So he was a great friend, and he knew that we needed funds all the time. He was also very generous; he'd give us books all the time, and he and Mr. Karpel used to have long talks about bibliographies, and Mr. Karpel did many bibliographies for him. Another person that should be mentioned in the library is Hannah B. Muller, who also knew Soby very well. Hannah's long since married and lives up in Albany now. Dorothy Simmons was also an early member of the library staff. Hannah worked with Jim on many research questions and bibliographies. You have to remember that in those days, Sharon, people did not have assistants and assistants like they have today. I think I've stressed this several times, and it can't be stressed enough. People like Lincoln Kirstein and Jim Soby and Russell Lynes--all the writers--came in and did their own homework. They went to the card catalogue and they knew how to use it. For instance, Jim Soby didn't have three assistants to come down from Farmington, Connecticut, which is where he lived. He did it himself, and then they wrote the articles themselves. The same way on the staff. The chief curators were in the library every other day. Peter Selz, Bill Seitz, Bill Lieberman, all those people, they did their own research. This is not to say they didn't have a staff. They had secretaries and so on, but for the most part they

did their own research and writing. In my view, I think a lot of those books are in some ways better, that's why they won prizes and that's why they're so esteemed today. My feeling is that when you get something diluted through assistants and assistants and assistants, that's when the errors occur. I've seen a couple of MoMA leaflets recently that have been issued and there are errors in them, bad errors. And then, as I say, when Jim Soby was not well, all of us were very upset and we kept sending him little notes and brochures, anything to cheer him up.

SZ: Including leaflets with mistakes in them? [LAUGHTER]

PM: No, no, that's now; I see it now, a few times in the gallery leaflets. This is not to say there weren't any errors in those days, too, there were a few, but very few. I mean, nobody's perfect. Also, Jim Soby always dressed beautifully, it was not overdone. He was just a joy when he came into the Museum, and we had so many joyous people come in here. Does that give you what you want to know?

SZ: Yes. Here is what I would like you to do: when you transferred to the library, why don't you describe the library for me, where it was, what it looked like, who was there, what kinds of things were being provided then.

PM: The library was on the fourth floor of the 11 West 53rd building. That was the original library. The Film Library, which is now the film department, was across the hall, and those were the two major departments on the fourth floor at that time. With the Latin American program, that took the whole front side of the building, and then the library was on the other side, facing the garden. That was the last word in library arrangement and organization at that time. You have to remember that when I went into the library, which was in June of 1944 as the Latin American contract was winding down and the war was winding down, we thought peace was imminent, which it was, then all those people who had worked on this project, we were all wondering what we were going to do next. The writers and people like that, who were in the film business, there was no problem there, but I was wondering what was going to happen to me. Very happily, I was offered this job in the library. Now, I didn't

know anybody in the library very well, but I knew where the library was and what it did. At that time, Mr. Bernard Karpel, who had been appointed the librarian after Beaumont Newhall--you see, the sequence was Iris Barry, then Beaumont Newhall and then Karpel--he was at war--and a very nice woman by the name of Hannah B. Muller, who I just mentioned a few minutes ago, she took over the library, ran the library for two or three years, until Mr. Karpel was mustered out of the army, until he came back in 1946. Nineteen forty-six was a big change in the Museum, because all the men that had gone to war came back, I think most of them came back, like Dick Griffith and Allen Porter--those men were all in the service. So when I came, there were just four people on the library staff. There was Hannah Muller, who was the chief librarian. There was Dorothy Simmons, who was the reference librarian; she did the first bibliography of Alfred Barr's first Forty Years of Picasso, and that was a staggering job. Then there was a lovely young girl by the name of Shirley Clark whose mother was in charge of the desk downstairs..., the books and cards, the sales desk, and that was a very good job. Shirley was very young and in the library, and she did a lot of work with the slides. There was just the four of us, that's it, the four women, and we did everything that was required. Hannah did all the bookkeeping and the budgeting and was the boss. She interviewed me, as I remember. I knew her slightly but we had never worked together. Dorothy Simmons was at the desk all day long, the reference desk. And it was a very informal library. People would come in and they could sit down and read, we had a good card catalogue and everything was together, it wasn't spread out like the Museum is now. So if you came in and wanted a photograph to hang on your bathroom wall or you were an editor over on Madison Avenue you could sit down and look at these photographs and order them. It was a very busy beehive. We were also, during the war, open on Sunday afternoons from two to six, and we took turns running the library during those hours. We had no page; we were all young so we ran up and down the stacks. If it was a heavy book, whoever was around would say, "Could you help me with this book?" So whoever was there would say, "Certainly," and he'd run up and down on a ladder. We were open Saturday mornings, too, and then every other Sunday during that war we worked from two to six, as I said, and we had a lot of servicemen come in because not all servicemen who came to New York wanted to

sit in bars; there were many of them who wanted to read and just get their minds off their troubles. I remember one Sunday we had forty people in that library. I was beside myself, and that kept up for a long, long time. After the war, they cut that out, the Sunday hours, because of security and everything, we had to have receptionists on the fourth floor, and after the war, it was not felt necessary to continue it.

SZ: That was done specifically for the war?

PM: Yes, I would say that. But still, it did continue for quite a while after the war; I'm not quite sure of the date that it stopped. You see, people in New York in those days worked Saturdays and they needed that time to study and work. Then, of course, during the war everything was open twenty-four hours a day, Sharon, so nobody thought anything about it, it just worked. You'd leave your job and then go do war work. It was just a different world. I also want to add the names of Henry Aronson and Charles McCurdy, key library staff members right after the war, who were with us for several years. I want to mention the photographer Soichi Sunami because he's never been mentioned in any real writeups of the Museum. He was a marvelous man, Japanese-born, from Yokohama. He was a poor man and was a painter and came to America I believe in the '20s and finally made his way to New York. His life story is fascinating, and after he died in 1971, his son wrote a little treatise on his work, a little bio, and it's in the library. I had it transcribed and catalogued. It's a wonderful story, and I'll just briefly capture it, because Sunami became one of the top fine-arts photographers, in the world, and worked into his eighties.

SZ: But you say he was an artist also.

PM: He was a painter, and he worked on the Alaskan railroads up there, he worked in the fishing industry, and he had, I think, very rough times, too. Anyway, he made his way across the country, doing all sorts of terrible jobs. He told me one time he was a butler in somebody's house; they put a uniform on him and he had to serve drinks and stuff. He got to the Art Students League because he had heard about it and he studied there. Of course, there was no color photography in those days, we're

speaking of a black-and-white world; there were some color slides, but expensive; nobody had the money for them. He found that a lot of his classmates at the League needed pictures taken so they could show their work around to various galleries, so he became a photographer, so much so that he was so busy with this, that he just gave up on the painting. This is not to say that he never painted the rest of his life, I'm sure he did. He also wrote very well, wrote poetry, in Japanese of course. His English was...how shall I describe his English? He understood you, but it took time to work with Sunami, and there were many people on the staff that didn't quite understand him. That's where I came in, because I could understand him very well. We had a very wonderful rapport, the two of us. We were from two entirely different cultures and everything, but.... I learned so much from Sunami about photography. I remember when I went into that job, I knew a lot about film and I knew the byproducts of film, which is, of course, photography, and I knew a great deal about the Museum and I had an art history background, but there were still many technical points about photography that I didn't know at all. Sunami was wonderful. He really taught me a great deal about cameras, everything. He was simply marvelous. He came in every day. There was no lab then, no laboratory on the premises at all. The men came in with their cameras and then went back to their studios and developed and printed, so there was this back-and-forth on the telephones all day long. Sunami lived down on 15th Street in a big brownstone house.... He married quite late in life. He married a Japanese-American, a lovely woman by the name of Sue Sunami, who is still very much around. They had two children. He used to also give dinners in his home, and he would invite Dorothy Miller and he'd invite me and Monawee Richards--she was Monawee Allen then--and we'd all go down to this lovely brownstone and, oh, the food was marvelous; believe me, there was no sukiyaki like you got....

SZ: Did he cook it, too?

PM: He cooked it and his wife was a wonderful cook. Some of the most pleasant evenings I ever remember in New York were at Sunami's home. Also, then again, it was international. He had Museum people that he liked, but he also had other people. I remember there was a man who dealt in rare jade and he used to come to

these parties. He had a shop on Madison Avenue and he was well-known in the field. There were all sorts of writers.... It was just a marvelous mixture, and this wonderful food brewed up. The first time I went to Sunami's, I thought, My goodness, I don't know quite what to expect. I thought maybe they'll have some odd Japanese wine or something, and I was sort of leery of it. This was in the summer, and when we got there, the first thing Sue did was she came out and said, "Well, what would you like? A gin and tonic? Would you like a Cuba Libra?"--in those days they drank that rum-and-coke stuff. And it was so very American. Then, after we'd all had our drinks, then the evening turned completely Japanese, and of course the food was marvelous, just wonderful. Then his daughter played the piano; they had a great piano, a nice upright like the one my parents had in their first home, the one that Victor Herbert had played on. Reiko was studying music and she eventually married a musician. The son, John, became a graphic designer. All through these years, I want to stress that Sunami was a great part of the Museum. He would work all night. He'd come here in the daytime and shoot the pictures and then when his family went to bed, then he worked all night. He had his laboratory in his house. I never called Sunami before eleven-thirty in the morning....

SZ: Because there were no facilities here, is what you're saying.

PM: There were no facilities here. There were rooms where you could set up the paintings, but there were no developing and printing rooms. That didn't come in until the '60s.

SZ: Was he hired to catalogue the collection?

PM: No, no.

SZ: He was not on the staff then?

PM: No, technically he was not on the staff. He was paid per job. We paid him so much a negative and so much a print, but the negatives were kept here. Then when we'd

need so many prints of something he would come and I had all sorts of little order pads and everything and it was my job to keep track of all those negatives, and they were big negatives, eight-by-tens, and they were all in separate envelopes. That was another thing that we did through the years. I see all these photo archives and they've come so far down the road, because we learned a lot by experience as to what not to do with photographs, both the prints and the negatives. You can say that in one sentence, but that was a long procedure, what to do and what not to do in keeping photo archives. Later on, many times I was asked about this by people who were setting up photographic collections, and I told them what not to do. Also, you could spend a lot of money on junk; you'd get a salesman who comes in and says you need this, you need that, and a lot of stuff you don't need. All sorts of things, like you never write on a negative envelope with ink, for example, you always do it in pencil, because graphite is safe, it doesn't go through onto the negative. All kinds of things. I have so much to cover, maybe we shouldn't go into this. I don't know what you feel.

SZ: I guess what I was wondering about Sunami is.... When these various things began, one thing was cataloguing, photographing the works that were in exhibitions. Another thing was a photographic catalogue of the collection. Did that all start with him?

PM: No. When I came to the Museum, we all had albums. The word "cataloguing," I think, is a little bit misleading. You can see them now; Richard Tooke has them. They were albums, and the photographs were made when we acquired a new work of art. Sunami would try to take four or five at a time, if we could. He did sculpture, too. I arranged for the physical arrangements of getting those to the various places and so forth, and of course I worked very closely with the curators, mostly Dorothy Miller and Sarah Mazo, because Dorothy was curator of the Museum Collections. Also, Alfred Barr knew a great deal about photography, and of course Sarah Mazo did, too. They had a duplicate set of prints upstairs in the albums in the Department of Museum Collections. So these prints were made; the photograph was taken and we had what was called the master print made, and that went into the album. Then we had extra sets made. Every major work of art was photographed. Then you had your loan

shows. After all, we were borrowing pictures from everybody. So there were two great sections: you had your Museum Collections section; you had your loan section--there again, all in the albums. We dry-mounted them on good paper and every negative was numbered; we had the negative number under each photo and the label describing the work. Then all departments came in and ordered from these albums as well, and the most traffic was with the publicity department--of course, Elizabeth Shaw was in charge of that. And, as you know, from having worked in that department, Sharon, those critics would come in and Liz had all those great big

accordion-pleated file folders of photographs for the critics. All of those were ordered through photographic services, which I was in charge of. So some woman, say, on Park Avenue would lend us a painting but she didn't have a picture of it; we photographed it for her and we reproduced it in a catalogue. Remember, we were reproducing catalogues all the time, too, so these pictures were needed for many reasons, first of all, publicity for the exhibition, and for the catalogues that we published, and which served as the permanent record. Another thing that the Museum did, we took installation photographs of all these exhibitions, and I think we were one of the first museums to do that on a professional basis. Now this is not to say that every single work of art was photographed, but the overall feeling of the show was done. Those were used all the time, because our installations were famous, they became very famous and innovative, particularly the ones that René d'Harnoncourt did, and people would come from all kinds of schools and colleges and they'd say, "I'd like to see the Arts of South Seas. Could you show me the installation photographs?" Every exhibition had a number and the installation photographs had the same number. People did it also for authenticity. They had remembered a picture that they saw when they visited their Aunt Mary in New York and they wanted to see that picture, and we might necessarily not have had an individual photograph of it....

SZ: But you'd have it there [in the installation photographs].

PM: Yes. So we tried to cover as much as we could. The set-up, the installation, whoever

did the show would talk to Sunami and say, "I'd like that featured and this featured," and so on, and Sunami would go down into the gallery ahead of time with them. Then all these prints and negatives all came to the library. So we kept everything going. It was a very busy operation, and it kept growing and growing. Then, when color came in, in the '50s, then the whole thing just burgeoned. Sunami was basically a black-and-white photographer, but then when the color negative was discovered, you could do so many things with that. Also, in the mid '50s, the whole publishing world changed, because there was money and all the art books that had been put aside during the war, because you couldn't get any paper during the war.... That was another thing I should have mentioned. The paper for the albums during the war was this ugly yellow paper, but we were so glad to get any paper. Many of those I replaced, the papers, but if you go downstairs now and look at some of the shows from the '40s, you'll see that yellow paper. It was all we could get. We were so happy to get anything. Soap was scarce. I told you about the nylon. Paper, all kings of things like that, and that was reflected in the photographic world as well. That led, then, eventually into the Department of Rights and Reproductions, because the traffic got so heavy. Also, we didn't have any rules and regulations as to how these things could be reproduced. Mr. Barr and the Art Directors Association of America got together, and they decided that something had to be done because the works of art...people were running purple ink over things, they were using them in wrong connotations, they were chopping things up. Some of those Madison Avenue graphic artists, they'd take a beautiful Picasso and chop it in half and run it off the page, bleeding off the page. So many of our artists were alive and it was just desecration, mutilation in many cases. Then they looked around the Museum and they said, "Well, who's the logical person to set up this little department?" Well, I became the logical person. I always say that I got everything in the Museum sort of by osmosis. I think I got the job in the film department because I could type and I knew Spanish. Then I was sort of a librarian by osmosis. Then I was there, and this was like a logical thing. But it was a lot of work to set that up. I remember that I started out and they gave me five hundred dollars to run the department and run everything.... That was the budget, five hundred dollars. That was a lot of money in those days, in 1959.

SZ: Was it enough?

