

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: JULY 21, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Do you have a middle name or a middle initial?

MW: Well, my birth certificate shows a middle name of Lathrop. I only came upon it late in life because I never used it. I'd always been plain Monroe Wheeler, but this birth certificate showed up saying Monroe Lathrop Wheeler. Well, I've never used it and I don't intend to start now.

SZ: Do you know where the Lathrop comes from? Is it a family name?

MW: It was a family name.

SZ: Your mother's?

MW: On my father's side.

SZ: Okay. Tell me where and when you were born and then we'll start to talk a little bit about your mother's and father's families if you'd like.

MW: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and soon after my birth my family moved to Evanston, Illinois.

SZ: Evanston was at that time a fairly rural suburb?

MW: Oh, it's always been a suburb. The nearest suburb to Chicago on the north side. They lived on Forest Avenue, 639 Forest Avenue, but that's not where they lived when they first moved to Evanston. They lived at 9 something Forest Avenue, at the corner where the Lincoln School was later built. My father was a friend of a Mr. Nichols, who was the president of the school district in which the Lincoln School was located.

SZ: It was a public school?

MW: A public school, and very progressive architecture, because Mr. Nichols was famous for his interest in architecture.

SZ: So that was something you saw, or was that built after you were...

MW: It was built in my childhood, and Mr. and Mrs. Nichols were close friends of my parents and remained so.

SZ: Your mother and your father, were their families both solid Midwesterners?

MW: No. My mother's parents were German. She was born in Bloomington, Illinois. That was a large family. My mother had, I think, four sisters and they were all very close to my mother. She, in her youth, became a schoolteacher in a city called Decatur, Illinois, and her closest friend--I'll have to ask my sister about her--she was indeed very close and lived with my mother in Evanston after she had established herself there. If I speak like this, can you get it? That's remarkable.

SZ: What was your mother's maiden name?

MW: Anna Marie.

SZ: And her parents were German-born?

MW: Her parents were German-born and their name was Kienzle.

SZ: And what about your father's family, where did they come from?

MW: They came from New York State. My father lived on a farm in western New York State near Buffalo and his childhood was spent on a farm in western New York State in a town called East Aurora. I can remember in my childhood in Evanston, Illinois, my father's visits to East Aurora to see friends and relatives there.

SZ: Was he one of many also?

MW: He had a brother named Freeman who worked with him in Chicago.... My own attachments to Chicago have always been extremely close because of the Art Institute of Chicago. My father was an amateur painter who helped form, at the Art Institute, with some friends of his, what they called the Businessman's Art Club, to which he and a cousin of mine named Richard Pride were deeply devoted. I still have in my attic in the country paintings by both my father and my cousin....

SZ: How would you characterize your father's painting style?

MW: Amateurish, but rather skillful at times.

SZ: So their art club was really for the purpose that they would get together and paint. It wasn't to buy art or look at art.

MW: You're right.

SZ: Was he a businessman?

MW: Yes. He and a friend of his named Charles Triggs started a business specializing in seafood for both the East Coast and the West Coast.

SZ: You mean they'd bring it into Chicago?

MW: From the East Coast and also from the West Coast. They had a large business in Pacific Coast seafood.

SZ: He did fairly well at that?

MW: Very high grade. My father was always going to both coasts, east and west, for the purposes of his business.

SZ: He must have been gone quite a lot, then, because that was a long trip in those days.

MW: It was. It was a long train trip.

SZ: Had your father been to university, or did he just leave the farm and start business?

MW: In partnership with Charles Triggs in Chicago. Mr. Triggs also lived in Evanston, and I can remember in my childhood, in the evenings...my father and mother [and I] would walk to the home of the Triggs in order to spend the evening with them. A simple life.

SZ: Was it a successful business? Was your father a man of some means?

MW: No great means because he was so passionate about literature. He had a splendid library, some of which I still own. He was devoted to that and to literature, English literature. He was a great reader, never stopped reading.

SZ: What about your mother, was she a reader too?

MW: Yes, she was. I can remember something called the 20th Century Club. It used to meet in the evening and consisted mostly of their neighbors. They would have meetings of this club sometimes at our house and at other homes of their friends. I can remember that my mother had met and become a friend of an economist named Henry George who believed in something called the single tax. I can remember how friends of my father's who used to come to our house to discuss this single tax, which was promoted by a man called Henry George, who was also a friend of my father's, and through whom he met an Englishman who was a disciple of Gladstone, and to whom he became very attached. Now what was his name? This Englishman came to Chicago, later married the daughter of one of the big packing magnates in Chicago.... She later moved to New York and made a great collection of modern art; she died only recently.... She later became an important lender to The Museum of Modern Art. That was my only connection with my early life.

SZ: To the Museum?

MW: Yes.

SZ: What was your father's first name? You haven't told me that.

MW: Fred. I think he was christened Frederick, but he always insisted upon being called Fred and he signed his name Fred Monroe Wheeler.

SZ: Monroe was his middle name?

MW: That's right, and he always used it.

SZ: Were your parents both essentially self-educated?

MW: Well, my mother went to some sort of college.

SZ: Because she was a teacher.

MW: Yes. My father and his cousin, Richard Pride, were both extremely literary, and I think it could be said that they educated each other.

SZ: It sounds as if in your early life at home there was a lot of discussion of timely topics and....

MW: Well, above all, literature. Above all, literature.

SZ: Your date of birth is February 13, 1899, so... your first years, growing up, it was the height of the progressive era....

MW: And that's when my father was deeply involved with this Henry George business.

SZ: I see.... Were you an only child? No, you have a sister.

MW: I have an elder sister who is still living in Madison, Wisconsin, at the age of ninety-one.

SZ: What's her name?

MW: Doris. There was some rivalry. My father was deeply attached to my sister, who is four years older than I. Then I had a younger sister who died at the age of six of a ruptured appendix, which was the family tragedy. The only one. This is all so boring. [LAUGHING] Anyway, my father had a brother and a sister, a sister named Grace. I've already told you his brother's name, Freeman. Freeman joined my father and Mr. Triggs in their seafood enterprise. Ask me a question.

SZ: Was your family religious?

MW: My mother was. She went to church every Sunday of her life. My father was not religious.

SZ: He didn't go with her.

MW: He did not go with her.

SZ: Were they [of] the same religion?

MW: My father, strictly speaking, was an agnostic. My sister married a Catholic in Chicago and then moved; they moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where they lived the rest of his life. After his death my sister remained in Madison, where she still is, and my brother, who is, I think, thirteen years younger than I, was born in Evanston, where he still lives. He's coming to see me next week.

SZ: A lot of longevity in your family.

MW: Yes, there is, because I believe my father lived to be ninety-seven and my mother a couple of years younger.

SZ: What's your brother's first name?

MW: Richard, Richard Freeman, named after my father's brother--I mean the Freeman part.

SZ: Did your mother give you a religious education since she was so observant?

MW: Yes, to some extent, and I remember going to church with a close friend whose name was Montague Corse. While I was going to high school, he was sent to a military academy, but he lived near us in Evanston and we used to spend much of our holidays together. He had a sister who came to New York and whom I knew in New York after I had become attached to The Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: You had a religious upbringing but it was not something that you practiced once you....

MW: No, because my father [was] an agnostic and I was very close to him.

SZ: You were close to him? You mean his ideas had an effect on you, a strong effect?

MW: Yes, through literature.

SZ: And you said that he especially liked English literature?

MW: Yes, and there are some of his books in that bookcase.

SZ: Would you describe your childhood as a happy one?

MW: Yes. I was pampered by both my mother and father. My mother had an active social life as a member of various Evanston clubs. I think now of Evanston, in my childhood, as a city where everyone knew everyone else and especially through Mr. Nichols, who was the head of the school district. There were a lot of people up and down Forest Avenue in Evanston who were close to me. One of them was a school

pal named Henry Windsor whose father owned something called Popular Mechanics magazine.

SZ: You attended public school?

MW: Yes. Public school was really Mr. Nichols, who was a close friend of my father's.

SZ: How big was Evanston then? How many people lived in Evanston, about?

MW: I would say, in those early days, not more than thirty thousand. It was a considerable area because there were three Evanstons: South Evanston, Mid-Evanston and North Evanston. Then there was a large part of Evanston to the west, which, when I was a child, was farmland, but now it's the heart of the city. One of my lifelong friends since childhood was Bobsy--her nickname was Bobsy--Goodspeed, who later played a role in The Museum of Modern Art. She was born in Evanston at the corner of Forest Avenue and Dempster Street, and she, very early in life, became involved with the Arts Club of Chicago. She married a man, [Charles B. Goodspeed], [who] became a trustee of the University of Chicago, and [she] became one of the important Chicago hostesses. She, through the Arts Club [of which her husband was later president], became involved in their exhibition program and gave some rather important exhibitions, loan exhibitions, at the Arts Club in which she involved me. Those early Chicago days were very important through the involvement of various ladies, chiefly Mrs. William Vaughn Moody who became one of the great Chicago hostesses.... Mr. Moody died young, but he had a great many friends whom she continued to entertain in Chicago. Most of them were Easterners, poets. Mr. Moody was a poet, and Mrs. Moody, after his death, continued to live in her family's home on Ellis Avenue.... They still have a co-trustee of the Museum...who was reared on that street. His father was a physician and I still see him. Nothing ever ends.

SZ: No. Let me go back a little bit to do a few other things. How were you as a student?

MW: I was never a scholar, but I was always interested in art.

SZ: Were you a good draftsman, or you mean just aesthetically?

MW: No, my father sent me to art school in Chicago, and I did not excel, but I greatly enjoyed the people I met there, including Alice Rouillier, who played a great role in the early days of modern art in Chicago. Her name is spelled Rouillier, I think. She and her father had a gallery in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue in Chicago where the Chicagoans of my generation bought their first art.

SZ: How old were you when he sent you to Chicago to study?

MW: I should think about fourteen or fifteen.

SZ: Now, in Evanston, growing up, what kinds of things did your family like to do together? Did you do things as a family?

MW: Yes, especially Richard Pride and my father and mother. The Prides and my family spent a great deal of time together.

SZ: Did they have children as well?

MW: Yes. The Prides, they were cousins, you see, and, yes, they were a clan. My cousin Marjorie and her family, a branch of the Prides, moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and we used to visit back and forth. One of those cousins became involved with the Duke family fortune, including Doris Duke, who lives near me in the country.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: In those days, what kinds of things did families do for recreation or for pleasure?

MW: Well, my father was always a gardener and remained so toward the end of his life. He became particularly attached to roses and had an extraordinary rose garden.... He has been succeeded [in this] by...Richard, my brother.

SZ: But not by you?

MW: Not by me. No, I somehow never had time for gardening. Both my father and my brother cared passionately about gardening and my brother is still a gardener, part-time now because he's retired.

SZ: What did he do?

MW: He gardened, always gardened.

SZ: Full-time?

MW: No, not full-time, part-time, as a hobby, which he indeed still does.

SZ: What was his work?

MW: He worked for a famous company that made birdseed and provided supplies to a large company that supplied pet foods to supermarkets, and he worked at that all his life, happily.

SZ: Now he enjoys his gardening.

MW: Exactly....

SZ: Did you have family picnics or did you travel?

MW: Yes, picnics, most of which seemed to collect around our house in Evanston. Everybody in Evanston was a gardener. There was a Frenchman named Paschaud

who invented something called Tinkertoy, a toy that fitted together.

SZ: I'm very familiar with Tinkertoy.

MW: I went to school with his daughter.

SZ: As a young man, did you travel? Did you travel with your family?

MW: Well, I can only remember travels with my father to see a friend of his whom he had met in his youth, I presume in East Aurora, New York. He became a friend of a writer named Elbert Hubbard, and Elbert Hubbard would visit him in Chicago and he [my father] would visit Elbert Hubbard in East Aurora. [Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915) was founder, in 1895, of Roycroft, an Arts and Crafts colony in East Aurora, Ill.] One time he took me when I was still a child to East Aurora to meet his friend.... I can still remember Elbert Hubbard, when we had taken the night train from Chicago to Buffalo, and I was put to bed as soon as we arrived, and I can remember to this day Elbert Hubbard leaning over my bed, being presented to Elbert Hubbard by my father.

SZ: Did you get on well with your father?

MW: Very well.

SZ: You mentioned before that there was a certain rivalry between your sister and yourself?

MW: Yes, because I think, naturally, my mother was more attached to my sister. No, I don't think there was really any rivalry, because we always remained friends.

SZ: You felt closer to your father than to your mother?

MW: Always, yes.

SZ: Were they strict disciplinarians?

MW: There's a book in there that my father and mother published together when I was a child....

SZ: What is it about?

MW: It's an essay of child science called "New Year's Eve," and they set the type and printed it and bound it themselves. It was very well done....

SZ: Was that their first enterprise like that?

MW: Yes.

SZ: Was it the only one they ever did?

MW: [LAUGHING] I think it is the only one they ever completed.

SZ: Was that an interest of theirs?

MW: Sure.