PM: At first it was, yes. Then as time went on, you know, of course I had to get more. I had one secretary, a nice girl out of Vassar, and she typed. We also had a slide collection that was also a running service, rental and sale, but I did not work that much with the slide collection. However, that was part of the library services and it's very important that it should be mentioned here. Mr. Karpel had many a headache over that slide collection, because in the days before the color negative slides had to be duplicated positive by positive, they had to be copied. You want to remember too

that we're an art museum, so quality was very important. Many a time, color slides would be rejected by the curatorial staff. That was another thing. The curatorial staff always passed on all these photographs and slides. So if Sunami took a photograph it went up to the Department of Museum Collections and it was passed upon by Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr. This is how high the standard was. The same way with the slides, whoever the curator was in charge of that collection. And that continued, I think it may to this day, I'm pretty sure it does. So that I did not have the final say in this by any means, and sometimes photographs were rejected. That was also a problem with Sunami, because he was a very sensitive man. He would take criticism (not that it was that much criticism, but sometimes things had to be redone) gladly from Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller, but some of these younger curators were not as subtle, you know.... And that's where I came in, I was the buffer zone. But Sunami was always agreeable, because he was professional, bottom line was he was always a professional. So if you said to him, "Do you think the value, Sunami, should be changed a little bit on this side," he might at first say, "Well...." Then he knew, because he was a pro. So I never had any trouble with him. It was all in the way in which you approached the matter. He worked so hard; nobody worked harder. He loved the Museum and he loved America; he was one of the best Americans I ever knew, and he instilled this in his children, who are still very much alive and whom and I see, and his wife. I remember when he became an American citizen. Oh, what a lovely day that was, because for a number of years Oriental people were not

allowed citizenship here.

SZ: Because of the war.

PM: Not only because of the war, but there were those rigid restrictions, you know, for Orientals in the United States, and he just couldn't do it for a long time. So that was a very happy day. I also remember the day that Mr. d'Harnoncourt became a citizen, too. I was here when that happened.

SZ: Tell me about that.

PM: I don't know too much about that except for photographs of the event, but I know that he went down to the immigration bureau and he had to have letters of recommendation and everything. That's all in the René d'Harnoncourt archive and is spelled out and maybe should be seen in that. Anyway, I remember hearing about it, that he had become a citizen, and it was so exciting. Then Sunami's turn came. It was all MoMA history, really. Then Sunami worked right up until--gosh, he died when he was, like, eighty-seven, eighty-six or eighty-seven, and he worked right up almost until the end, as I said before, and then his eyes began to go. Age was nothing to him, he was going full guns. When he was seventy-five, he could do stuff that people thirty-five would fold up on. It was amazing, amazing.

SZ: Let's go back. Tell me, you said a few times that things changed a lot after the war, people came back....

PM: Well, the world changed, too, because in the '50s it was of course the Eisenhower Administration and there was peace. The Korean War had started, but, fortunately, that didn't last terribly long; it was a devastating war, as everybody knows. But I would say there was an aura of good will. Also, all the men that came back, they wanted to resume their lives, get married and have homes. You also had a great many people leave for suburbia in the early '50s because they wanted to have that life of families and good schools and all that. There was no crime; you didn't have

that then to contend with.

SZ: The staff expanded a lot, I know.

PM: And then the staff of course expanded a great deal. Then the big push was in 1952 when the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave that huge, very generous amount of money to start the International Program. That was when the Museum really became international, in the '50s when that grant was given. It also made a tremendous difference in all the staff, because Porter McCray was appointed the head of that and they set up a whole International Program to send these exhibitions overseas. And then, of course, Europe was opening up. You want to remember too that Europe was starved for everything; they'd been at war all this long time. So when this money came in, the shows were done just left and right done. Well, that accelerated everything in the Museum, especially the picture role, the photographic role, I was beside myself. That's when I got more help, because the directors knew this avalanche was coming in addition to our regular exhibition program which was going full speed. Many of the shows that we had here circulated internationally, and it was just buzzing, buzzing activity. Then the biennials were set up in Europe, in Venice, and in Sao Paulo and in Germany, in Kassel, Germany, and all over, and the Museum, of course, contributed and was represented in those shows, and they were very important. In fact, when the fire happened in the Museum in 1958 the show New American Painting was in Europe and that went to six or eight cities there. Dorothy Miller was in Europe with her at that time. Waldo Rasmussen was in Europe at that time. He worked for Porter. He became head of it [the International Program] somewhat later. So it was just a very exciting time. You felt this sudden change, that it was no longer a New York museum but that it was international. Then came Family of Man in the '50s, and I worked on that. I'll tell you my part in that. I did not work directly on the pictures because Captain Steichen, well, that was set up as a whole special project. They rented a loft on 52nd Street--it was above a jazz club--because there wasn't enough room in the photography department to cull all these pictures and make decisions. Thousands of them came in and he had to make the selection, to get this down to some five hundred photographs, I think, in the end were shown.

So in those days there were no xerox machines, no photocopies, nothing, and you had to have everything done by a photostatic process, for the preliminary selections as to what would be shown.

SZ: Which meant?

PM: Photostat is a paper negative and a paper positive process, and it was very fast. There were these places all over New York, and we dealt with a place called Russo, F. A. Russo, and they were in Radio City. One of my jobs was that when they got very busy I was the runner, and happily so. I would run between them, the photographic place and this loft on 52nd Street. Grace Mayer has gone into all this much more carefully; she has documented Steichen's life and career here so marvelously that I don't want to really step on toes. But, from my point of view.... When you would go to the loft, the musicians would start to practice at three or four o'clock in the afternoon for the night show. Now these night shows lasted all night. As I say, there was no crime, and to walk down Fifth Avenue at two or three o'clock in the morning after having been to a jazz club, which I did many a time with a date, was nothing. So you'd go up the stairs and hear all this jazz tinkling. And Carl Sandburg was there. Carl Sandburg was a wonderful man and he wrote all the titles for that exhibition. So you'd go up and here was Steichen with all these millions of pictures all around and his helpers and Carl Sandburg over in the corner, writing, and they'd say thank you and they'd have another batch, and this went on.... There was a photographer by the name of Rolf Peterson who did most of the work, the printing, of those many, many photographs. Grace can tell you more about that.

SZ: She wasn't here for that show.

PM: No, she wasn't here for that show. Anyway, Peterson, he was a European man and as far as I know he still lives up in Connecticut with his wife, although I didn't know him very well at that time. After the lab was set up in the Museum, after Sunami was semi-retired, and we got the in-house photographic lab, then Rolf Peterson was in charge of that, and we had many dealings. But that comes later, in the '60s. I was

invited to the big dinner and everything, when The Family of Man opened. Of course, it was a great thing. What were you going to wear? These were the days when the tea-length gown was very stylish.... It was well below mid calf. It was a lovely length because you could wear very pretty slippers and stockings and walk easily, you know, but yet it would never be mistaken for a street dress or anything like that, and they were nipped in at the waist and then full skirt. It was a very graceful dress. I remember I bought my dress during lunch hour at Best & Co., and I had great luck to get the dress quickly. Everybody was very dressed up, and then all the brass from the Navy was here; all the people came up from Washington and Steichen was in full regalia that night--he was a captain in the Navy. It was just a marvelous party. They had it in the old penthouse. This was to inaugurate the show, and there were all kinds of speeches, all of which have been written up, Sharon; you can read those in the Bulletins. Then The Family of Man went to Russia, and I think it was the most heavily attended show in the history of Russia. There are pictures of people in line in Russia. It was a marvelous exhibition. Then the book was printed in nineteen editions and many, many languages, paperback and everything, and they keep bringing it out again, you know [LAUGHING]. People who never came to The Museum of Modern Art, wouldn't set foot in the place, came for The Family of Man. So that was a very marvelous era, between The Family of Man and, as I said, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the International Program. It just went on and on and on. I look back on the Museum now in decades. You do that when you get on in years because you see big chunks of history by decades, as I said.

SZ: What about Steichen?

PM: I want to tell you one more thing that's important before I forget it. I remembered this this morning while I was taking a shower [LAUGHING]. Of course, Steichen did many, many things that were important, but one of the things that he did was, in those days there was an awful lot of copying of photographs with no credits, flagrant copying, so architectural photographers, for example, who would go out and stand in the rain and photograph lovely places, many of these magazines and publishers would just snitch those photographs and copy them, and they'd be published without

any credit. Steichen was adamant on this subject. Beaumont Newhall was another man who felt very strongly about this. Another photographer by the name of Ezra Stoller, who is a famous photographer now, they all got together and decided that this had to stop, and they were very instrumental in photographers now being able to copyright photographs per se. I mean, they got the clause in the U.S. copyright law for photos. Now if you look on the back of photographs you will see "Copyright Ezra Stoller," "Copyright The Museum of Modern Art." Up until that time, this didn't exist. Not only were the pictures inferior because they'd been copied by people who were not qualified, also there was no credit given. Also, the photographers were cheated out of fees that they should have gotten for reproduction. For heaven's sake, if you have something published by a legitimate for-profit publisher that person should pay you fees and rights. That was one of the things that I was also very much involved in when [the Department of] Rights and Reproductions got going, so that the artists would get paid what was due them. So now, if Time-Life wants to reproduce a photograph, they've got to pay for that. There are all different categories of rights. You have world rights or one-time rights, a whole world unto itself, and I was very much enmeshed in that. I think this ought to be mentioned because a lot of that was started right here in The Museum of Modern Art, which is not generally known.

SZ: It's really been a fight for the rights of photographers and artists.

PM: Exactly, you said it. And the recognition of the photographer as an artist, or even the photograph itself <u>of</u> a work of art, <u>as</u> a work of art. That also led to the American Society of Magazine Photographers, that came into being. I was there when all these things were happening. But now, these things are a fait accompli, and you don't realize what a long process this was to enact rules and legislation to protect the photographers' and the artists' (painters') rights.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SZ: I want to ask you, since we're on the subject of Captain Steichen, because you were here when Newhall was really sort of eased out and Steichen was....

PM: Beaumont and Nancy I knew, and Beaumont went up to Eastman Kodak [George Eastman House], you know.

SZ: I think Russell Lynes wrote that there was a lot of internal dissension because of it, and I just wanted to know if you knew of it.

PM: I wasn't really that totally involved with that. I knew Steichen but I never worked with Steichen directly. I knew Steichen from The Family of Man, and, there again, I did not work specifically on that; we all helped and I was kind of the errand girl. But I do remember many times going into his office and I think it's generally believed that Steichen got Beaumont the job.

SZ: What was he like?

PM: Who, Beaumont?

SZ: No, Steichen.

PM: Tall and imposing, forceful, knew what he wanted. I think he was crazy about the Museum and was delighted to be asked to come here and had great respect for Beaumont and helped Beaumont get the other job. I don't know what happened at the top and how that shuffle came about, I really don't, Sharon. I know that had to be a trustee decision. Beaumont was a brilliant scholar and writer and still is; he's a wonderful man. And Nancy, equally. They were very different as people. Beaumont was very quiet and very studious; he was more like Alfred Barr. Nancy was very outgoing and very lively. They were very good together, they complemented each other. I knew her because when Beaumont was at war, she ran the photography department and all those people would come in to see her, and at one time we shared an office together, so I knew her very well. I felt badly when they left, but I

didn't really know what had happened. Then we were all delighted when Beaumont went to Eastman, and he of course did a superb job up there. So much work needed to be done; they didn't have a museum, and he brought all that terrific knowledge and skills up there. So I don't know. It's hard to look back and see. You wonder what would have happened if Steichen didn't come to the Museum, or if Beaumont had stayed on...you don't really know. But Steichen did some marvelous exhibitions; so did Beaumont. But they were different. Steichen did Power in the Pacific and Airways to Peace, and they were just breathtaking photographs and shows. Beaumont did the most famous, the history of photography from 1839 to that present time [Photography 1839-1937].... Does that answer your question pretty much?

SZ: Yes. I guess I have a similar question about when René d'Harnoncourt came, how in those first few years you saw things change and what that was like.

PM: I didn't know Mr. d'Harnoncourt in the early days. I knew, of course, who he was. He had this silly title, Director of Manual Industries or something ridiculous, and of course he was very tall and a lovely man and I'd see him on the elevator. I knew two of his assistants quite well. He was on the fifth floor there and knew everybody. But I didn't have any direct dealings with him until he became director. There again, as I said earlier in this dialogue, he was the director of that art section for the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and he and Nelson Rockefeller were not only colleagues, but also became very, very good friends. That's another thing that I want to go into before this afternoon ends. I went to the graveside service of René d'Harnoncourt's out on Long Island and I want to talk about that. So anyway, René was of course extremely well liked. He was very outgoing, he was very cheerful, and then he moved right along up the ladder. He was a great mediator, a marvelous diplomat; he could put people together who were hardly speaking, who were opposed on certain views and projects, and he'd get them in his office and he'd get them so they were talking and they were working together. He did this with the trustees, too. They say that he was marvelous at those meetings because there were divergent points of view, as there are in any group of people, Sharon. Somebody has described him as a great big open hearth where everybody came to get warm, and I think that is the

best description of him. He had a title, which he dropped when he came to America; he was penniless when he got here. There wasn't an ounce of snobbery about him. He truly loved America. You speak of Sunami loving America. René truly loved America and was one of the most marvelous exponents of democracy I have ever known, and yet he was a foreign count. He just held us all together. There was a cohesive quality about him and you could talk to him about anything; he was very open and free. He didn't send a lot of silly memos around, never. If you wanted to see him if you had a problem, he could be seen, and you didn't bother him about small things. When I later organized his archive, I learned so many things that I didn't know at all about him. Anyway, he went along and he was so well-liked, and of course he had the wonderful art background. Also, he was not in competition with any curator because his field was primitive art. He was knowledgeable in all ages of art, but he wasn't like a competitor. I think the trustees and I think especially Nelson Rockefeller saw this as what we needed. By this time, the staff all knew him and loved him; he wasn't brought in from the outside, someone that nobody knew. You want to remember now that he came in 1944, so he had five years of direct contact with the staff, so when he [became director] everybody was delighted, just delighted. And then, of course, he spoke three or four languages, which was great. In those days, you see, people coming from Europe, they did not speak English as they do today. You had to know some French and you had to know some Spanish and some German to function in those days. Now English is the second language, but it wasn't in those days; French was the second language in those days, after your native tongue.

SZ: What other kinds of things did you learn from the archive about him?

PM: It's just multitudinous. Of course, I knew Sarah [d'Harnoncourt] too. She was marvelous to me when I was doing all this work, she kept finding all these things and bringing them over. And everybody knows about his doodling, how he would draw. He was a very fine draughtsman, and there are original drawings in the René d'Harnoncourt archive, wonderful doodles. He would sit at the trustees meetings--now this is the top level--and he'd have the agenda before him, as they always do,

and there are examples of his doodles on the agenda sheets in the archive. Somebody would be discussing some horrible budget problem, some ghastly thing [LAUGHING], and he'd be drawing away. He drew everything, from good-looking women to a European castle with turrets on it, and a horse and carriage going up the drive. Lovely, in pencil, and all shaded and really finished drawings. Well, Eliza Parkinson Cobb, after the meeting was over, she'd collect them, she'd grab them and take them away for keeps. She had a whole collection of them and donated them to the archive; they're original drawings and they're over there in the René d'Harnoncourt archive. They've also been filmed; the Smithsonian has filmed that archive now for posterity. Also, Mr. d'Harnoncourt always wore a homburg. He always looked like he was going to address the United Nations in about ten minutes. He always wore dark suits and that hat. He looked like Count d'Harnoncourt, but of course he had dropped all that, and when you spoke to him he wasn't that way at all. He spoke with a thick German accent, and sometimes when he lectured, it was a little difficult to understand him, but he knew English very, very well. I will vouch for that, because I've read all those letters, and he knew all the slang in English, idioms and everything; he was very idiomatic.

SZ: What were you going to say about his graveside service?