SZ: Well, there's a bit of a connection, isn't there?

MW: As E. M. Forster used to say, "Connect, connect, always connect." He became a friend too.

SZ: Of yours?

MW: Yes.

SZ: Your interest in art.

MW: That began with my father because he was always painting. There was a little room in the house that was always devoted to his efforts in that regard. He had a friend, the head of a huge grocery supply business in Chicago called Butler, Brothers and Mr. Butler cared a lot about art and he gave art by his favorite painters to the Art Institute of Chicago. I can remember a gallery which he had given to the Art Institute of Chicago which I believe was entirely devoted to the paintings of George Innes, whom he liked. I was told recently by the director of the Art Institute that they plan to revive that George Inness gallery; something I must look into the next time I go to Chicago.

SZ: Was your father a collector at all?

MW: The house was full of pictures. The way this one is. [LAUGHING]

SZ: What kinds of pictures did they have on their walls?

MW: In the case of my father, the pictures that he liked that he had painted himself, but there were also a lot of others. I can't remember all their names, but they were dear to him, and my brother still has some of them. I'll ask him when he comes next week who they were, several that he cherished and still owns.

SZ: Would you say your father had a good eye?

MW: No, I don't think so. Like everybody else, he liked what he liked. He liked what he owned.

SZ: When did you first realize that you might have a good eye?

MW: The first picture I ever bought was from this Alice Rouillier Gallery in the Fine Arts Building in Chicago. I'm trying to think who the artist was. I have it somewhere in the

country.

SZ: Can you see it in your mind, what it looked like or what it was about it that you liked?

MW: I can't at the moment, but it will come back, having kept the picture this long.

SZ: How old were you when you bought your first picture?

MW: I should think about twelve or thirteen. There was a family, very important to me, whom I met when I was very young called Dudley. They were part of that Chicago group with Mrs. William Vaughn Moody and Harriet Monroe, who was the editor of Poetry magazine [Poetry: A Magazine of Verse]. I knew her very well, and her sister, Mrs. Calhoun, whose husband was, I think, one of our early ministers to China.

SZ: Oh, yes, that's right.

MW: I later met her, I knew her both in Chicago and in Shanghai.... After her husband died in China, [she] stayed on..., and was there when I went to China much later in the '20s, when my friend Barbara Harrison and I went to China after we started our little publishing business....

SZ: You started telling me about this group of people in Chicago....

MW: Oh, well, you see those were the days of the Chicago literary renaissance. Carl Sandburg and the poet Edgar Lee Masters and another poet who became quite celebrated....

SZ: You were still a young boy at the time. Were these all things that your parents were involved in?

MW: Well, my father had met some of them. He knew Mrs. Moody. She played a great role in Chicago life because she started...a little gourmet restaurant on Michigan

Avenue, which she called Le Petit Gourmet. It was the place for superior French food. Because she had started that, she was also encouraged to start the men's grill in the men's store of Marshall Field and Company.... In my youth, my father [and I] used to lunch there. It was very deluxe and because of her success with that men's grill in Chicago, a partner of Marshall Field's named Selfridge who had started his own business in London--have you ever been to Selfridge's in London? Well, it's the great shop in London, and Mrs. Moody helped Mr. Selfridge to start that business.... Everybody at that time, and even now, still knows Selfridge's, and the center of it all was Chicago.

SZ: Yes, because Chicago was really the important center in the whole progressive era in a lot of ways: literature, certainly the political [discourse] at the time was all coming from there.

MW: Yes, including that man from London.

SZ: Henry George.

MW: Henry George, exactly. That was economics....

SZ: It sounds as if your growing-up years [were] quite lively, from an intellectual point of view.

MW: Yes, [they were], and I'm trying to think of the name of a lady who wrote children's stories who lived on Forest Avenue and was a friend of my family's and of mine, and of the other principal educator, who was the head of another Evanston school district....

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: JULY 24, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: Mr. Wheeler, I promised you last time that we would get out of Evanston,...[but] you were going to tell me a little bit about the Dill Pickle Club.

MW: Yes. [LAUGHING] That was a group of Chicago writers who used to meet on Friday evenings on the near North Side of Chicago. The ones I remember were Edgar Lee Masters, Alfred Kreymborg. It was after the death of William Vaughn Moody but his widow had remained interested in writers and entertained them at her home in Chicago a great deal.... The Dill Pickle Club consisted of these writers whom I've mentioned, I've only mentioned two or three but there were half a dozen of them, and what they did was to read their poems, mostly, to one another. You might find, in one archive or another, something by Alfred Kreymborg.... I think he spent most of his life in New York after the Dill Pickle Club days but he was an ardent writer and I think there might be, in the library under Kreymborg, something about him and his reminiscences that would be of interest to you. He was one of the early Chicago writers, along with Carl Sandburg.

SZ: And Edgar Lee Masters?

MW: Yes.

SZ: Well, this is the Chicago School it was known as, right? right?

MW: That's right.

SZ: Tell me a little bit more about the school or what it was like in Chicago at that time....

MW: It was also closely connected with the poetry club of the University of Chicago, and several of my friends were members of that, including Glenway Wescott, whose first book I published at the instigation of Harriet Monroe, who was the editor of Poetry magazine.

SZ: Did you ever write any poetry?

MW: No, but I always had poet friends. The principal one, in those early days, was Yvor Winters.

SZ: What happened to the Chicago School? Did it dissipate with World War I? Was that a critical time for it?

MW: Well, Yvor Winters moved to the West. He married Janet Lewis, whose first book I also published. Her father was a professor at some Chicago university. His name was Edwin Herbert Lewis, and it was at his home on the West Side of Chicago that I first met Rabindranath Tagore, who later played a role in my life through the great Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray, whom the Museum helped to launch, at the time of our exhibition. I can't remember what it was called. I think we finally called it Ornamental Arts of India [Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India, 1955]. Because after the war, the Museum wanted to do something about India, and they sent me there to find out what the Museum could or should do about contemporary Indian art. What I found was that the ancient art of India, above all the sculpture, was of tremendous interest, but that was not our field, and that's why we branched out into the contemporary art of India, under the guidance of a brilliant woman and scholar of Indian art named Pupul Jayakar. When we decided to go ahead with this exhibition, she came over to help us with it.... Before she arrived here, she had met [Charles] Eames, the designer, and they had become friends, so that Eames and his wife [Rae] both

wholeheartedly espoused this project, and [they] worked with us as volunteers on that exhibition until it was completed.

SZ: On what, on the installation?