PM: The day that he died was just terrible. Let me just look at something here and make sure I don't leave anything out.... Another thing that I wanted to mention in connection with the international circulating exhibitions is that the library had an overseas book program which the International [Council] sponsored. It was very important because we sent books to all these impoverished libraries worldwide, just treasure troves of materials. Mr. Karpel bought all those books and I can see those packed trunks all going to India, to Afghanistan and/or South America. All these people were just desperate, they had nothing, their libraries may have been bombed out. So that was a wonderful project, and that goes in with the '50s and the '60s history of the library. I'm sure whether it continues to this day or not. I'll just finish on René and then I'll go back to one more thing and then into the special collections. Where was I? The graveside service. As you know, he had just retired, in June of

1968, and they had this wonderful party for him up at the Rockefeller estate, Pocantico Hills. Many of us were invited, and I was just delighted to be asked. They had a bus to take us up. It was a glorious evening. They had a tent and there was dancing; filet mignon was served. All the trustees were there and it was just a glorious night. We danced and Anne was there, his daughter, Anne, whom I also know very well. Well, that's a whole other story. And Sarah, of course. It was such a glorious evening. That was the finale. René was the head of the Museum of Primitive Art, had been appointed director of that. That was another thing. He was involved in so many museums all over. But the whole idea was that he was going to help and just be on hand to advise us. I know he wanted to be, and then also to give more time to the Museum of Primitive Art. Everything was just going so wonderfully for him, and the Museum gave him as a present a marvelous stereo hi-fi as a parting gift, the last word, a beautiful hi-fi. They had a home in Key West, and I remember reading a letter that thanked the staff for the stereo, and I think they took that to Key West. I'm not sure of that, but anyway, it doesn't matter. It was a magnificent present. Everything was up, and he was only sixty-seven when the accident occurred. That summer they went out to Cutchogue, Long Island, and they rented a house there, I guess to relax and have a summer vacation. This crazy fool of a woman was coming down the road, drunk, eleven o'clock in the morning, and struck him. René had gone to the post office to pick up the mail. He died in the Greenport hospital out there. It was just horrible. I heard about it when I was coming back from lunch. At that time the Department of Rights and Reproductions was down the street in the "21" building. I was coming back and I remember it was a hot August day. Bill Lieberman was in front of the Museum with a couple of people, looking terrible. I remember coming from the corner and I thought right off something was wrong because they were sent out to warn people. Bill told me. Bill was the one who told me that René had died that afternoon. Well, you can imagine, it was just horrendous. Everybody went back in and there was just this pall over the place. I can't describe it to you. People embraced each other, and it was just awful, and senseless, that was the main thing. Mrs. d'Harnoncourt wanted a very quiet service, she didn't want to do a big funeral or anything like that. René was buried in this little country cemetery in Cutchogue, Long Island. Then she said it would be alright if just a few people from

the Museum were allowed to come. So then the decision as to who was invited--that must have been awful. I'm glad I didn't have to get involved in that, it must have been terrible. I think Dick Koch had a great deal to do with it, as he did with so many things. I knew him very well and he was wonderful to me, very helpful to me, especially as R&R became more and more legal, wonderful as he was to all of us. Anyway, they had this bus to take us out to Cutchogue, and we all got up early and went out. It was a lovely country cemetery. The day would break your heart, it was so gorgeous and the place was so beautiful. Everything was green, the full green of August, and there were about maybe twenty people. The minister from the local church spoke and he was so nervous everybody felt sorry for him. I don't know how well he knew René, but it was in his parish. I remember the flowers on the casket were all blue and white, this blanket of blue and white flowers. Then Nelson spoke, and that's published. That, of course, was a lovely thing. I was thinking about this last night, what I would say to you, because that was a Nelson Rockefeller I never saw before. Here was a man who stood there completely stripped of power, stripped of money, a humble man who had lost not only a wonderful, wonderful professional colleague, but also a very dear friend, and that was so noticeable. Everybody got up in total silence and embraced each other, and then we came back to New York. I remember we stopped in Riverhead at a place called Perkins' Inn, where they had arranged to have lunch, and nobody could eat anything, even though we'd all gotten up early we sort of picked at the food. I think it was one of the greatest tragedies that ever happened to the Museum, his death. That's my feeling, and I'm not alone in that, because I think the course of the Museum's history would have been very different had he lived, because he could have advised the new directors and it would have just been a different situation. They would have listened to him. I think a lot of trouble we had in the '70s, the strikes and things, could have been, I won't say eliminated, but certainly alleviated, because, there again, René had this wonderful healing power of bringing people together, and I don't think it would have reached the pitch that it did had he been on the scene, even though he wouldn't have been director and have been there every day, but he would have made them come together, those sparring factions.

SZ: I'll ask you one more question from this decade: where were you the day of the fire, and what do you remember about it?

PM: The day of the fire, there again, started out as a beautiful day. It was April 15th, 1958, and that morning I had just been to the post office to mail my taxes [LAUGHING] and I was hurrying like crazy to get to the Museum on time. We were still in the library on the fourth floor and [the department of] Rights and Reproductions hadn't started yet because that didn't happen until 1959. We were all working away and it was a perfectly ordinary day, and then all of a sudden two of the painters came upstairs, two of the workmen, and said, "Please, everybody leave the building." And we just looked; we were astonished. Then we began to smell the smoke. Mr. Karpel was there and he gathered all of us and he said, "Come immediately," and we all just grabbed our pocketbooks, no coats or anything else, just our pocketbooks and all stood with him. Then he led us down the staircases quickly and then we got down on the street and went across the street. Then we saw that the Museum was on fire, and it was horrible. Then we saw people upstairs that hadn't got out yet, they were standing by the windows of the "21" building, because there were offices there and we saw all those people waiting there. Then there were the fire trucks and the news people, and it was just chaos, Sharon. The worst part to me was that we did not know the extent of the damage; that was what we did not know as we stood there in the street. A lot of people went back in to bring out the paintings.

SZ: After they put the fire out, or not knowing that the fire was out? Do you know?

PM: I don't know. I know that the fire was contained and that it was put out very quickly.

SZ: Because there is a picture of Bernard Karpel doing that.

PM: Yes, Karpel, he went right in and did all that. The Seurats were small, you know, so they could grab them; the Juan Gris paintings were small too. The reason I know those shows so well is that we never got either one of them photographed before the

fire, that is, the installation photos. We had to wait until the Museum reopened and then they were rehung, and then we photographed them. Anyway, one of the firemen, this great big handsome six-foot Irishman by the name of Clancey, he looked at me and he said, "Are you alright?" I said, "Yes, I'm okay." He said, "You look a little pale." I guess I looked pretty bad. So I never went back into the building because I just felt...that word frightened me a little bit and I thought, I will fall in the middle of the thing and I'll be a nuisance to everybody. I was also terrified; we all were. But people went back in, and of course Nelson Rockefeller put boots on and went right back into the fire, his coat on and everything. Karpel went back in. Then there was a man who was hired as a typist for the day in the bookkeeping department and he went back in. It was mostly the men that went back in; the women were not up on those ladders, there was no way. So then we all stood there, it seemed like for hours on end, and then it suddenly dawned on me and all of us that our families would hear about this on CBS News and everything, and I thought my mother up in Connecticut would be frantic. So we headed for the nearest phone, which was in a very fancy restaurant called Maude Chez Elle, which was across the street. We went in there and there was this rather snooty maitre d'; of course he knew that the Museum was on fire. We said, "We're going to use your telephone," and we just barged right in the restaurant and went down the stairs; there were two public phones and we took turns calling. My mother was very glad to hear my voice. I said, "Don't worry, it's alright." Then she told other people and family. Also, all of us had very odd phone calls after this fire; people called up that you hadn't seen in years, they wanted to make sure you were alright. The next day was one of the worst days I ever spent, because we all came in, naturally. The Whitney Museum was next door to us at that time and they opened up their lower gallery space, their whole floor; they closed everything off and let us put paintings over there. Jean Volkmer was right there. Paintings were damaged; of course, we lost the beautiful [Claude] Monet, the big Monet. Then the other paintings, I think all of them were repaired. I don't want to speak about that because I don't feel I should; that's the conservator's domain. But I do know the Whitney were wonderful neighbors to us. Everybody around the neighborhood was wonderful. Then, the next thing was the telegrams, which René immediately sent to all the lenders. It was funny, that day all the heads

were in the Museum. It's a spooky thing when you think of it, because René was here, Alfred was here and led people safely down through the Prentice House, and Monroe was here. That was unusual, because they all traveled so much. It was just a miracle. Every one of them, the heads were all here. At that time, Ellen MacKethan was René's secretary and right hand, and they started in on those cables and telegrams immediately, to every person who had lent anything to the Juan Gris show and to the [Georges] Seurat show, to assure everybody that their paintings were safe. As far as I know, not one person reneged or said, "Send my painting back." Then the Museum had to close down and we had all sorts of fire inspectors and everybody running through the place. Then, as I say, the next day was horrible. We all came in and there was some water damage on the lower shelves of the library. We had to take all these books up and everybody came in in dungarees and old shirts and moccasins, sneakers, and we closed everything off, everything. Dressing went right out the window: we were workers. I remember putting newspapers all over the tables in the library, on the reading room tables, and putting every single photo album out and examining it to make sure there was no damage on the bottom, and holding every slide up to dry them off, because there was insurance involved in all of this. That went on for days on end. Then we had trouble with people who wanted to come into the Museum, old friends of the Museum. They couldn't quite believe that the Museum had caught on fire, you know, and that was a big problem, to keep them out. And then, of course, we had to close. Finally, then, we reopened, and that was really a terrific vote of confidence when we reopened. They had a marvelous reopening and it was wonderful, and all the pictures were put back, and by the grace of God, nothing more was damaged. It's a miracle there wasn't more damage, it really was. La Grande Jatte remained unharmed. Then people, as I said earlier in this little talk, people who were very critical of the Museum suddenly were leaving fifty-dollar bills on the desks, things like that. We really found out who our friends were, and we found out we had an awful lot more friends than we realized, devoted friends. Then, the next thing that must be said is that every museum in the world looked to its own fire laws and regulations, because they said, "My Lord, if this could happen in The Museum of Modern Art it could happen to us." So as a result of that, many, many regulations were changed in the museum world. People looked at their

fire escapes, they looked, I guess, at their insurance forms, they looked at everything. So in many ways, sometimes good comes out of bad, evil things. I think this was worldwide, and many fire procedures were reviewed and possibly changed.

SZ: It was a terrible story, with as happy an ending, almost, as you could have.

PM: Yes, we were so lucky, and then we pulled ourselves together and went right along. I remember later Mr. Barr had a wonderful show that he got from many private owners, and they all lent without any reservations. I suppose people felt that after the fire we would be safer than ever.

SZ: I'm going to stop for today?

PM: Good.

SZ: Thank you, Pearl.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **PEARL L. MOELLER (PM)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **WEST 43 STREET**
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

DATE: SEPTEMBER 24, 1991

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: Pearl, we did a nice discussion of the fire last time, but you had a couple of things you wanted to add.

PM: Just a couple of things I wanted to add about the fire, and that is, of course, the Museum was closed for weeks; all the upper floors, the gallery floors and all that, had to be closed off. They wanted desperately to keep the place open and the phones working, so they put us all downstairs in the auditorium. They took out the seats; they were able to do that. There were about fifty desks down there and then we had about four phones for twenty people, so we all took turns using the phone. So much of my work was on the telephone. We just desperately tried to keep the place open, as I said, so that when somebody called up, we tried to give them the information as best as possible. Then, as the floors cleared up upstairs, then we were moved back up again. That's all I wanted, to finish that up, because I think that was so important. Now.... Nineteen fifty-four was the twenty-fifth anniversary. I got this out last night, my book, and my gosh, the people that were there, it's just incredible. I'm going to read the names, because I think that ought to be in this record.

SZ: Sure, absolutely.

PM: It was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Museum. It was a beautiful October day--October 19th, actually, 1954. Many of the staff were asked to be ushers so we could hand out programs and get the people in. It was in the garden.

SZ: Philip had done the garden the year before.

PM: In 1953, exactly, the garden had been remade into the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Sculpture Garden and had been redesigned by Philip Johnson. Before that, it had been a very informal place, but not really a garden where you could exhibit sculpture professionally.

SZ: But they had the houses in that informal garden.

PM: Yes, the Ain and Breuer houses. The Japanese [exhibition] house, however, was erected in the new garden in 1954.

SZ: But the garden had a very informal feel about it.

PM: The early garden had a very informal feel. In fact, if you looked as you sat there, you almost felt you were in Munich in a German beer garden. It had that feeling. There were a lot of bushes around and you could have a nice luncheon there.

SZ: Did they have lunches in it?

PM: Yes. The sculpture was in and around, you know, but it wasn't really a sculpture area. It was decided that it really had to be redone. Also, everybody felt, including René, that the garden was one of our greatest assets. There was no other museum in New York that had this beautiful garden that could be seen from 53rd Street. So they engaged Philip to redesign it, and he did a superb job, as everybody knows. Then it became really a European sculpture court garden. Also, many of these sculptures were in storage. It was dreadful. We needed to get them out and show them. So they did that. The twenty-fifth anniversary followed in 1954--the garden was rededicated in 1953 as the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. If I'm not mistaken, that was the time that Elizabeth Shaw was made director of [the Department of] Public Information; that was her big start, with the dedication of that garden. To go to '54 now: the Museum decided they'd go all-out on everything. As I say, it was a beautiful day in the garden, but it got colder as the day went on and everybody was freezing because we were all in these little suits and stuff to look good. And here is the roster of people who spoke that afternoon: we had a message

piped in from President Dwight Eisenhower; Dag Hammarskjöld, who was then Secretary General of the United Nations, spoke; August Heckscher, who at that time was the chief editorial writer for the New York Herald Tribune; William A.M. Burden, who was the President of The Museum of Modern Art; Paul J. Sachs, who was Professor of Fine Arts Emeritus at Harvard; Robert F. Wagner, Mayor of the City of New York; and René d'Harnoncourt. Now that was a roster, believe me!! Of course, they started with Ike's talk. I have a lot of these speeches. Last night I got August Heckscher's out, and of course it's glorious, just beautiful. I don't know if it was ever published, but I read it last night. It was one of the publicity releases.

SZ: Tell me what you remember of Paul Sachs. He must have been a fairly old man by that time.

PM: I worked with Paul Sachs on his book. He did several books, but I worked with him on his major book on prints and drawings. He was a very short man, very, very courteous and old school. He came down for weeks on end from Cambridge, and he needed loads of photographs. I was in kind of an enviable spot in the Museum in many ways, Sharon, because everybody needed photographs sooner or later, as I said earlier. The foremost living authority needed them, or a young person just discovering Matisse. Sachs, of course we had all heard about him and I was a little bit afraid of him when he first came. He was a very formal man; he was very polite but also very formal. He was also professorial; you got the feeling that he had taught many years, and he did. So he came down, and he ordered many, many more photographs than he needed for the book, hoping that the publisher would include all of them, and they didn't, because publishers always cut you back. But anyway, we had some very nice sessions. Another thing that he was very nice about was when the book did come out...he had gone all over the Museum to get information from different departments, but most of the time he spent in the library, and he very carefully acknowledged everybody in his book. There was none of this just doing the "department heads" and that type of thing. At that time I was not a department head, I was in charge of photographic services in the library. Does that answer your question about Professor Sachs?

SZ: Yes. So the twenty-fifth anniversary was an all-day celebration?