MW: Yes. It was a beautiful exhibition and Eames made a film of it which is in the Museum archives, a short film. It was an immense success, the exhibition, and I can remember talking about it to the ambassador from India, who was amazed at the contents of the exhibition. I remember his saying that he had...never seen so much art of that quality in India.

SZ: Who was responsible for choosing the objects that were included? Did you play a part in that?

MW: I did, finally, because I, as Director of Exhibitions, had asked Edgar Kaufmann, who was the director of our Department of Industrial Design, to direct the exhibition. He went to India with Eames.... Somewhere along the line, while that exhibition was in preparation, Edgar Kaufmann became annoyed or offended by some release that the publicity department had sent out without his consent, and I can remember my surprise and dismay when he walked into my office and said, "Monroe, I'm sure you'll understand this. After what has happened, I cannot proceed with the direction of the exhibition." Well, then I had to take over.

SZ: Did you agree with him? I mean, was it that offensive to him, or serious?

MW: Well, it was serious because the following morning he had a truck at the entrance to the Museum in order to move out all of his books and papers and possessions, and that was that.

SZ: What was in that release that got him so upset? Can you recall?

MW: I cannot recall. None of us in the Museum thought it was a serious matter....

SZ: And that was his exit?

MW: Right. I remember meeting Edgar Kaufmann's father at the Museum and his father said to me, "I don't see how you can get along with that boy." [LAUGHING] Well, of course, we didn't.

SZ: I was going to ask you your opinion of Edgar Kaufmann but now I don't think I have to. [LAUGHTER]

MW: Well, he's still living...in New York.

SZ: I want to just go back and clean up a couple of other things. You told me that when you were...a teenager, your father sent you into Chicago to take art lessons....

MW: That's right.

SZ: Did you ever study music...?

MW: I've always loved music and members of my family were also passionate about music and used to go, constantly, to Orchestra Hall in Chicago to hear the big musicians. Yes, I've always been interested in music.

SZ: Did you learn to play an instrument?

MW: Never learned to play an instrument.

SZ: Anybody in your family ever do that?

MW: My sister played the piano, but that was all.

SZ: And then there were a couple of other things before we get to the beginnings of your

career in publishing--World War I, do you recall? You were young, but....

MW: I was young and I was in the Army. I enlisted in the Army, in the Signal Corps, when I was, I think, eighteen or nineteen.

SZ: Well, you must have been just eighteen.

MW: Yes.

SZ: When the war began you were just eighteen.

MW: Anyway, I was sent by the Signal Corps to an Army unit at Northwestern University in Evanston, so that I just moved from Forest Avenue to the university campus.
[LAUGHING] This only lasted for two or three months, when the war came to an end and that was the end of that. Question?

SZ: Yes. You were going to tell me a story that I have read in a couple of other places but I'd like to hear it from you, about going to the Goldbecks' home.

MW: Oh, Goldbeck, yes. Well, my closest girlfriend in high school in Evanston was named Eva Goldbeck; her father was Edward Goldbeck, who was, I think, editorial writer for the Chicago Tribune. Her mother was a famous German or Austrian singer named Lina Abarbonel, and she had a reputation both in Europe and in New York. After her marriage to Edward Goldbeck she renounced her theatrical career, but I can remember, in my teens, going every year to Chicago when she would appear, singing her favorite European songs, at a vaudeville house in Chicago. Well, we were very close, Eva and her father and her mother, and they had a great influence on me because they had many European connections and were constantly receiving visitors from all over Europe to whom I was introduced. They had a salon every Sunday afternoon in Evanston when all of their visitors from abroad were welcome, as well as visitors from Chicago, and I was fascinated by these people. I remember that we were told by Eva's parents that we would be permitted to come to these

Sunday afternoon salons, provided we never spoke and only listened, and that's what I was good at. [LAUGHING] I never forgot a voice that I heard and it was at that time, after I'd met a great many Europeans--English, French, Italians, Germans, especially--that I made up my mind that I wanted to live in Europe.

SZ: Why?

MW: Because everything those people said interested me, and Eva's father encouraged me in this because he was a German who had moved to Chicago. Later, he moved to New York, when they gave up their residence in Evanston. He died in New York and she became quite famous in the New York theater.

SZ: Who? His wife or his daughter?

MW: His wife--whom we called Mutzi, and Mr. Goldbeck was called Putzi--after his death in New York, she became a casting director for an important New York producer whose name I forget, but I continued to know her for years afterward and, also, Eva. Eva, when her mother moved to New York, married a New York composer called Mark Blitzstein, who was later murdered in the Caribbean, but I believe his music is still played.

SZ: So, what you heard at the Goldbeck home was a lot of intellectual discussion?

MW: Yes, especially about the arts and music. That group linked up with the salons of Mrs. William Vaughn Moody in Chicago and, of course, Frederick Stark, who was the director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

SZ: This was all pre-World War I, though, because you said you were fourteen....

MW: [Yes.] I began meeting artists and writers in Chicago and continued to do so when I went to Europe [after the war]. Let me see, I guess I published my first books--there's one of them in this room--in Evanston before I went abroad, and then I continued

publishing while I was abroad. I published Glenway Wescott's first book of poems, called The Bitterns, in Evanston, encouraged, as I may have mentioned, by Harriet Monroe, whose sister I later met in China.

SZ: Yes, and you were going to tell me...when and how you met Glenway Wescott.

MW: I met him through a close friend named Maurice Leseman, who was a neighbor in Evanston and whose father was a clergyman. He was very much interested in poetry and wrote it himself and was a part of that Chicago group which consisted not only of Harriet Monroe but a family called Dudley. Mr. Dudley was a famous Chicago surgeon who had, I think, three daughters. One was called Dorothy, one was called Helen...there were two or three daughters, and one of them launched and became infatuated with that famous black singer....

SZ: Paul Robeson?

MW: No. It would have been about that time. Robeson was very close to me because he and Arthur Lee and Isamu Noguchi were all friends in Greenwich Village when I moved [there] from Evanston.... [The third daughter's] name was Betty...Betty Salemme. She was very much admired by the Greenwich Village artists Isamu Noguchi and Arthur Lee, and probably [by] Mrs. Whitney [Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney], who started the Whitney Studio in Greenwich Village.

SZ: But, Maurice Leseman, through him you met Glenway?

MW: That's right.

SZ: Do you know what year that was?

MW: It would have been 1919.

SZ: Right after when the war was...

MW: Yes.

SZ: And he was already writing poetry at that time?

MW: Yes, encouraged by Harriet Monroe.

SZ: So, when you got out of the Army, you decided to start a publishing enterprise, is that how it went?

MW: Well, it was much more modest than that. I simply wanted to publish the poems of my friends that no one else would publish. Just at that time...I wanted to receive a motorcycle for Christmas, instead of which he [my father] gave me a very elaborate printing press, which disappointed me. But my friends said, "But, you know, we can make money with this press if we learn how to run it." And so my father gave us the introductions to friends in the printing business in Chicago and we did learn how to run it. [LAUGHING] It was quite enjoyable for a while.

SZ: So, you published his first book of poems.

MW: Also Yvor Winters's first book of poems and he moved on to considerable fame in California where he became a sort of prima donna professor of English poetry. He developed quite a reputation in England. His wife, Janet, is still living out there and writing poetry. What else?

SZ: So, you were publishing some poetry and you decided to go to Europe.

MW: I went first to New York with a handful of introductions to poets from Harriet Monroe and Mrs. Moody. One of the poets that I met through them was Arthur Davison Ficke, and another was Witterbinner, who Glenway used to call "bittertwitter," and he moved on to Santa Fe and had a great career there. His works are still being published.... He somehow made a lot of money on the stock exchange so that, he

could paint and publish--have his books published.

SZ: Let me get this straight. You moved from Evanston to New York...?

MW: Yes, Greenwich Village in New York--17 Christopher Street.... I shared an apartment with Glenway Wescott and a delightful woman named Elizabeth Phillips. We had a floor in that building, 17 Christopher Street, and across the street...was Romany Marie's Cafe. She was a Rumanian Gypsy who was a fortune teller and a fascinating woman with a deep bass voice, and all of Greenwich Village, writers and poets, loved her. She had this extremely amateurish cafe where she would just make tea and coffee, but the talk was wonderful and everybody loved her and everything she said. She had already become famous in Greenwich Village before I arrived there. I think she had an art school of some kind, too, and I remember she was also a friend of James Johnson Sweeney, who was a friend of mine and who later worked with us at MoMA. When Romany Marie died, I remember that both Jim Sweeney and I spoke at her memorial. Greenwich Village days.... You mentioned Robeson--he was part of the group. He was very close to the Salemmes and we had many parties at the Salemmes' studio and that's where I first heard Paul Robeson sing.... It was at that time that the beauty of his voice was discovered. He gave some recitals at that Greenwich Village theater where, I believe, Eugene O'Neill's first play was given. I remember meeting...Eugene O'Neill and his wife. I don't know whether she was his wife or not. Her name was Carlotta Monterey and she was a great friend of an art dealer...Gerald Kelly. He worked for Wildenstein's, and he was immensely popular with all the writers and painters of the moment, including Charles Demuth, who I met at that time and liked very much; I wanted to publish some of his watercolors, including illustrations for a story of Henry James's. I don't know whether that was later done by somebody else. I think it was. I had moved on to Paris before I realized this dream of publishing Charles Demuth.

SZ: But you had a little publishing venture in New York, right?

MW: Yes....

SZ: Did you bring your printing press with you?

MW: No. No, I didn't. [LAUGHING] I had the work done.

SZ: Was it at this time that you published Marianne Moore...?

MW: Yes.

SZ: You have that too?

MW: It's here, somewhere. That outfit--have you heard about it?--that was publishing.... Her name is Kitty Deutsch. Do you know about her? She's a member of the International Council of MoMA and she is backing a publication of Marianne Moore through a young man with a peculiar name. I wish I kept better records.... His name has an "sch" in it and it's called Archive of Oral History or something like that. He wants to have, immediately, a copy of Marianne Moore's poems, which I published. But in those days we weren't really publishers, we were just amateurs who enjoyed printing the works of our friends. We saw each other constantly. I'm trying to think of the people I knew in the Greenwich Village days. It sort of ends with the Salemmes. Tony Salemmes, Betty's husband, I believe is still living out on the Delaware River and he still has exhibitions of his sculpture now and then. But the most articulate of the artists was Arthur Lee, who was a conventional sculptor whose work is in the Metropolitan Museum. I think it's on view, a sculpture of his.

SZ: Did you entertain a lot during those days?

MW: Everybody entertained one another. The great entertainment center was probably Marie. Everybody just gravitated to her cafe.

SZ: When did you take your first trip to Europe?

MW: I think it would have been about 1920.

SZ: While you were living in the Village.

MW: Yes.

SZ: Did you go just for pleasure?

MW: Yes, with letters of introduction from these same two ladies, Harriet Monroe and Mrs. William Vaughn Moody. We all went, all the new writers.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

MW: I remember meeting William Butler Yeats at the University of Chicago when he came over to do some readings for them, and we all went in a little band to hear Yeats, down to the South Side of Chicago.

SZ: Was it inspiring?

MW: Yes. Well, he was an idol of all of us in Chicago and New York because his father, William Butler Yeats' father, John Butler Yeats, lived in New York and he was an artist. I can remember his saying to a dear friend of mine, who is Mrs. Edgerton Winthrop..., "I'm broke and I'll have to paint another portrait of you." That fascinated me. He did, too. John Butler Yeats lived in a sort of boarding house just off lower Fifth Avenue, where a number of the New York painters, including John Sloan, used to eat, and Dolly Sloan. All the New York School was flourishing at that time around the Art Students League, which still flourishes, I believe.

SZ: On 57th Street.

MW: Yes. I think most of the New York artists went to study there at one time or another.

SZ: Back to your first trip to Europe. You had said that you had really wanted to go to live in Europe, but the first trip, was it just a...

MW: Yes, on the first trip I went to London. I had been fascinated by the stories of a Scotch writer named Cunningham Graham. I'm told they're still interested in his writing although it was very peculiar.

SZ: Peculiar how?

MW: Eccentric. And he lived on the pampas [in] South America and wrote stories about them which had fascinated me. He was a friend of W. H. Hudson; I had met him [Graham] in London and he wanted to introduce me to Hudson because he admired him so much. When he finally arranged a date to take me and Glenway to see W. H. Hudson, we had made an engagement to spend that weekend with Ford Madox Ford at his country place with his wife and a new baby called Julie, who later became a painter, I believe. I had first met Ford in Greenwich Village through a publisher who was distributing his Transatlantic Review, which he was publishing in Paris, and I saw a good deal of Ford at that time.

SZ: You liked him?

MW: Yes, he was a wonderful storyteller, and that's where I met Ernest Boyd, who lived on 19th Street, I believe. I'm trying to think now of the other writers that I met in those early days. I seem to be running a little dry.

SZ: No. I really just wanted to get a sense of how Europe affected you that first time, your having really hungered for it.

MW: Well, you see I was still in Greenwich Village just before I went to Europe, and now I'm already in Europe with Cunningham Graham. I began meeting writers in London.