PM: All day, and what they did was that they opened up all the galleries. It says here that from five to eleven P.M., after this long afternoon celebration, "Paintings from Museum Collections will be show. The entire Museum will be devoted to the most comprehensive selection ever shown." Then they also had fifteen new acquisitions and then a show of American prints. So it was just a huge thing, and it was really marvelous. After all these speeches in the garden everybody of course filtered back into the Museum and saw all of the paintings, and then this glorious book came out called Masters of Modern Art, which was a tour de force. It had what is known as tipped-in color plates, and that means that each color plate was reproduced individually and then tipped into the books, which makes it much more expensive. It was produced in Holland by a firm by the name of Enschede and it was based on a square format. Heretofore, most art books had been longer than wider and this was a square format, and it was a first in the museum publications world. Another thing that they did, the black-and-white prints were made from the original negatives, and we never, never let any original negatives outside The Museum of Modern Art, but this was the one exception, because Enschede was thoroughly reliable. They were in Haarlem, Holland. I got those all together and sent them over and we insured them, and then they worked directly from those to do the black-and-white plates--beautiful plates. Every single department is represented in that book, the entire Museum. It's been used many, many times, and it also went into print in many languages.

SZ: It was a celebration of the collection.

PM: It was a celebration of the collection and the twenty-fifth anniversary. They went all-out, spared nothing, and used the best printing methods. I think the black-and-whites were made by gravure printing; that was the idea of borrowing the negatives. The color prints, as I say, were all tipped-in and most faithful. All the major works of art were shown; each curator was responsible for showing his [department's] collection, and that was just terrific. I remember Frances Pernas, who was very important--she

was the production manager of the Department of Publications and was Monroe Wheeler's right hand--went to Haarlem to see the running-through of these plates. She did that, in fact, for many books. That was a common procedure all the years I was in the Museum and may still be. In other words, you had somebody from the staff and stand right at the printing presses and say, "No, don't do that, put more blue in that, put more red in this." It was very assiduously done. Later on, when I was in Rights and Reproductions and corrected the first color plates--I did a lot of that for outside publishers; Frances did it for the Museum.... I would go down to the gallery with their first proof and sit in front of the painting and then match the colors, paint right on the first proof. I was trained in that, so I could do it. That was when I discovered oil pastels would do the job, because up to that point we'd been using oils and watercolors. We had to work very quickly, because the galleries opened at eleven. So I'd get down there at nine-thirty or ten o'clock, and I'd have to go like lightening to get it finished; I couldn't be down there in the galleries in the afternoon doing color work. And the same way with Frances, but she went all around overseas because after World War II, we started to publish overseas right away, because there were just some wonderful companies over there that had started, and Enschede was one of the main ones. Another printer we used was Brüder Hartmann in Berlin. If you'll notice, many of the books from those years were printed by Brüder Hartmann. Fritz Hartmann represented that company; he came to America a lot. It was a father-and-son operation and they were marvelous, they did some of the best work. Later on, we had an Italian publisher, Pizzi--we went all over, to find the most skillful printers, to maintain the Museum's very high standards.

SZ: Maybe I'll ask you before we go onto the '60s, one thing I felt more of last time was I wanted you to talk to me a little more about Bernard Karpel. Just tell me anything and everything you knew about him and can remember.

PM: Well, of course Bernard Karpel was a marvelous man.... He was a Brooklyn-born boy and he married a childhood sweetheart. Bernard tells about their courtship, where he spent so much money on malteds. That was the kind of world then, compared to today. He was New York-educated. He got his library degree from Pratt and he worked at the 58th Street branch of the [New York Public] Library for many years, deeply into the library field. Eventually, he was asked to come to the Museum library by Iris Barry, because she wanted to have a professional bibliography/library person check out some cataloguing. So, through Mr. George Freedley of the New York Public Library, who recommended Bernard, he came on sort of a temporary basis. Then Beaumont Newhall left for war and shortly after Bernard was in the Signal Corps, the Army Signal Corps, and he was stationed in Long Island, happily. He was away two or three years, and when I came into the library in 1944 from the Film Library, there was a wonderful woman by the name of Hannah B. Muller who was in charge of the library and who interviewed me and hired me. We worked together very happily for many years. Then, after the war was over Karpel came back, Beaumont Newhall came back and was head of the Department of Photography. Bernard was a heavyset man, loved to eat, always had wonderful afternoon teas in his office. I'd been out to his home many times for roast turkey dinners--he'd have the whole staff out there, and we'd groan at the end of the day. It was delightful. He had a lovely house in Long Island, on the corner near the water. His wife, Ray, whom I still keep up with--she lives in Florida now--they had two boys, and a girl late in the marriage; they'd wanted a girl for many, many years, and then finally this little Wendy [Mara] came along. I think Wendy was a little bit spoiled, but in a nice way. Ray is still very much alive and lives, as I say, in Florida and I'm in touch with her. All through the years, Bernard grew up with the Museum like we all did. He was really one of the people who did real professional bibliographies for Museum publications. Up to this point, they'd just been sort of odd listings and incomplete references, and he changed that and really did a scholarly bibliography to coincide with the shows. There were terrible deadlines for these things. Hannah Muller also did some marvelous bibliographies. You see, at that time also, Sharon, they had scholars on the board. This is not to say they don't have them today, because I don't know the board of trustees that well today; it's much larger, of course. But you had people like

Jim Soby, who was a scholar; Alfred Barr was a scholar; Eddie Warburg was a scholar. So the whole trend in the Museum, which was small in those days, was a scholarly approach to everything, and Bernard was marvelous with that, he fell right in line with it. He was knew French and German very well, and he was also very modest about his French knowledge. I used to kid him about that, because I'd say, "You know French as well as anybody on the fifth floor," the fifth floor being where all the directors and curators were located. But he really knew those languages and could do a very good bibliography, but his passion, as I mentioned very early when we started talking, was the visual aspects of art as well, the visual aspects of the library, the photographs and slides. He was very interested in promoting this so that it wasn't just a book library, just a word library; he felt the word and image belonged together, particularly in an art museum, so much so that in 1956 he found some money to send me to Europe. I was going to Europe on a trip anyway with a friend and the Museum gave me some money to stay some extra time and interview these various photographers. I interviewed them in London and Paris and elsewhere. They were fine arts photographers. The idea was that we were going to keep building up this archive all the time, and not only to have pictures of the works of art the Museum and the works of art that the Museum had exhibited, but also this wonderful ephemera that was all around--pictures of artists, everything related to art. So that was what I was asked to do and I did, and I wrote a big report on it when I got back. I interviewed the major photographers in London, Paris, Basel, Milan and Venice.

SZ: Not bad.

PM: Not bad. When I got to these places--we had written to them in French because French was the language at that time and so we wrote in French and I assumed most all of us spoke English, but I'd get to the door and of course they'd say, "Vous cherchez quelqu'un, madame?" And that was it [LAUGHING]. So sometimes I'd go back to the hotel room at night and brush up on my French. But what I was doing was more information seeking; in other words, to find out what was there, what was available and what it would cost. Then I came back and wrote this report. It never really got off the ground, except that we knew what was out there and if the money

were available, then we could do it. But you also have to remember, too, that what was starting to happen in the Museum library was that people were coming to the Museum not only for pictures of works of art, but we began to become a picture source per se, for pictures of all kinds. People would call up and they'd say, "I want to find a good picture of a black panther, where should I go?" Or they'd call up and say, "I'm looking for a picture of a bull." So that was another thing that I did. I went all around New York and I was very familiar with these commercial picture agencies, so I could tell them where to go. Also, Bernard Karpel encouraged me to join the Special Libraries Association; he was an officer in that. The picture division of the Special Libraries Association had just been founded. Some of the first meetings of that group were in The Museum of Modern Art Library, and that led eventually to an invaluable book on picture sources which is still used today and is now updated and in about its tenth printing. Karpel was in on the beginning of that, and I was, too, in a lesser capacity. There was also a marvelous woman by the name of Romana Javitz, who was head of the picture collection at the New York Public Library, and she and Bernard were very good friends and colleagues because of their library connections. This is very important in the history of the Museum because people think of the Museum as having only pictures of works of art, and that was not true. I'll tell you more about Bernard. He had wonderful ideas for the library. I think basically that he really almost wanted to make our library a university library, on that level. He couldn't do it, but he did it on a marvelous small level with worldwide tentacles, but the Museum had so many first priorities they could not make the library a university library. We just didn't have the capacity for that. So Bernard tried in every way he could to spread the word and even with limited funds--and we had limited funds--to make the most of what we had, the slides and photographs and exhibition catalogue bibliographies.

SZ: It still was considered the foremost library....

PM: The foremost library in the world.

SZ: ...on modern art.

PM: Yes.

SZ: But he wanted it to be even...?

PM: He wanted it to be even larger and to encompass more. Also, he wanted all these indexes of visual materials and a much, much larger photo archive, and that was one of the reasons I went to Europe, to test it all out. But actually, as I said very early in this talk, many of the things that are done on computer with pictures now, Bernard foresaw. He was way ahead of the game. Another thing that he was very involved in was the Arno Reprint project. This took place later on, but since we're talking about Karpel I'll mention it here. Many of our publications were out of print; they were very much used, and some of them became the bible, for instance, Cubism and Abstract Art, Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism, and many of the one-man [show catalogues] were ragged and out-of-print and nobody could find them. So a company named Arno came along and said, "How about it? We'll reprint a lot of these catalogues in a lesser edition. There will be no color reproductions"--they were all black-and-white--"but you will have this wonderful text written by all these authorities," starting with Jim Soby and you name it. Bernard Karpel was very involved in that; he set up the contract, he worked with the Department of Publications. That was a lot of work. Decisions had to be made about what was to be published. As far as I know, they're still in print to this day. We sold them down at the front desk, and people who were dying to get a copy of the earlier books could now get them, and it was wonderful, particularly for the student world, the colleges and the students, because the color plates, well, they were nice to have, but they were not as important as those texts written by very famous people. In the meantime, outside people were always asking him to do bibliographies and he did what he could without jeopardizing anything in the Museum; but there was a lot of tension in that, you know, if you do any outside projects. Another thing that the Museum did that was great was they sent him to India, in the '60s, to assess the overseas libraries, because by this time, the International Council, among its many, many activities, was very interested in getting books overseas to these impoverished libraries. I mentioned that earlier, how we

packed all these wonderful trunks. They were not only books of modern art but the whole panorama of art, from early Christian art right on through. So in the '60s they decided that Karpel really ought to go and see those libraries and make those contacts, so he did. That was a long trip; he was gone four or five months. By this time, Inga Forslund was in the library, a lovely Swedish woman whom I'm very friendly with, lives in New York. She was the associate librarian and I'll talk about her later on. She took on while Bernard was away and then he came back, and wrote a huge report. This was a Rockefeller grant that he'd gotten; that's where the money came from. It was a marvelous trip for him because he had not traveled much. He had married early, he had three children, he had his home in Long Island, and he just didn't have the money to go gallivanting around. When you have three children, you just don't have the money to do that.... [PAUSE] So anyway, time went by and pretty soon we were up into the '70s. The Bicentennial of the country was soon coming up, in 1976. By this time, Bernard's name was very well-known, all over, and he was known as a foremost bibliographer. So with the Bicentennial in mind, the Smithsonian approached him to do this enormous bibliography of American art, starting with colonial times and right straight through to the present time, and that would be into the '70s. He felt it was a marvelous opportunity, so he accepted the job, thinking that he could carry on as The Museum of Modern Art's head of the library and also do that, because he had six or seven editors, one for each section, a painting person, a sculpture person. He went all over and got the best people he could.... So he thought that he could do both, which was madness. Without a doubt, it was madness. He just couldn't. He realized when he got into this bibliography that it was full-time, more than a full-time job. Also, the contract was very strict; this was no fooling around. He had a deadline and a time limit. Also, a couple of the editors pulled out for some reason or another, one got ill, so he had to scramble around and get other people, top people. Most of these people were working, too, so there were a lot of problems. I was involved in that Bernard confided in me what all the problems were. The upshot was that he retired at the end of '73; he just retired because he felt he'd been in the Museum for a long, long time, over thirty years, and he had to devote full-time to this. In the meantime, he lived in his house in Long Island for some time after he retired and did all the work between New York and Washington. I

should also mention that his wife in all these campaigns was so helpful. Ray was a very good businesswoman and had for a time a little real estate agency going on her own. Also, in addition to being a wonderful wife and mother and a good cook and everything, she typed for Bernard, hours on end. She was a real helpmate. So when he'd get into time restrictions with his bibliography she'd go to town and sit right down and type everything right out. She is a very outgoing person. So anyway, then when he left, Inga Forslund took over the library, and she was the logical person to do it.

SZ: Was she made director of the library?

PM: Yes, having been associate librarian. Inga came, I think, in 1961, so she was very well-trained, multilingual, and was well-liked by the Museum and well-known. She was a known quantity, so she stepped right into the situation. By this time, the Department of Rights and Reproductions was separated from the library physically; also, we were then under the aegis of the publications department. That was a logical decision. [PAUSE] So in the last years of Bernard's life they [he and his wife] moved to Poughkeepsie. Also, the house in Long Island was just too big.

SZ: Where in Long Island was it?

PM: It was in Beechhurst, Long Island. Wendy [Mara], the daughter, had married, the boys had both married, they had grandchildren. Bernard was very proud of those grandchildren. He used to bring us in pictures--lovely kids. He also used to bring us flowers from his garden. For a long time Ray's father lived with them and he had not one green thumb but ten green thumbs, and the beautiful things he raised were on all of the reception desks at MoMA. Bernard would come in like this, with a bouquet, and we'd divide it up and put the flowers upstairs and all over the place. I met his father-in-law, and he was a jolly man and he was old but you'd never know it. He had a pixie sense of humor and was an absolute delight and adored his garden, and he was just a great addition to that household. Anyway, they moved to Poughkeepsie, and one of the reasons they moved up there, as I said, was because the house got big. Bernard was away so much and Ray was there a lot alone, and I think he got a

little bit worried, because by this time, in the '70s, things were beginning to happen, society was changing. Billy was the older son and he was up there in Poughkeepsie. Also, Bernard had a brother who lived up there. He came from a big family, four boys and a sister. So they went to Poughkeepsie and he kept on with this bibliography for the Smithsonian and finally got the thing finished. I think it almost did him in. He had a severe heart attack and his wife wanted to move to Florida. But Bernard never liked Florida. He thought Florida was for the old folks. His wife loved Florida, and she'd go down there every winter; she had relatives there, a brother. She'd go down a couple of weeks in February to get out of the cold, and with great reluctance Bernard would go down for three or four days to keep her company. He hated Florida, he hated the sand, he hated the beach, he hated the ocean, he hated everything about it, and he said there was no good library south of Duke [University]. That was his summation of the South [LAUGHING], and he used to say that. Because he passionately loved his work, Sharon, he really did. There was no happier man than when he was at his desk throwing papers all around. He was not athletic. He didn't like boats, he didn't like tennis, or athletics. He was an urban scholar and loved every minute of it. So, after he had this very severe attack (I didn't know how severe it was until after he died, when I was told by his wife), they then moved to Florida. When I heard that they were going to move to Florida, I thought, Bernard is really ill. He lived two more years down there. They had, I guess, a pleasant two years, but he was weakened, and frail.

SZ: He had a heart attack.

PM: He had a heart attack, yes, and he died in January of 1986. He died in his sleep, peacefully. Then the library association called ARLIS [Art Libraries Society of North America] did a very nice memorial to him in the Museum and there were many articles written up in the library world, tributes, from all over. But he was awfully good to me and fought many a battle for me and, I think, was appreciated by the people who really knew what it was all about. Shall we get into the '60s now?