SZ: On the first trip?

MW: On the first trip.

SZ: Did you go only to London [on the first trip]?

MW: Went to London first and from London to Germany, because I had met in Chicago, with Mrs. Moody, a famous German pianist named Elly Ney. She was a fascinating person with a great chrysanthemum head of hair, and [she] had a considerable reputation in New York at that time. She had a husband named Van Hoekstrader, a Dutchman, who became a part-time director of the New York Philharmonic, and through the Van Hoekstraders I met the Lewises, and they were always giving parties and entertaining other musicians. I met many of the great German musicians through the Van Hoekstraders....

SZ: So that's why you went to Germany?

MW: Yes.

SZ: What was Germany like? It was right after the war.

MW: Oh, it was awful. The great attraction of Germany at that time was that we youngsters who had very little money could live on nothing at all there because of the inflation and, in fact, I remember being told that the place for aspiring young American writers to live was in Germany because they could live there for so little. We lived on the exchange. I went, on the advice of the German consulate in London, to a city called Wiesbaden and lived there with Glenway. Both of us were writing at that time.... Elly Ney, whom I'd met in Chicago, offered us her apartment in Bonn and we not only lived in the apartment with the benefits of her secretary, but traveled with

her on her concert tours in Germany.

SZ: Was she a wonderful pianist?

MW: Yes. She had a great reputation; struck a few wrong notes, as I remember, but she was so glamorous as a person that she had a big following.

SZ: Did she have a particular specialty?

MW: Beethoven, yes. Because she lived in Bonn which was Beethoven's town.

SZ: Were the Germans welcoming to the Americans at that time?

MW: They certainly were to us, but I never paid any attention to politics, and, of course, at that time I met many of Elly Ney's friends, including a whole string of German musicians who played in New York regularly....

SZ: Are you tired? Do you want to stop?

MW: Yes.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: JULY 27, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: Do you want to continue what you were saying? I had said to you, after reading the article by John Russell, that I thought that some of the trustees might not be particularly appreciative of some of the thoughts that he expressed.

MW: Yes, well, many of our trustees have behaved badly from time to time and they simply didn't understand either the problems of the infant museum or the personalities of the people they had chosen to direct it.

SZ: Do you think that the issue of personality itself played a large part?

MW: Yes, because they didn't understand the temperaments of people like Alfred Barr.

SZ: He wasn't shy, was he?

MW: Yes, he was. He was shy and he was not always very respectful of the trustees who employed him. In private conversation he always referred to Mrs. Rockefeller as "Mrs. Rocks," which always shocked me because I loved her and revered her.
Question?

SZ: I was going to ask you if you thought that appellation was....

MW: It was a kind of joke, of course.

SZ: Affectionate or just not respectful?

MW: I say it seemed disrespectful to me, because I knew not only her but members of her family.

SZ: What you're saying is that in a way he was not a good diplomat.

MW: Well, I'm not sure that it really called for diplomacy. It was just a habit he developed of calling Mrs. Rockefeller [Mrs. John D. (Abby Aldrich) Rockefeller, Jr.] "Mrs. Rocks," which I think he did more in fun than for any other reason. She was the most considerate person I have ever known, and this consideration she showed in the manner in which she exercised her authority. She always was prepared to take a back seat in the Museum administration. Very modest, she was, in relation to her position as vice president of the Museum. I was closely concerned with the opening of the Museum's new building, which occurred when Nelson [Rockefeller] succeeded Conger Goodyear and became president of the Museum himself, and I worked closely with Mrs. Rockefeller on the arrangements for the opening of the new building. [Mr. Wheeler was then Director of Publications, having been appointed by Nelson Rockefeller in mid 1939.] I can remember the day when, at a meeting between Stephen C. Clark and Mrs. Rockefeller, the latter said, "Stephen, the staff has been so wonderful through these difficult years of the transition that I think it would be very nice if you and I, together, made up a fund to provide every member of the staff with a month's salary on the occasion of the opening of the new building." To this day I can remember the expression on Stephen's face because it was not the sort of proposal that made him happy.

SZ: And did it happen?

MW: Oh, yes, of course.

SZ: Did Mr. Clark often put a stop to certain expenditures of funds that might otherwise have been made?

MW: I don't recall that he did, although he may have. I don't know what there is in the Museum archive about Stephen Clark, but he was an extraordinary man and a very great collector.

SZ: Tell me what you mean by extraordinary.

MW: Exceptional, exceptional. He took the job very seriously. He visited the Museum frequently; for example, he took me to lunch every Wednesday, at the University Club, in order to discuss Museum affairs and he always ate what is sort of an everyday dessert--rice pudding, bread pudding?

SZ: With raisins?

MW: I think that was it.

SZ: That's rice pudding.

MW: Yes. And I remember one luncheon when he ordered three rice puddings, one after the other. It was his favorite dessert.

SZ: Was he trim?

MW: Trim?

SZ: Well, I mean if he ate three rice puddings for lunch every day....

MW: Oh, his figure. Yes, he was not obese. His passion was baseball; [he] started a baseball--what do they call it? The organization within baseball. He started it at his home up there in northern New York State. Baseball Hall of Fame.

SZ: Oh, the Hall of Fame.

MW: Baseball Hall of Fame.

SZ: In Cooperstown, New York.

MW: Precisely.

SZ: Oh, he did start that?

MW: Yes, and financed it. I believe it still exists there.

SZ: Yes, it does.

MW: He disagreed with his brother, who was just as wealthy as he was, both heirs of the Singer Sewing Machine [Company]. His brother had moved to Paris and married a French woman and formed his collection there, but because of his disagreement with his brother, Stephen would never go to Paris, even though he would have enjoyed all the art that he could see there.... There were three brothers, I think: Ambrose, and Stephen, and the one who came back here during the war and stayed here and left his collection to--what is the university?

SZ: Williams College.

MW: Williams. Exactly. Williams.

SZ: It's a very fine museum now.

MW: It is, thanks to the Clarks. I'd like to go there this afternoon....

SZ: I thought we'd spend the balance of today just going back to the '20s and to your

time living in Paris and your relationship with Barbara Harrison [Wescott], and anything else that you feel is interesting and of some importance to your own story.

MW: Well, you see my relationship with Barbara Harrison also touches the Rockefellers, because she had a favorite aunt, her aunt Harriet, who married the brother of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and I met that branch of the Rockefeller family through Barbara.

SZ: How did you meet Barbara?

MW: I met Barbara in Paris, through her sister [Virginia]. Barbara had just finished her studies at Oxford and had decided to live in Paris, and I met Barbara through...Virginia, who now lives in Seville....