SZ: I think that makes a lot of sense now. I'm thinking in particular of movement up to the

'64 expansion and what you can remember of how things were changing, because the '60s apparently were....

PM: The '60s were a time of great expansion. The Department of Rights and Reproductions had requests from all over the world, not only for art books and art articles, but we extended the use of art reproductions to record album covers, book jackets. We also published internationally, so the laws changed.

SZ: So you had to study all that.

PM: I had to study and I was involved in all of it, and I was in the lawyer's office, Dick Koch's office, every other day.

SZ: So through that you developed a relationship with Dick Koch?

PM: Yes, I did, and he was a great asset to the Museum, because the Museum had gotten bigger, just gotten larger, and we needed a resident lawyer on the staff. It was no longer a small little organization where people could solve things with an outside lawyer when necessary; we needed somebody there every single day, particularly when the big expansion came, which developed into the big east wing, which opened in 1964, May of 1964. We needed a lawyer there every day and a director of administration, which Dick Koch was, and very ably so, too. On the R&R, as I said, we had the wider use of the collections and we now shared fees with living artists....

SZ: What does that mean? How did that happen?

PM: When a work of art was used commercially, say on the jacket cover of a book or on a record album cover, Mr. Barr felt very strongly that whatever we got in the way of a fee, that should be shared with a living artist because it was a commercial use. We also tried to encourage publishers to go and hire artists to design jackets, rather than taking works of art that were well known. Many of the publishers were afraid to do that; they wanted an established museum and an established work of art. This was

the time when the whole concept of art was changing; the fine arts were coming into everything. So I did a lot of work on that and I had lots of contacts with other museums. Then we also had people who were going to use the works in a very bad way, so it was a police action to some extent. We had to know what we were giving permission for. There had also been a lot of violations. People had bled the picture off the page, chopped it up; they had superimposed color on it. Some of these Madison Avenue designers had wrecked various reproductions. So we got into that whole business of not only checking the color fidelity, which I did, but also, we saw the proofs of every layout that would appear in other than an art context. We had to see and approve it before giving permission for reproduction.

SZ: Let me go back to something you said, because it brings to mind a question. How did some of these policies get set? You said that Alfred had some input into the idea that artists should share in the fees.

PM: Well, he had a great deal of input because, remember, everything that we were giving permissions for was in the Museum Collections; it was the only thing we could give permission for. We could give permission for loans only with the owner's written permission. So as far as Museum Collections were concerned, Alfred was my boss. I had three bosses in this job. I had Monroe, as the head of publications, because the program eventually came under that; that wasn't until several years later though, really. Then Alfred was very active in what was to be published and what was not to be published; anything of that nature that was not straight textbook publishing had to be approved by him or by Dorothy Miller. Dorothy Miller did a great deal of this work. Alfred delegated a great deal of this to Dorothy, and I was in constant contact with her; the memos flew back and forth. When Dick Koch came, when all the legal aspects came up, I could go to him for counsel. The more we published abroad, that brought into play the laws that were different from our laws in America. I can just say briefly that in America, if you owned a work of art, you controlled the reproduction rights to it, you as an individual. If you were in Europe and you bought a work of art in an art gallery, you did not control the rights; the family of that artist controlled the rights indefinitely. So it was a very different setup. I don't want to get into that

because it gets very complicated, those copyright laws, between the United States and Europe, which are very different.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 2

PM: Alfred was very prominent in all of this, as he was in every phase of the Museum, Sharon.

SZ: Even in the '60s you felt his presence?

PM: Oh, yes, very strongly. Alfred not only knew the history of art and all that end superbly, but he knew photography; he was involved in everything. As I said earlier, every photograph that was taken of a work of art was approved by the Department of Museum Collections; it was a very, very powerful department. His power was restored, and it was very, very strong. I can't stress that enough. And now, Richard Tooke has often told me that the forms and formulas that we worked out are still in use today in Rights and Reproductions, which is nice to know. For an art museum it was a big business.

SZ: I assume what you're saying is that you didn't have many models on which to draw. This is something you, together with these three people, [formulated].

PM: That's right. What we did was, when I first started this, I sent for the permission forms of every museum I could think of that had been in business for a long time, starting with the Met, because they had a permissions department. You see, in every major museum in America, permissions were controlled by the director's office. For example, if you wrote to the Cleveland art museum, whoever was the head of that would clear that. That still, to some extent, happened in MoMA, but we were really the only, I think, contemporary museum that had a special rights and reproductions department at that time [1959]. So after we got started, got going, of course

everybody came to us, and many galleries called me up and wanted our permission forms, which we gave out. There was a commercial book done later on artists and rights, and every one of our permission forms was reproduced in that book. I must say also that a lot of these rules developed by trial and error, as anything does. There would be a terrible mistake made and we'd say, "Well, this wasn't on the form of regulations," so we'd add it. It was a trial-and-error thing; it was very adventuresome ground in many ways, a lot of detail, a lot of correspondence. Then, pretty soon, I had four or five people to work with me. Then in the '60s we also got a lab on the premises, which helped a great deal; before that, all the photographers had to come in, do their work and then go back to their home or their studio or lab and do their developing and printing. When we finally got the lab in the Museum, Rolf Peterson, who had worked for Captain Steichen, became the head of that fine arts lab, and that made a big difference. It meant we could go up to the gallery and photograph something and they could run down and develop it and print it, and if it wasn't right, they could go back up again and re-shoot it. But the color work, we still had that done by outside photographers, by and large. Peterson was a black-and-white man, and Sunami was a black-and-white [photographer]. So I had all these color photographers around that I used all the time, and I let them know that there was competition, because if you have competition among people they do better work.

SZ: And they keep their prices down.

PM: And they keep their prices down. I learned a lot in a hurry; I had to. I was reading up on color reproduction and everything, night and day. Remember, I had a background for this to some extent.

SZ: And you liked doing this?

PM: Yes, I liked the color work very much. I enjoyed, to some extent, the legal end because I learned so much about the legal end, but it was also a very detailed job, very precision[-oriented]. You can't take anything for granted. So after ten years of

that I was asked to go into the special collections in the library; they set up a special program, because by that time, in the late '60s, Bernard Karpel and all of the trustees were getting very worried about all our special documents in the library, which did not have any one person to take care of them. This fell in line with the whole trend in America, where we all were looking to our heritage and seeing that it was disappearing before our eyes. So they created the job for me. By that time, Richard Tooke was well trained and I knew he could take over. I was so pleased, because I didn't want my work to go down the drain. And he's still there, happily. I'll get into that later, but one thing I did want to mention was...do you want to know the restaurants that we ate at around here?

SZ: Absolutely! You had told me last time that there were restaurants where you all ate.

PM: Last night I sat down and I thought of all these restaurants, and I'll just do this briefly. There was Badens on the corner, which was the corner drugstore, and that's where everybody ran to get an aspirin tablet or a tuna fish sandwich.

SZ: What corner?

PM: Corner of 53rd and Sixth Avenue. If you had no time, you just ran down there. As I say, if you had a prescription you had to get done in a hurry, that's where you'd go.

SZ: That's the corner where....

PM: ...the CBS Building is now--"Black Rock" it is now. Then there was another place called the Frances Bell on 55th Street. This was a great favorite of Alfred Barr's; he'd go there all the time. It was run by this old lady, but you could get a marvelous lunch there very reasonably, and it was all home-cooked food.

SZ: Was it sort of like a tea room?

PM: A tea room, yes, but a good one. She had very good food and it was nice. Down the

street from her was a place called Jane Davis, which was very similar. Jane Davis was a little more expensive and a little more elegant, but they were both godsends for the staff, and everybody went there. Then there was another place called the Valmor, which was in an old brownstone in the 50s, and that was very nineteenth-century in feeling. Everything was dark carpets, white tablecloths, the waiters were ancient, and it had a literary atmosphere to it--when you went in there, you expected to see Henry James come in any minute, walk through the door. It was that kind of place. Everybody would go there and there would be tables of Museum people, but then nobody would sort of speak to anybody else. I don't mean they were unfriendly, but they would sit at tables, little tables, and that was a great spot for years, the Valmor. I don't know what ever happened to it. I think the building came down. Another place was called the Faison d'Or, and that was next door to Badens, right along the line there. That was a long bar in front, a red bar, but in back they had delicious food they had about six or eight booths. There was always a waiting line there, it was very popular. They had marvelous omelets, they'd make them up fresh for you. People would go there and there were booths where you could talk quietly. It was a wonderful spot. Another popular spot was the Ben Yee, a Chinese restaurant with an enormous bar and good food. It was quiet and you could talk business there.

SZ: You went out to lunch every day?

PM: Yes, I went out to lunch every day. But as these places begin to disappear--and they did, because of the whole expansion of Sixth Avenue, or Avenue of the Americas. Then the restaurants in the Museum...in these early days, all we had was the garden restaurant. Well, we had the penthouse, too, but for the most part, people wanted to get out of the Museum for lunch, and these places were very reasonable. So you'd leave and go out. I'm talking of the '40s and '50s, these places. Then there was another place called Chez Lina, and that was run by a French lady; that was on 52nd Street, along with those jazz clubs I mentioned earlier. Later on, there was a place called Jerry's on Sixth Avenue, and that was kind of a bar-and-grill place, but good food. And then there was the famous Hicks on Fifth Avenue, which had wonderful ice cream sodas and sandwiches. I used to eat breakfast there a lot, just run in there for

coffee.... But everybody frequented these places. They were very democratic, and you could look up in any one of them and see a curator or a [department] head and so on. Okay, now to get into the '60s.... As we said before, the expansion was going strong, Rights and Reproductions was booming, publications was booming, the international aspects of the Museum were very prominent, and, of course, the much wider use of the collections in every way--the loans of the paintings and the reproductions of the paintings. Then we come to November of 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated, and I was in the Museum the day that happened. Do you want to hear about it?

SZ: Sure.

PM: Actually, I was in a restaurant, called The Three Crowns, on 54th Street with a friend from out of town, and we were having a smorgasbord lunch. Everybody always remembers where they were when Kennedy was shot; I'm sure you do. Just to make it brief, we heard all the waiters circling around and we knew something was terribly wrong, and then finally one of the waiters told us the President had been shot. So my friend and I were practically on our coffee and we just stopped everything, paid the bill, threw some money on the table and went out. Everybody was clustered around the radio, anybody who had a car radio, and there was a music shop called Liberty Music Shop on Madison Avenue and everybody was clustered around that. So my friend said, "I have to get right back to my hotel and get my husband"--her husband was here on business--and I said, "I have to get right back to the Museum." So we bid each other good-bye and I flew back to the Museum. Dorothy Dudley, who was the registrar at the Museum, a marvelous woman, had a transistor radio and we all clustered around that. That's when we heard when Kennedy died, that's when we actually heard it. Of course, they closed for the day, naturally. They closed down and asked everybody to leave.

SZ: People in the Museum.

PM: Everybody, the public.... And the word spread like wildfire. Those things do. So we

went home and all had that dreadful week.... In the plans, Jacqueline Kennedy had agreed to speak in May of 1964 at the dedication of the new east wing. Also, while this wing was being built, numerous paintings were loaned to the National Gallery. The National Gallery said, "This is great, we'll take the paintings, they're major works that you're not going to put in storage, and we'll have a show in Washington." None of our paintings had ever been shown down there in such mass; they'd been loaned one-by-one, but never in such mass. So all the paintings were shipped down there, and the idea was that they were going to have a big opening in Washington. I was invited to that Washington opening. It was "The National Gallery requests the pleasure of your company...," at which the Kennedys had agreed to be present. And then I remember the terrible follow-up of that, after he was shot. This engraved invitation came, very severe, and it said, "The opening of The Museum of Modern Art collection of paintings will not take place." Well, it so happens that in this interval I happened to see the show, because I went to Washington one weekend. I had some color corrections to do and the paintings were there, so I did see the exhibition. That was tragic, but that was what the plan was, to have this big opening in Washington with the Kennedys present, and then Jacqueline Kennedy had agreed to come and to speak at MoMA later. Well, as everybody knows what happened, [Lyndon B.] Johnson became President. They wrote, then, to Lady Bird Johnson, in due time so that everything was polite and proper, and she happily agreed to speak. And that was a gala evening, it really was. Do you want to know what she wore?

SZ: Of course! [LAUGHTER]

PM: She was in white from head to toe, much more petite than you'd ever seen her in her pictures. I was there and I was invited to the dinner. I was so pleased, because it was really a lovely dinner. Dinner was held in the new wing, facing the garden. It was beautiful. She was in this lovely white dress, off the shoulders, and long gloves up to here, with matching white peau de soie pumps and this jet-black hair swooping backwards. The thing that I remember about her more than anything is the fact that she was so petite. But also, she held herself so beautifully; her carriage was marvelous. There are pictures of her being received as she came in the door.

I have one interesting thing to tell you, and that was we had posters for the vitrines outside the Museum. This was, of course, hectic to get all these posters made, and there was a mistake made in the dimensions of the these posters. They were supposed to be fitted in and go behind the glass. I was involved in this because it was part of photographic services. It was just an honest mistake somebody had made in the measurements. Well, we got all these posters made, there were six or eight of them, and they couldn't fit in the glass, so we didn't know what to do. So we thought, Well, we'll just put them on the outside and pray that it doesn't rain all night or no vandals come, because we knew that when Lady Bird Johnson pulled up, we had to have what the exhibitions were in those vitrines outside the Museum. So we just pasted them on the outside and prayed, and it didn't rain, it was a gorgeous night, nothing happened, there were no vandals. This was 1964. Nothing was scraped, graffitied or anything. Then the next morning, of course, we all breathed a sigh of relief, and then one by one we took them out and we had them cut down to fit. The lab actually came to the Museum and cut them down so we could get them in. I just tell you this because this was minor compared to other things that happened on a much greater level, because this was a huge...I think it was a $25-million wing. So you can imagine all the plans, and everybody helped. People came in, they wore old clothes, and we just really put the thing together. Alfred and, of course, Dorothy Miller did all the collections work. Everybody just worked to get it together, and it was a beautiful evening. The Champagne flowed like the Niagara, as they say, and everybody was all dressed up and carried long gloves because you thought if you had to put them on, you know...very proper. We all shopped and got new dresses, the whole bit [LAUGHING], and prayed that it didn't get too windy so your hair would be a mess.

SZ: At that time, was the staff cohesive, was there still that feeling of family?

PM: Oh, yes, very much so. Well, I think it was, in many ways, throughout my days there, because I found that in a crisis people stuck together at the Museum, they really did, which people do. Trouble always brings people together, anyway.

SZ: There was some trouble....

PM: There was trouble later on, sure, in the '70s. Okay. Alfred retired in 1967, and there was a lovely party for him up at Pocantico Hills, the Rockefeller estate, to which I was invited. That was a glorious night.

SZ: It seems like the weather always held out.

PM: Well, that was a cool night, Alfred's party, and everybody worried about what to wear. We always worried about what we were going to wear because in those days there were strict dress codes. In the next year was René's wonderful party, which I think I described earlier.

SZ: And Monroe Wheeler also retired.

PM: Monroe Wheeler retired, yes, and the trustees gave him a very nice party. I don't [know] too much about that, but I know he was feted and given a nice send-off. You see, all of them were active afterwards. Monroe put on that marvelous show that opened and traveled in South America entitled From Cézanne to Miró. That was wonderful, and he did all that. Alfred was very, very active, and of course René didn't have a chance; he died that summer, two months after he retired. Alfred had an office down the street. Dorothy Miller and Dorothy Dudley retired in 1969. I want to tell you about this because this was interesting. Philip Johnson gave a party for them up at his house in New Canaan, and it was a real "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe." We all went up on buses--he hired buses for it. As always, Philip did everything with great style. At that time there was a famous restaurant called the Brasserie that had opened across the street from the Seagram Building, and Philip had these boxed lunches packed from the Brasserie sent up, and then we all sat all around with drinks and everything and opened up these lovely lunches. They had everything in them, it was a divine lunch. That was for the two Dorothys, Dorothy Dudley and Dorothy Miller. There were lots of people and it was just delightful. There again, the weather was good, marvelous. And we saw Philip's house. It was the first time I had seen his

house, and he had everything open and let us all go through everything. We went into the Glass House itself and then we went into another little house--he had a little guesthouse on the property--and then his art gallery, which was downstairs underground. I knew many of his paintings, but I had never seen them like that. So everybody went down and saw them. It was not only a party for the two Dorothys, but also it was a wonderful chance to see Philip's house, and it was very nice of him to do that. That was their farewell party. As I say, it was a real French luncheon.

SZ: You didn't worry about what to wear to that.

PM: Well, everybody did because they didn't know whether to dress formally or real country, and everybody kind of opted for something in-between. It just went off beautifully, it was very, very nice, and then we all came back to New York on buses. I didn't have that written down, I'm glad I put that in.

SZ: That's what I want to hear.

PM: This is what you want to hear, Sharon?

SZ: Sure!

PM: There again, you won't find that elsewhere.

SZ: No, that's right.

PM: As I say, everybody was nicely put together at that party, and then there were lots of people, as I recall, lots of people who were not Museum people. They were family friends of Dorothy Dudley and family friends of Dorothy Miller, which is always nice. Philip, of course, officiated, charming as he always is. A charming man. I knew him well; he gave a lot of materials to the library and I had lots of dealings with him. Just a delight. Where are we going?

SZ: I think we're going to need one more [interview], to do PASTA and the strike and all that.

PM: We got up to 1969, when I left R&R and went to the special collections.

SZ: Maybe I could ask you one other question and then we could just end it for today. I wanted to go back to something else that you said. I don't know if you really are interested in talking about it now, but you said there were lots of romances at the Museum and you were going to tell me about some of them.

PM: I remember in the film department it seems to me that there were two or three people who married that met there, and I remember going to a couple of the weddings. Beyond that, I can't think now.

SZ: Could we talk a little bit more about something you said last time. We got to the point in the late '60s where you have these crucial retirements.

PM: They happened all of a sudden, you see. You had of course the three heads, Alfred, René and Monroe, within two or three years, and Dorothy Dudley and Dorothy Miller.

SZ: How did that leave people feeling? How did it leave you feeling?

PM: I knew there would be big changes in the Museum after those people left because I had worked with them very closely, Sharon, all those years. But on the other hand, you had to face the fact. Also, they all had worked hard and long and had given everything. They were tired, those people, and certainly deserved a change of pace.

SZ: It also paralleled real changes in society. They were very active times.

PM: They were very active times. Even though we had the Vietnamese war, which was horrendous, times were very good. There was money around. I don't think the Museum had enough; I don't think nonprofit organizations ever have everything they

need. We were careful; we were all of the "waste not, want not" school, as I said earlier on. But I remember Christmas presents that were given by various companies and so on, you know. We were all very careful about anything like that, but somebody would send you a little...I remember the Museum library got a lot of little boxes of nuts and candy, that kind of thing. It was nice. The regulars would always remember us. There was one man that always brought a box of nuts every year. We'd put them right out on the table for the visitors. Yes, there was a cohesion in the Museum. I think, with the east wing and all that, we were full of plans, we were going forward, very definitely. Then, of course, when all those people changed at once, yes, it was a big change, an upheaval, and we knew then that the crowd we had worked with very closely was gone, it would never be the same. You see, when you work with somebody very closely, you can count on those people and they can count on you. This makes a big difference. If I called Sunami at midnight and said, "Sunami, I have to have these prints tomorrow early," he'd work all night. There was this camaraderie and...I can't think of the word.

SZ: Ethos?

PM: Ethos, yes. So you knew what everybody could do. René d'Harnoncourt had this in his staff. He knew he could go out to and say we were going to have a marvelous exhibition and he was going to direct it.... The last show he did was a sculpture show of Picasso, which was just a spellbinding exhibition, but he knew he had the backing of all the staff, he knew everybody would work all night, all day and in-between. You could count on people for things.

SZ: Would you say it was that way when you retired?

PM: It changed a lot, but I think any viable organization, Sharon, goes through changes. Nothing stays the same. The world isn't the same, you aren't the same. New York is certainly not the same. Also, I think in the beginning we <u>were</u> the only museum of modern art, and then people copied us left and right. We spread the gospel, and many places copied us. It reached into every corner. Before, it was much more of a

concentrated effort, as we were unique.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**PEARL L. MOELLER (PM)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**WEST 43 STREET NEW YORK, NEW YORK**
DATE:	**OCTOBER 1, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: I think, Pearl, we left off last time where you'd really painted a picture of the Museum left with a large, gaping hole with Barr gone, René d'Harnoncourt gone, Monroe

Wheeler gone. There were a succession of directors and problems with that, so I'm just going to ask you what you remember about that.

PM: Not to over-repeat, but Alfred was gone, he had retired; René died; Monroe retired; Dorothy Dudley, who was a key person in the Museum as the registrar for many years, she retired; Dorothy Miller retired shortly thereafter; Allen Porter, who was a key liaison in the Museum for many years, from its beginning, really, he left. So you had, as you said, this gaping hole all at once. It was just a huge thing. We're up now to 1969....

SZ: We could talk first about when René retired, Bates Lowry was made director.

PM: I want to go into that. Bates Lowry was the first one to come in. Of course, René was alive when Lowry was appointed, and he had excellent credentials and background. I did not know Bates personally before he came to the Museum, but I had corresponded with him for years because he was teaching out at Pomona College and he'd also been at Brown and [was head of the relief organization CRIA, which was organized after] the Florence floods. He was very active in that and raised a lot of money to do that tremendous restoration that had to be done.... Plus his academic background and everything, so he seemed like the perfect solution to come in here. But it didn't work, and the same way with John Hightower, who came out of a different background. He was the director of the New York State Council on the Arts. There again, an extremely nice man. Both of them worked hard, but I think the gap was too much between the top echelon who had just left. I believed, and I still believe to this day, that you cannot come into a place like The Museum of Modern Art cold and be the head of it. You can come in on another level, maybe on a departmental director's level, but I don't think you can come in the top job.

SZ: Why?

PM: Because I think there are too many factions, there are too many complexes, the chemistry of the place. You have to have the background somehow. That was one of

the very fortunate things about Dick Oldenburg when he came; he came in as director of the publications department, and did a marvelous job with that. Also, he was there a good two and a half years before he was made acting director [of the Museum]. We all got to know Dick well, he went all over the Museum and got to know everybody. I remember there was a College Art Association in Washington which I went to; it was in February of 1970. He had just come to the Museum--he came in the fall of '69--and I remember Richard Tooke and I went down. We had to speak at a meeting down there in connection with the College Art Association; it was held in the trustees room at the National Gallery. Dick was there, and I remember later we all had drinks together and he was asking me a lot of questions about the Museum. He said, "You've been there a long time," and I remember telling him various things, how the departments fitted together and all, things like that. What amazed me was his great retention of detail--tremendous. I remember sitting there, looking at him, in Washington, and thinking, This is who ought to be director of The Museum of Modern Art. It was just that wave that came over. It's like you see an actor somewhere in a play and you just say, "That woman's going to go to Broadway" or "That man's going to go to Broadway." It's a feeling you have, like seeing a great painting or something. Of course, other people felt the same way [LAUGHING], including the top echelon of the trustees, and, very happily, he was appointed as acting and then of course as full director.

SZ: During the time that Bates Lowry was director, did you sense that he wasn't making out well, or did his departure come as a surprise?

PM: No, it didn't come as a surprise, because he added so many people to the painting and sculpture department, for one thing; it was confusing. I just can't put my finger on it, really, but you just had the feeling that somehow the chemistry just wasn't right or wasn't going to be right. There again, I go back to my original contention, that I do not think somebody can just step in at the top without previous on-the-job training and experience. This is not to say that somebody has to be on the staff thirty years before they can become director. I don't mean that. In other organizations that are smaller, it might work. I don't know.

SZ: Did the staff not like him?

PM: It was mixed, it was very mixed. Then we came to Hightower. There again, the staff liked Hightower. He had, I think, a lot of good ideas and is a very personable man. But there again, I think they both were at the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong job--at that juncture. Now, had it maybe been five years earlier, had it been five years later, it might have worked. Or, had René been alive. I still say that his death was a great tragedy, because I think they would have both gone to him and he would have seen what was happening and he would have maybe put the forces together. He would have been there, not only as a presence, but as an active person. I don't think he would have interfered unnecessarily, but I think he would have been there. It was a very difficult situation and there was a lot of unrest. Then, of course, the union got going: PASTA was born. But I think had René been there, that never would have happened. I think he would have taken the factions together and somehow worked it out so it didn't get to the strike situation. I have a lot of ground to cover, Sharon, in special collections, Mrs. Barr [Margaret Scolari Barr], all kinds of things.

SZ: That was one thing I had on my list, that I wanted you tell me a little bit more about special collections. You went to that in '69, right?

PM: Yes, '69. I had been in [the Department of] Rights and Reproductions for ten years, had set it up and run it, and it seemed to be running fine. I also knew I had Richard Tooke as a fine colleague who could take over those duties; he'd been there almost eight years. In the meantime, Bernard Karpel was getting very nervous about the special collections in the library, all these precious papers and things that were there but they needed a full-time person to handle them, to copy them and to preserve them. Bernard also was at the stage of his life where he knew he wasn't going to be in the Museum forever and a day, so he was very anxious to get this thing going. So, with a lot of persuasion...we got that line on the budget, which in the Museum you always had to present your case and work hard at it. Sometimes you got it,

sometimes you didn't. Anyway, my job was to get things microfilmed and preserved. It was the days before fiche and before fax. Fiche came in a little bit later on, and now I think the Museum has quite a lot of fiche. But those were unheard of [in 1969], and the best thing you had was microfilm. It's a terrible job to get a manuscript microfilmed, it's a big job, because you have marginal notes and you have to have a company that's very, very talented and understands manuscripts. Also, these things could not be let out of the Museum for any length of time, so I had to these microfilming places and had to stand there while they made a negative, and make sure that some kid didn't have his coffee break on [Umberto] Boccioni's treatise on Futurism, we'll say--that type of thing. So that took a lot of time and I enjoyed that; I learned a lot and I also worked very closely with the conservation department--Jean Volkmer and Tosca Zagni were there, who were wonderful. Since I was not trained as a conservator, I never did anything without checking with them, unless it was photography or something I knew well. Meanwhile, I went around town to various special collections and learned, I learned a lot of it on the spot. But I was very careful about that because if you don't know what to do in conservation you don't do anything, and you don't do anything that's not reversible. That's one of the points I learned. In other words, when you're conserving anything, be it a rare book, a manuscript, a letter, whatever, you never do anything that you can't reverse, and that's an old Museum practice.

SZ: Tell me what kinds of things constitute special collections.

PM: Special collections constituted all original letters and some of the main archives--for example, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's scrapbook, which you've seen. That was a little book that she just put together herself and it turned out to be extremely valuable. We had the Conger Goodyear archive on the first ten years of the Museum. Conger Goodyear very nicely had those books bound, very beautifully bound. He kept everything, including the menu when The Museum of Modern Art opened. He had the menu of the [opening for the] new building in 1939, and don't think that wasn't consulted when we got to be fifty years old. They had mock turtle soup with three kinds of wine and nine courses; nobody eats like that today. That was all there. He

even had the bus tickets from when the building opened in 1939, that is, at 11 West 53rd Street. The World's Fair was on, and the Museum had this idea that you could go from the World's Fair to the Museum--it was a dual idea to promote the Museum--and he even collected the bus ticket that you had for that. To say nothing of the all the annual reports and the financial reports and everything. Rona [Roob], has made an index of that as part of a Columbia University project; we'd never had an index to it. That, of course, is invaluable. It's just a marvelous archive. Then we had a huge archive by Curt Valentin. Curt Valentin was a 57th Street dealer. He had been a dealer in Berlin, and he was one of the few art dealers even then who was not greedy and money-minded. I don't mean to say he didn't make a living, but he was not greedy. He was a great friend of the Museum's, and particularly of Alfred's and Dorothy's. Many of the German works of art came into our collection through Curt. He used to come to the Museum all the time. All his letters are there; he corresponded with everybody, all over the world. He also corresponded with, for example, [Max] Beckmann during the Occupation when Beckmann was in Amsterdam under the Nazis, and earlier. Those letters are there. It's just a treasure trove of information, to say nothing of all his little exhibition catalogues. He put out these small little catalogues, but they're now very sought after and very valuable. I knew him well, he came to the Museum. You asked me the other day to tell a funny little story and I'm going to tell a funny story. Curt died much too young. He died in Italy, at the sculptor [Marino] Marini's home. He was in his fifties when he died. His doctor told him he had to have more exercise--this was earlier on--so he thought, Now, how can I get more exercise? So he bought a boxer dog and he took the dog everywhere on all his travels. There again, as I said much earlier, it was the days when people did their own research; they didn't have all these lackeys and all these assistants and assistants and assistants. They did their own thing. So Valentin would come to the Museum to see Alfred and Dorothy and conduct his business. Well, the dog was left downstairs with the receptionist, so when anybody would come back, they would all go over and pet the dog and we all knew that Curt Valentin was in the Museum. He did this on all his rounds. This lovely boxer with melting brown eyes would look up at you, you know. It was just one of those sweet stories, and of course

he got the exercise because he had to walk the dog as well as do his business all around town. Anyway, another famous German dealer was J. B. Neumann; he also had a gallery on 57th Street. He was a great friend of the Museum's and was almost like a senior adviser because he had had galleries in Germany. There again, many things came from Neumann to the Museum. I also forgot one thing about Curt Valentin, and that was, when he died a group of his friends got together and that magnificent Rodin sculpture in the garden of Balzac is in his memory. It's a great piece, I'm sure you know it well. I have often thought that somebody should do a show on Curt Valentin and on J. B. Neumann and it should be done, I don't know where, but probably in the Modern, because the letters are there of both of them and many photos of their shows, and certainly the works of art are there, you'd just go around and pick them out. It could be a very nice show, with the two of them. Whether it was maybe thought of and never came off, I don't know, but it's something that I've thought about for some time. Another extremely important archive is called the Eluard-Dauss [Paul Eluard and Camille Dauss]. It's mainly a Surrealism archive, and it's all books and early publications of the artists, from as early as the '20s--André Breton and all those writers. That reminds me of a wonderful story about André Breton which I want to tell you because you'd asked me to tell you those little sidelights. Anyway, that was a huge archive and occupied several shelves in the special collections library.

SZ: How was it acquired?