SZ: Let's back up a little because we talked last time about your first trip, with Glenway, to Europe.... You stayed for a while, but then you came back to New York. And I read somewhere that you worked for a bank doing public relations?

MW: That's right.

SZ: What bank was that?

MW: It was a small bank. I had met, in New York, a man named Potter who was the president of this small bank, and I was hired as director of publicity for the bank. I believe the bank was later taken over by another bank which became a branch of the Chase.

SZ: Was that work that you enjoyed doing?

MW: Yes, it was, and at that time Marianne Moore took a great interest in the bank and its publicity. To such an extent that she was always giving me ideas for new developments for the bank, and I remember her cherishing little publications,

publicity folders, that she cherished.

SZ: Did you make much money doing that? Was that a high-paying job at that time, relatively speaking?

MW: Oh, no. Nothing was high-paying, but it was well-paid, and then I left it to go back to Europe.

SZ: Why did you decide to go back? Whose decision was that?

MW: Mine, but I think that Glenway Wescott went with me and we established residence in Paris and stayed there.... We took an apartment at number 9 rue de Condé; we had a mutual friend named Frances Robbins who helped us establish ourselves there--Frances E.L. Robbins. She was a daughter of a cabinet minister.... [TAPE INTERRUPTION] She was a very dear friend. We had known her in Greenwich Village.

SZ: What was Paris like at that time? What was the flavor and the atmosphere like?

MW: Well, there was some opposition to Americans. I remember certain "Yankee go home" protests, but they weren't serious.

SZ: But, in intellectual circles, it was quite....

MW: Oh, yes. Those were the days, Gertrude Stein and all of her friends.

SZ: Did you meet her?

MW: Of course.

SZ: Was this all through Frances, that you began to meet people?

MW: No. I met Gertrude Stein through George [Platt] Lynes, strangely enough, because he had an aunt who lived in Paris and who introduced him to Gertrude Stein, whom he later photographed; because it was in those years that he became a photographer and later on an extremely eminent one, which led to his being employed by the top fashion photographers in New York. What was the name of the editor...of Vogue?

SZ: Liberman, Alexander Liberman.

MW: Alexander Liberman, yes. He's still around. I don't think he actually employed George Lynes, but he certainly knew him.

SZ: So, you were in Paris. Now, Glenway, was he writing all the time? He had written two books in New York, right? Two novels....

MW: Yes, The Apple of the Eye was one, I think; The Grandmothers was the Harper-Price novel. But we had just as many friends in London as we had in Paris and we went back and forth. I'm trying to think of the man. I think he was a literary agent in Paris, he and his wife, and they knew all the French and English writers, but his name eludes me. I saw a great deal of them.

SZ: Who were some of your good friends during those years?

MW: Well, there was one whom I had met in Chicago named Bernadine Szold, and she later married Chester Fritz, who came from the Northwest and had been a friend and an employee of the Hochschild family. The Hochschilds, who had an international metals business in Shanghai, employed Chester Fritz as a silver broker and we all met each other and liked each other, continued to see one another. And later, in the early '30s, Barbara [Harrison] Wescott and I went to visit the Szolds, Bernadine Szold and her husband, Chester Fritz,...in Shanghai, and upon that visit, both Barbara and I became close friends of Sir Victor Sassoon, who was managing the Sassoon fortunes in Shanghai, having transferred them from Bombay.

SZ: What was Shanghai like in the early '30s? Can you describe the city a little.

MW: It was, I suppose, very much like what Hong Kong became. Victor Sassoon, at that time, owned the biggest hotel in Shanghai which was called the Cathay, and while Barbara was staying with Bernadine Szold Fritz, Victor Sassoon, who'd become a good friend, invited me to stay with him at the Hotel Cathay. [He] gave me the Japanese suite, which was very elaborate, and began introducing me to his Chinese friends who were art collectors. He took me to many of their homes and to the homes, also, of his English friends. It was a fascinating period because the society was British, American, Chinese, and their favorite sport was paper hunts, paper chases.... They all did play polo, too, but they had these paper chases, when they would drop paper to give the scent or the clue.... I continued to see some of those English friends much later in London.

SZ: Now, that was just a pleasure trip that you took? Just to visit? You weren't looking for paper or anything?

MW: Well, I guess we did find some paper for some of those early Harrison of Paris editions. We had a fondness for iridescent Japan velum, which is a handmade paper of great beauty....

SZ: Was this your first trip to the Orient? Would you go and look for these kinds of papers, or could you always get them in Paris?

MW: Oh, you got them in Paris too. Well, of course I took great interest in bookmaking, and one of my principle friends and helpers was Ambroise Vollard, who was always extremely kind and helpful to me; later, when I went to The Museum of Modern Art, I think the first book that I wrote and published myself, for the Museum, was called Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators, and I believe that I dedicated that

book to Ambroise Vollard.

SZ: What kind of a man was he?

MW: He could be said to be the most fascinating man I ever met in my life because every moment of his life was devoted to painters or writers or publishers. He himself was the greatest publisher of his day because he published those great early books illustrated by [Pierre] Bonnard, which are still unsurpassed. They're all to be seen-- Vollard's early books illustrated by [Henri de] Toulouse-Lautrec and others--at MoMA among our treasures....

SZ: Are you getting tired?

MW: Yes.

SZ: Want to stop today?

MW: I'm afraid so. Is it too early?

SZ: No. If you're tired, I'll shut off.

MW: Okay.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: AUGUST 4, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: Please tell me what you know about the rift between Alfred Barr and René d'Harnoncourt, which in some way ultimately led to Mr. Barr's being fired, if that's the correct term.

MW: Dismissal.

SZ: Dismissal.... I think in this particular issue you should just start and talk about what you remember and what it is that you want to say about it.

MW: Well, I stayed out of the whole thing because I didn't want to take sides. Alfred respected my position, and we never discussed it between ourselves at all. Things just happened, and, of course, the real crux of the situation was Stephen Clark's....
[TAPE INTERRUPTION]

SZ: You had just mentioned that the problem began with Stephen Clark.

MW: In all institutions there are people who develop an antipathy to one another and Stephen Clark was, everybody knew, a spoiled man. He and his brothers inherited the Singer Sewing Machine Company, and they were used to having everything they wanted and everything that they thought was right, and he was passionately interested in art and so was his brother. He really spent half his time looking at art and that's how he became involved, through Mrs. Rockefeller, in The Museum of Modern Art. They became very close friends and he became extremely devoted to the Museum and what it stood for in those early days. He wanted to make it a success, and he did. When I came on board, he immediately began devoting a lot of time to me because he liked my ideas, and whatever else he liked about me I didn't know, but we became very good friends and he wanted to introduce me to his clubs. He took me to lunch every Wednesday at the University Club and he was always inviting me to go to baseball games because he was a tremendous baseball enthusiast....