PM: Walter Chrysler bought it in Paris and gave it to the Museum. It's all very carefully documented; there were press releases done. Chrysler's idea was that, if he gave, then other trustees and collectors would follow and give other collections to the library. They did, but not of that massive type, this was really enormous. It's all catalogued; you can go to the catalogue and look up the numbers and get any book out you want. Many of them, however, are in very fragile condition. I tried to protect them and put all sorts of cases around them and everything. But, André Breton.... He was one of many artists who were in the library in the late '40s, because they were

all refugees from Europe. There was a whole exhibition on that in Washington recently, on the various refugee artists. The Barrs were very helpful in that, too, to help those people come to America. They were all without homes and many of them had been thrown out of Europe. André was a very elegant man, he was handsome, and he always had these little girls circulating around him. He only spoke French, he never spoke English; I think he knew English very well but he refused to use it. He would get on the elevator--in those days the library was on the fourth floor of the "11" building--and he'd say, "Quatre etage." In the early days the elevators were run by ladies, and sometimes they'd know what he meant and sometimes they didn't, but after a while they did. He was totally in another world. If central casting needed to commit to film a French poet, they wouldn't have to do anything but bring the cameras right in, dolly right in on him. As I say, he was always surrounded by these young admirers looking up at him. He did most of his work in our library. Then, all these other refugees would come, and it became a meeting place, because, unlike Paris, we didn't have cafés in New York where these people could gather as they did in Paris--like the Dome and those various famous places on the Left Bank. So it became a meeting place for many of the refugees--[Fernand] Léger, Matta, Max Ernst. They all came to the library to do their work and to meet and compare notes and so on. Many publication ideas were germinated in the library of the Museum. I was right there, of course, at the time, but it's like anything else, at the time you don't realize how famous these people are going to become, and then you look back on it and you think, My God, there was André Breton and Max Ernst sitting there! Of course they're all gone now, but before they'd died, everybody would have given their right arm to meet those people. It's the same way with Philip Johnson. I knew Philip when he first came to the Museum. By the way, he gave us some very nice archival materials, too. Another real treasure of the special collections is the famous filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. We have original scripts in the library of his films. Also, we have Boccioni letters, as I mentioned before--on Futurism. One of the things that always amazed me was how much very important ideas and treatises were written on hotel stationery. In fact, somebody could do a wonderful story on this sometime; it would be a nice student paper. These people would go to these various hotels, and

they always tried to stay at the best. What do you do? You put your hand in the desk drawer and there you have this nice writing paper, and they used it. In fact, Eisenstein wrote Que Viva Mexico!, one of his major films, on hotel stationery, and you can see it in The Museum of Modern Art Library. We also had all kinds of rare periodicals, which I really can't go into. It's just vast. Later on we had the whole International Circulating Exhibitions Archive come to the library; that was in the '70s. All that material had been with Porter McCray and Waldo Rasmussen, and it was just getting huge and enormous and it was decided that that should really go to the library. That is an absolutely indispensable archive. Not only do you have all the catalogues of [those exhibitions] that went all over the world, you have Rose Kolmetz's wonderful translations of all the press clippings, worldwide, in all kinds of languages. Much of it is catalogued and people use that all the time. It's just marvelous. I worked to try and organize it into library cataloguing procedures. It was a big job. I can say it in one sentence, but....

SZ: You went through it all?

PM: I went through it all, to know what was there. I had to. That is just irreplaceable, fantastic. The next thing I wanted to get to is Mrs. Barr and the Alfred Barr archive, which she set up in the library. By this time, Alfred was not well and Marga was terribly anxious to get many of his letters and papers set up in the library. I worked with her very closely on that, and also Inga Forslund worked very closely on that. As I mentioned earlier, Bernard Karpel retired in the early '70s to work on the huge bibliography for the Smithsonian in connection with America's bicentennial in 1976. Inga Forslund, who had been in the library, took over as director of the library. That was a very happy and a very pleasant transition. Inga and I had been very good friends and colleagues, and I think it was a rare occurrence between two women, because she and I could go at night to the ballet and talk about our personal lives and everything, and then the next day, she was my boss. But I had tremendous latitude with her because she was in the tradition of the bibliophile and was very happy to let me handle all of the rights and the copyrights and artists' estates

problems--all of that end of the library. But we had this joke. We'd do a letter and she'd say to me, "What do you think we ought to do about this?," and I'd say, "Well, I think we ought to go see Dick Koch because that has a legal implication." So I'd run upstairs to Dick Koch and we'd draft this letter between us, then I'd say, "Should you sign it or should I sign it?" Dick Koch would say, "I think Inga ought to sign it because she's the head of the library." But then in another letter he said, "You sign it, Pearl." So we had this procedure and the relationship between the library and Richard Koch was very pleasant. I was in his office all the time. I sometimes think I was a pest up there, but he never treated me that way. I got so I knew what inherently could be trouble. You get that feeling. As you know, with anything relating to the law, especially in a museum, it's better to be safe than sorry, so I'd go up there with all kinds of things. So we got into a lot of those problems, because archives were given to us on different bases. Sometimes we had full discretionary powers; we didn't have to check with anybody for viewing. At other times, there was an executor involved whom we had to get in touch with before we could open it to anyone, letters had to be exchanged. It was very complicated. I can say that again in one sentence, but I did a lot of work with that. Before I left the Museum, one of the things I did was I made a summary sheet of every one of the archives that had legal implications and made a summary of what was necessary for entrance. I did that for Clive Phillpot because I felt it was necessary and so did he. So if the phone rang in the library, you could go to that file and look it up and see exactly what was needed, number one, two, three, four, five, what you had to do before anybody could even go near the archives. Many of the things were completely free, you could just let people in to look and read. But it wasn't so much looking, it was when people wanted to publish something, and that was when it got into all kinds of laws and rules and that's of course where Dick Koch a general counsel came into the picture. Then the actual setting-up of the archives, which were all done by formal letters, transactions back and forth. I also learned to write a letter that didn't sound legal; it was legally binding, but it didn't sound legally binding, because we never wanted to scare anybody off. Lots of times we had widows who had very precious items that we wanted, but if you wrote them a very firm, legal letter, it would frighten them to death and then they'd

back off. So we made the letters so they were formal and binding but you didn't feel as though you had to run out and hire a Wall Street lawyer. We made it easy for people, and yet at the same time protected them, as well as MoMA; it was double protection. To go back to the Barrs, for years and years I was scared to death of Marga Barr. In the early days she was known as Daisy Barr. She used to come in to see Bill Lieberman. At one time he and I shared an office, which I'll go into later. So she would come in, and I always felt totally inadequate in Marga's presence in the early days, even though I had a good art education and had a couple of degrees on my name, but I always felt she was going to ask me something and I would never know the answer and then she'd say, "That dumbbell you have in the library there..." Except she never really acted that way, but she was very bright and sharp and there was this aura around her, just like there was this aura around Alfred, the two of them. I was young, and of course we were all very impressionable. As the years went by, that changed considerably, I'm very happy to say. I got to know Marga very well. I like to think I helped her in setting up the Barr archive in the library. Bernard Karpel was also very helpful to her. She was trying to get this done, you know, and she'd come to the library and you could see that in many cases she was not well. It was like time was running out and she was very anxious to get this together. So we set it up and she gave us many wonderful things, many of Alfred's awards and even the actual awards we got in little velvet boxes and all that type of thing, plus the marvelous books that we could have--we had a selection of books that we could choose for the library--and many letters. It is just a marvelous archive, and I worked very hard to organize it. Marga was wonderful to work with because she had a marvelous memory for everything. I know that later on, when Rona Roob worked with her very closely to do a complete publication of all of Alfred's writings, which was a fabulous job, she said the same thing. In the course of this Marga and I became friendly, naturally. I went to her house many times, with all those wonderful paintings all around. She was completely multilingual. I miss Marga even now. The other day I had something that came up and I thought, Now Marga would know the answer to this. It was a question involving Renaissance art, and I had looked all through my books at home and I couldn't find the answer. It was a church in Assisi. I

had been to this church years ago and I couldn't remember something someone had asked me about it, and I thought, Now Marga would know that right off. She persevered, and to her everlasting credit, she set up the Barr archive. There were daily phone conversations. It's now, of course, a terribly important part of the library.

SZ: So she was intimately involved with that, she would come frequently?

PM: She would come almost every day, and she'd call up, she'd get worried about certain things, and I'd say, "Don't worry, don't worry, we'll do it." Then we'd draft the necessary letters. Alfred, by then, was really not too well. He was up in Salisbury, Connecticut; he was in a home up there. She was living here and still very active, and running back and forth to Salisbury. It was hard on her, very hard. She'd go up there every weekend, and Alfred was not good. People would ask questions about him and we tried to protect him. Anyway, it was a lovely place. I drove by it one time. We never went to see Alfred there, but one time going up to a college reunion we went through Salisbury, and it was a lovely, lovely place where he was, lovely country, that northwestern edge of Connecticut, which is so beautiful. Then, as I say, she was adamant to get all of their life down on paper. She really told all about those early days of MoMA when she was there, about her life and everything, which Russell Lynes has gone into very carefully in Good Old Modern. He went into their early life and how they met, which is a lovely story.

SZ: It's also in the "Chronicles."

PM: Yes, that's right. When she died, it was very sad. I went, of course, to the service at the Presbyterian church on Madison Avenue. Walter Kaiser spoke; he's now the head of Villa I Tatti in Florence. John Rewald spoke, brilliantly. There were others.... Now, as you may know, Sharon, a memorial book fund has been set up at I Tatti in Marga's memory. A committee was gotten together. Elizabeth Shaw is on that committee and she wrote me about it, and all of us who knew Marga very well contributed to it. It's outside of Florence in Fiesole. She was a Florentine, born in

Florence, so everyone seemed to feel that was a very fitting memorial to her. That was just set up within this last year; this last winter I got the letter, and since then it has been successfully funded.

SZ: You were going to tell me about sharing an office with Bill Lieberman. I really would like to know about Bill Lieberman in the early days.

PM: Those were early, early days. That was when Bill came to the Museum. He graduated from Swarthmore and then he was at Harvard with Paul Sachs, [in] his museum course. He came to the Museum in the early '40s and was very young and very peppy, as we all were. He worked for Alfred, very closely. He was his assistant, but he really did everything. At that time, one of the projects that Alfred was involved in was a slide lecture series down at Bryn Mawr College. I was involved in slides in those days, so Alfred would collect all these slides and he'd go to Bryn Mawr; the thing went on for weeks, one whole winter, I think. Bill would have to run to Penn Station and get on the train and go to Bryn Mawr with those slides. Then Alfred would call us and want something else to substitute. There was a company in New York called Van Altena, and they made up slides. These were these large slides. They were not the little 35mm of today; they were big ones, 3 1/4 x 4 inches, that you needed a big stereoptic machine for. They were mostly black-and-white; there again, this was before color was really in. I can remember going down to the Van Altena studio, and so did Bill, to get these things made in the eleventh hour, back and forth. On one of these lectures I decided I wanted to go to Bryn Mawr and hear Alfred speak, and I did. People have asked me since if I ever have seen Bryn Mawr college, and I've said no, not really, because I only saw it in the pitch black of the night [LAUGHING], because we left the Museum at four-thirty in the afternoon and it was a good hour and a half, two hours, to get there, then I heard Alfred's lecture and then came back that same night. So I say I really haven't seen Bryn Mawr. Bill had to do that practically every week, and it was a chore. Plus all the other things he was doing

a lot of writing--he started in early on Picasso. He was born in France, in Paris, and

his family knew Picasso. So I watched Bill's rise through the Museum, which was very quick, because he's a very bright guy. I have great warmth for Bill Lieberman. We saw each other through many and many a crisis at exhibition time, when the press was chomping at the door and the photographs weren't ready and one thing after another, all through many, many years.

SZ: Were you surprised that he left?

PM: Yes, I was, because he was so devoted to the Museum, but I think the Met wanted him, really wanted him, for a long, long time, and he's just doing marvelous things now. I always thought it was our loss and the Met's gain, that's my personal feeling. But I'm glad for Bill that it worked out. Now I want to come to a couple of things that happened in the '70s.

SZ: I hope you're going to talk about this NEA grant, because that's one thing you haven't mentioned.

PM: Along with setting up special collections and working on that, the feeling in the whole Museum was--there again, led by Bernard Karpel--that we ought to find out what we've got in [the way of] archives. They were in different departments, but nobody had really sat down and written up what was where, an archival survey of MoMA, in other words.

SZ: You mean things were sitting in various departments?

PM: They were sitting in various departments, and it was decided that we ought to have somebody go through thirteen departments and have a basic, I hate to use the word questionnaire because that sounds so statistical, but in other words, we needed a survey, and to do a survey, you have to have a set of questions that you ask. So we worked that out, and then through Bernard and Wilder Green and the heads, they got the grant from the NEA. The trustees were very interested in this, particularly June Larkin, who was so helpful. So the grant came through and they looked around and

they said, "Now who can logically do this? Pearl." So I spent over a year doing it, and it was a huge job, but it was mitigated by Bernard Karpel writing the summaries for each department. He said, "If you'll do the legwork, Pearl, get all the information and write that up, I will do the summaries for each department was to what is needed." Of course, I worked very closely with everybody, and I remember Arthur Drexler and...Ludwig Glaeser. Arthur would remember another cupboard or cabinet that he hadn't been into for years, so he'd say, "Now just a minute," and the two of them would climb up on these cabinets and open them and these clouds of dust would fall out. Then they'd bring the materials down--they did it themselves. Then I would go through everything. However, one of the things that came out after this whole survey was really how well-kept papers and records were. We made a very big point of this in the survey that we submitted to Washington, to the NEA. Even though certain documents needed to be catalogued or maybe filmed, basically things had been kept in very good condition, in file cabinets and that type of thing. I went through everything, and of course I learned the Museum inside-out. That was another thing: I never came in and said, "I think that ought to be done and that ought to be done." I worked very closely with each department head and said, "What do you think should be done?" I proceeded, I think, diplomatically, and people opened up to me, they told me all kinds of things and their needs. Then I incorporated those and everybody saw those reports before they went anywhere; I gave each department head a copy to look at and make sure that I had my facts right and that there was nothing wrong. I must say, there were very few changes, just a couple here and there. What I did was I ran right downstairs and typed my notes up like crazy. I'd do all the running around in the morning and then I'd type in the afternoon, just frantically, to get it down on paper.

SZ: Was it your sense that basically different departments wanted to keep those materials within their own departments?

PM: Yes, there was that feeling, a little departmental possessiveness to it. At the same time, in the bigger scheme I got the feeling that, well, this wasn't going to last this long, that we were going to have to have, someday soon, a Museum archivist per se,

which we now do.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SZ: Were you met with any visible hostility or....?

PM: No, I encountered no hostility. There was only one episode where someone maybe felt that I was trying to take away some of their rights or privileges or something, but it was not hostile. But before I said anything or even started to look, this survey had been preceded by a big memorandum from the director of the Museum to cooperate. I was not trying to run anyone's department or take away anything. As I said to everybody, all we were trying to do was find out what's here, what collections you feel should have certain attention, what are your rare things. There again, I was an information-gathering person.

SZ: Because there was, I think, just a few years before the whole uproar over the establishment of the International Study Center, from what I understand, and that, again, departmental heads were most unwilling to relinquish control over any of their [archival materials].

PM: Yes. Well, I think that was just started too soon by Bates Lowry. I think had he bid his time on that and fed it in little by little, I think that might have worked. Of course, today it's a going thing, but I think it was just done too precipitously and it threatened people and angered them. I learned a long time ago that in the Museum, especially, you can't do that. You have to proceed with caution. I saw too many people who came in like a streak of lightning, and they didn't last. I will give you a prime example, if I may. We had one man who was hired as an efficiency expert. Every so often people thought the Museum wasn't that efficient and one of the trustees would send in somebody. I remember at the time of a [Pierre] Bonnard show--we had two or three beautiful Bonnard exhibitions--this man came down to R&R whom I'd never

seen before and introduced himself. I was still in the Department of Rights and Reproductions at that time, handling all the photographs and wall labels for the show.

SZ: Do you remember his name?

PM: No, I don't remember his name. We had a lot of them. So he came down and more or less bawled me out. He had a clipboard and he said, "Why isn't the information on the photostats ready?" and he named a date, like December 22nd at two P.M. He irritated me the way he did it; it was very dictatorial. He said, "I don't understand why you don't have those wall labels ready for the Bonnard show," and I said, "Just a minute. We have maybe seven paintings coming from Russia, but it has not been decided yet whether these paintings will come or not." This was way back in the days of Khrushchev. I said, "We don't want to spend the money for the labels unless we know the paintings are coming." "Well," he said, "who makes the decision on that?" Very haughtily. I said, "The Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance." [LAUGHING] Well, that quieted him down. He left, never said another word to me, and the upshot was, the Russians said nyet--we never got the pictures. So about two weeks after that, I saw this guy in the elevator. Of course he knew by then, and I said, "Isn't it great we didn't spend the money for the labels? We would have had to throw them out." And they were expensive even in those days, because these would have been large labels, all mounted, photographic blowups. I named the amount of money that we saved, like a hundred and two dollars or something. But we had that all along, those "efficiency" people that came in. Most of them didn't last too long. There were others that were very good and stayed on. Now I just want to mention Inga Forslund and how she brought changes in bibliographic projects. Also, she was responsible for the Museum catalogue in the library being photographed by a company in Boston by the name of G. K. Hall. This is very important in the whole of librarianship. It was then put into book form. What they did was, they came in and photographed each card in the Museum card catalogue, which is a terrific job, and Mrs. Cornelia Corson, who had worked in the library for many years, was hired to come in and adjust each catalogue card to G. K. Hall's specifications. It was a big job. There were a lot of changes, extra cards had to be made, and so on. So it now means, Sharon, that you can sit in San

Francisco and in London, and if you have these published books, and you're a Ph.D. student or you're a beginning student, you can read exactly what the holdings of The Museum of Modern Art Library are, and it's simply marvelous. This G. K. Hall thing just caught on like wildfire, and many collections were photographed. Now you can go into any really good library today and if you want to know the holdings of the Tate Gallery in London you can just sit down on 42nd Street and read the book; you don't have to go to London. You can also write to the various libraries and get photocopies of documents made. So it was a tremendous boon to scholarship. Not only that, but it's a permanent record of your holdings. Another thing I want to mention is the library scrapbooks. That is a very misleading term, because they were really little albums of ephemera that had been collected. Every time a curator went to Europe or went anywhere to do an exhibition, they would go to the families and galleries, and they would get a lot of extraneous material for the exhibitions which are now very, very valuable. For a while we kept them in what we called artists' files, and then when these files got to be too big, just too much, we made what we called the scrapbooks. We had, for example, the first catalogue when Picasso was a young man in Barcelona, a four-page leaflet of the first show that he was ever in. That type of thing.

SZ: Where you can open it and see it.

PM: Yes, you can open it and see it. I did a lot of work on the scrapbooks. There are eight volumes on Picasso's obituary alone. We had clippings from all over the world which Liz Shaw got and gave to the library because she knew that a special archive had been made. I arranged those by language, so whatever language you read, you'd come in and you could read it. People would come in and want to see all the French articles, for instance. I also got articles from Paris Match; I wrote to Paris and got articles from them, that weren't covered here in our press. So we have a marvelous archive on Picasso, plus all the scrapbooks, which have now been recently photographed by G. K. Hall, I'm happy to add. That's a very important project in our library, and now in other libraries world-wide. I think I mentioned earlier the Arno reprints of Museum catalogues. Now we get up to the '70s, the middle '70s, and at this time Inga Forslund was reaching retirement age. There was a question, then, of

who was going to succeed her. That was going to be a big hole to fill, and everybody was anxious, especially me, because Inga and I had had such a marvelous working relation and personal relation--still do, we're still great friends to this day.

SZ: Her tenure wasn't that long, really.

PM: No, but a lot of critical things happened in those years. They were very formative years, with the PASTA business starting and all the special collections. The archival survey was done while Karpel was still there, but they were just very rough years in the Museum. Then, luckily, Dick Oldenburg came. At one time Margareta Akermark, whom I also knew very well and shared an office with in the early days, said that the "Swedish mafia" is now ruling the Museum, because we had Inga as head of the library, who is Swedish, and of course Dick Oldenburg was born in Sweden, Margareta was Swedish, and the two heads of the carpenter and mounting shops at that time were both Swedes. Those, of course, were very key positions, that mounting shop of the Museum; if you didn't rate with them, you never put on an exhibition, forget it. It was very funny. So Margareta said, "The Swedish mafia is now holding forth." And to some extent it was true, I guess. Anyway, Clive Phillpot, who had been the librarian of an art school in London, had been instrumental in starting what is known as ARLIS, an art libraries association world-wide, and it's now very big and there are chapters all over. It started in England, and Clive was one of the people who started it. It was decided that the Special Libraries Association had so many science libraries in it now that the art libraries needed to get together and have an identity and organization of their own. I've been a member of it for a long time and served as an officer of the New York chapter and been very much involved in it. So that's how Clive met the American people, through the American ARLIS, because there were conferences in London and he met them [there]. He also wrote for the various art magazines, so he became known. Then he was appointed MoMA librarian, and he came. Of course, everything was new for him. It was a new world, new country, new museum, new everything, and I didn't know what was going to happen between us. On the other hand, I was getting close to retirement myself. I knew that the pension and everything was set up at the Museum [for retirement] at

age sixty-five, and I was prepared to do that. I had terrible misgivings; people always do when they're going to retire, you always worry about it. I had been at the Museum so long, it was my second home. I would wake up in the night and think, "Oh, dear," even though I had always had this great painting interest and a lot of other interests. Then I was asked, very happily, to do the René d'Harnoncourt archive. I knew I had to retire to do that because that was going to be a demanding part-time job, and I couldn't possibly carry on what I was doing then in the library. So the last year that I was there I tried to tell Clive things that would help him. I knew people in the art world that he didn't know. But he took hold and went right along. One of the things that Clive has done is a lot of is traveling, and I think that's very good. I think the Museum should be represented at more international conferences, and that's one of the things that I don't think either Bernard Karpel or Inga Forslund did enough of, nor did I do enough of, and the reason was we were all afraid to ask for money to take those trips.

SZ: I think you mentioned one other time where it was often a hard fight to....

PM: Yes, it was. Also, you see, in the Museum, as I said earlier, all of us of that generation, we were brought up in the "waste not, want not" school, and Alfred was the chief exponent of that. I've said that many times. So we were afraid to ask for certain things, like an expensive trip. But that has changed a lot in the Museum. Now the film department, they go everywhere, because, there again, the Museum changed. The Museum became international, Sharon, and once that happened, you had to have representatives. Now you have international library associations, and of course, the Museum library, as a terribly important library, should be represented, in the same way that Dick Oldenburg should go to all the top meetings, which he does. The International Council has also made possible a lot of these trips, for everybody. It just changed, so now people travel all over the place, and they should. But at the time that we would have done the traveling, first of all, there wouldn't have been the places to travel to, because the Museum wouldn't have had that international reputation in the earlier days, but once it did, then the whole picture changed and people could now go to Australia and New Zealand.... Then, also, jet airlines, that

changed travel; you could be in London in six hours. When I went to Europe, in the '50s, I went by ship. Nobody flew in those days; you went by ship, five days over, five days back. So I'm very glad Clive is traveling, because I think it's good.

SZ: What other kinds of changes do you think he's made in the library?

PM: I don't think he's a bibliophile like both Karpel and Forslund were. One of the things he's made great changes in is that he's bought a lot of artists' books. In the late '70s and '80s, artists all around, instead of doing paintings, created books as works of art. They got them published, for the most part, and now we have a very fine collection of artists' books, a whole new concept. I think Clive is much more visually attuned to the library world. This is not to say that he's not a book man, but the emphasis, I would say, has been more on artists's books and the visual aspects rather than on the bibliophile end. Except that we must remember that Bernard Karpel was a word and image man. When he was there, the artists' books, there were only a few, maybe, but nothing like in the last ten years; they've taken off. I'll just say a few words about the d'Harnoncourt archive, which I thoroughly enjoyed doing. I had to reread a lot of the material because the first set of rules set down as to what the Smithsonian could photograph and what they couldn't were changed somewhat as we went along. I also want to mention Eliza Parkinson Cobb in all of this. I think there should be a gallery dedicated to Eliza Parkinson Cobb in The Museum of Modern Art; I think it's very long overdue. She has been a most dedicated woman, from the year one. A lovely person and the one who really made the d'Harnoncourt archive project a reality, to be organized by me and to be filmed by the Smithsonian. I worked very closely with her on this, and it was a joy, from beginning to end. Also, Sarah d'Harnoncourt, who couldn't have been more helpful. She kept bringing things to us of René's that she's remembered. As you know, Eliza and René were very close, very close friends and colleagues. After these very formal trustee meetings, Eliza would go and collect these doodles, these drawings that René did during the meetings, which I think I mentioned earlier, and they were eventually made into a charming booklet. She was in on everything from the beginning. Also, as I read through the archives, one thing I learned is how many of the trustees, how many

things they do behind the scenes that are never understood by anyone. As long as I was in the Museum I thought I knew a lot of those committees and what happened, but I realize I did not. I don't mean any secret stuff necessarily, just dogged hard work that went into that place, not only finances, but getting new people and the programs and everything. They really worked hard, and no one has worked harder than Eliza Parkinson Cobb. The same way with Sarah, of course, but particularly Eliza; she was there, all the time. We also have in the library microfilms of all of René's exhibition installations, which I think ought to be mentioned. As you know, he was a master installionist, and all his Museum shows were microfilmed. At one time a book had been planned; the book never came to be, but all the materials that were collected for that book, Bernard Karpel got them microfilmed. There's also a copy of the microfilm in the Museum of Primitive Art as well, so we have a permanent record of all those things. The Smithsonian has since photographed the d'Harnoncourt archive itself (the papers, that is) for perpetuity, I'm happy to add.

SZ: Do you feel, having gone through all of that stuff, that you knew him differently or better?

PM: René was a very warm person, a very approachable person. Yes, the facets of him were incredible, just incredible. Also, his command of the English language, that was another thing that surprised me. He knew the language very, very well, and yet he spoke with a thick German accent, quite an accent, but when he wrote it, it was beautiful, he could really write well. He wrote in Spanish and of course in French, but...what am I trying to say is so many subtle things came out. And he was involved in everything, from the planning of Lincoln Center to the Amon Carter Museum, and he spent a great deal of time with the National Council on the Arts, at the federal level, to say nothing of all the Indian connections--he was chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for some time. I don't know how he kept it all together.... I wrote to Eliza Parkinson Cobb and told her I'd finished; I wrote, naturally, to Dick Oldenburg; and I wrote to Sarah d'Harnoncourt. I wrote different letters to each one, because they required different comments. When I wrote to Sarah, with a copy to Anne--and Anne at that time had just been made director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art--I

said in Sarah's letter, "I don't know how he held the whole thing together, with all the irons in the fire that he had. I don't know how he did it." But I said one of the reasons I think he was able to do it was because of the backup team that he had at 333 Central Park West, which is where they lived, and that was Sarah and Anne. I think that was how he did it. I think that was a very strong, wonderful marriage and family. Sarah, of course, was involved in everything that he did, and then they had this wonderful daughter Anne, who is so bright and so wonderful. That's, I think, how it was held together. But it's a fabulous archive, and I am very envious of the students and the Ph.D's who will eventually go through that, because I can think right-off of at least ten theses or dissertations, or both, and I said that to Eliza Parkinson Cobb when I wrote to her. I said, "I'm envious of those people who come after and will be able to do that." I considered that a great privilege to be able to do that, and as I said to you when we first started these interviews, never in my wildest dreams did I ever think when I first started working at MoMA that I would end by organizing René d'Harnoncourt's archive for posterity. I would never have believed it.

SZ: Since then, you've been painting.

PM: Since then, I've been painting.

SZ: You retired in....

PM: January of '81. I might say I was in on that interim move of the library. The library had so many moves, I don't want to go into that, but one of the last things that I did was transfer these boxes of rare papers around the corner, because before the new west wing was built, the library was housed temporarily in an old brownstone which used to be the Rehearsal Club, a famous club in New York. That building that looked romantic on the outside, the inside was falling apart; it really had had its day. Of course, the movers moved all the books and Clive was naturally all involved in that, but one of the things that I had to do, well, we couldn't trust these things to a mover, to Santini movers--no way. So I remember it was five above zero, and I never took my boots or my coat off for three days. I carried these boxes around the corner with

a page by the name of Daniel Fermon, who's very much still in the library and now has his library degree. I took him because I was afraid if I fainted away on the street, these things would be lost forever [LAUGHING]. So here I was carrying Boccioni's original treatise and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's scrapbook around the corner, and that went on for three solid days at five above zero to get them over and moved. It was absolutely wild. Danny was bringing up the rear, you know. Actually, I did the d'Harnoncourt papers in that building; that's where I did the work for that, a year and a half of it. But I consider that, as I said before, a great privilege. Since I've retired, I've been involved in all sorts of things, because I'm still active in all those library associations. And I've been painting at the Art Students League, with Richard Pousette-Dart.

SZ: You enjoy that.

PM: I love that, yes. I finally, with five other artists, got a show together last spring at the Cork Gallery in Lincoln Center, in Avery Fisher Hall. It went well, I'm happy to add.

SZ: Are you going to do it again?

PM: I don't know. I have to paint some more; you can't just churn it out.

SZ: Where do you paint? Do you paint in your apartment?

PM: No, I can't. My apartment is small. I do it at the League. I like that, because you go there and it's a work place and you work. Pousette-Dart's a marvelous teacher and very free and open.

SZ: What does your stuff look like?

PM: It's abstract. I had never painted an abstract before I went to the League, and it's this whole fascinating world. All those years of looking at abstract art. I remember when I first met Pousette-Dart, he said, "I want you to forget everything you ever learned at

the Museum and just paint yourself." I had known intellectually what abstract art was all about; I had to, to keep my job. But doing it is a whole other ball game, entirely different, it really is. I've been working in collage, too, and when I see a [Kurt] Schwitters collage now, well, I always loved it, but I really appreciate it now, because you know what's involved, Sharon, to create one. It's very different. I like the League very much, I think it's a marvelous school. Maybe an oral history ought to be done with the League.

SZ: It's a wonderful idea. A lot of interesting people in it.

PM: Because everybody who was anybody studied at the League, and then also, a lot of those early instructors are still around.

SZ: So, Pearl, looking back on the thirty-nine years you spent at The Museum of Modern Art.... [LAUGHTER]

PM: Hired for six months.

SZ: Not bad.

PM: Not bad. I really parlayed that one. [LAUGHING] As somebody said, "You really parlayed that one, Pearl."

SZ: I would say so, yes, you did. Thank you, Pearl. Thank you for doing all that work.

PM: Thank you, Sharon, it was a pleasure!

END TAPE 4, SIDE 2

END INTERVIEW