SZ: You say he liked you. Did you like him?

MW: Yes, I liked him very much. He was a very intelligent man and his love of art was profound and sincere, and we used to go to art galleries together. I remember once I persuaded him to buy a Bonnard which I thought was very beautiful, and to my great distress, a few months later we took it back to the dealer. However, we already had a wonderful Bonnard, which--I don't know who persuaded him to buy that one, the first one; I think it may have been Mrs. Rockefeller--we still have, and it's a great picture. It was something of a disappointment to Mr. Clark that I didn't want to go to a baseball game every afternoon, but I had better things to do, I thought. He never

took Alfred Barr to baseball games--probably one more of his disappointments.

SZ: That Alfred wouldn't go?

MW: That Alfred wouldn't go, I think. In any case, Alfred Barr's office was at the end of the corridor on the garden side of the fifth floor of the Museum. My office was on the same side, in the middle, and Alfred's was at the end; and Mr. Clark would come to the Museum, always stop in at my office to learn if there was anything new or of interest to him, and then he would walk down the corridor to Alfred Barr's office, which was...the last office at the east end of the corridor. More than once after he left Alfred Barr's office he'd walk back down the corridor to my office and he'd walk into my office and say to me, "I cannot understand that man." And when I questioned him as to what he couldn't understand, it appeared to me to be that he felt that Alfred Barr was always changing his mind, that they'd discuss something that he thought would be desirable for the Museum and, after their discussion, Alfred would consent to Mr. Clark's proposal, and then he'd reverse his opinion, change his mind, and this is what Mr. Clark couldn't understand. But things went from bad to worse, until there began to circulate around the fifth floor an idea that Alfred was becoming a sort of bottleneck, that things that he had consented to did not transpire. I don't know at what point Mr.--a Guggenheim man, secretary of the Guggenheim Foundation--he was a good friend of mine, too, and a good friend of Mr. Clark's; we three would often lunch and sometimes dine together at the hotel in the next block.

SZ: In the Dorset?

MW: Dorset. It was Henry Allen Moe. He was the director of the Guggenheim Foundation. He became very close to the Museum because he represented Mrs. [Simon] Guggenheim, who became a chief benefactor, on the board; Mrs. Guggenheim relied heavily on Mr. Moe's opinion, and so did Stephen Clark, so they became a sort of trio. I believe that Stephen Clark [also] somehow involved Mr. Moe in the affairs of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. But, in any case, we were all very close friends who saw each other frequently and both Mr. and Mrs. Clark liked me and

invited me to their Sunday evening parties at their great house at the corner of...as it 70th Street and Park Avenue, southwest corner? That's where Mr. Clark had his Matisse gallery, on the top floor of the house, which he later relinquished. The Sunday evening parties were really extraordinary. [LAUGHING] They were supper parties and dances, and they would have an orchestra for the dancing; I can't remember whether dancing took place before or after the supper, but it was an elaborate supper and they would invite all their friends and there would from twenty to fifty people, excellent music and very happy dancing. One of the sources of Stephen Clark's disappointment in Barr was that he was slow to finish books that he had undertaken for the Museum, and that's a difficulty that we had not only with Alfred Barr but with other curators as well.

SZ: That's always been a difficulty.

MW: Always been a difficulty, including James Johnson Sweeney, who was a major disappointment because he undertook to do, for us, a book for a major exhibition of the work of Georgia O'Keeffe, which we'd always wanted to do and Sweeney asked to be allowed to do it and we decided to let him, and one deadline after another was established and he failed them all. That was one of the reasons that Sweeney was released, and it was also, in part, the reason why Alfred Barr was released, because Henry Allen Moe agreed with Stephen Clark that Alfred was taking on more than he could do.

SZ: Did you think that was a fair assessment at the time?

MW: Well, yes. I think that he did, in a way, take on more than he could do, because there arose around the Museum all sorts of little problems which Alfred, as director of the Museum, was expected to solve, and Alfred, in some cases, simply deferred making a decision, and that was why the question of his forming a--that dreadful word--bottleneck when he just didn't solve the problem.

SZ: Can you think of any specific problem that had come up for which he proved to be a

bottleneck like that?

MW: No. It wasn't as clear as that. It was just a matter of postponement.

SZ: Was this all pretty much how it was when you first came to the Museum...? What you're describing are your early years, right? Late '30s?

MW: No, I think it was later than that.

SZ: It was later than that?

MW: My early years at the Museum were extremely simple. I was assigned by Alfred to do exhibitions which had been proposed by Mrs. Rockefeller's little advisory committee [the Junior Advisory Committee] that she had established.

SZ: You were on that advisory committee.

MW: I was at one point, yes; later, I think, rather than earlier.

SZ: When Alfred [Barr] was in Europe, the whole decision was made as to which architect [was to be used] for the new building. From what I understand, that was really a signal, that that decision was taken in his absence and not necessarily would have been one of his choosing, and that that indicated that there was already a difficulty.

MW: Well, as I recall it, I guess I was here at the time. Was that in the early '30s?

SZ: That was '37.

MW: Oh, that's later.

SZ: So you weren't on staff but you were around.

MW: Yes. I remember the discussion about the architect with Nelson and Alfred, and Ed Stone [Edward Durrell Stone], who was chosen as the architect, was a friend of mine. I was very fond of him and was happy with the choice and, I think, so was Nelson. Nelson, of course, worked very closely with him. I remember the discussions as to the disposition of the new space that we were creating and Nelson's reluctance to have a space that could not be converted to other uses if the Museum should fail. At least we did have a useful building for something else. Nelson had a very sound head; he thought of everything, and, believe me, there were plenty of things to think about in those early days, when everything was being done for the first time. But, of course, Nelson was invaluable to us by taking his mother's side with his father, because his father was always very doubtful and suspicious about the importance of a museum. There was never any doubt whatever in his mother's mind about the importance of a museum, because she had been reared, as a girl, with art, being taken abroad frequently by her parents to see art. Then there was the long wooing of Abby Aldrich by Mr. John D., Jr., in which he finally triumphed.

SZ: She was reluctant?

MW: I think she was. At least it was sometime after he fell in love with her that she consented to marry him.

SZ: They were supposedly two very different people.

MW: You mean temperamentally?

SZ: Yes, and, as you're saying, in interests also.

MW: Yes, they were, but he was remarkably kind and responsive to her about her interests. I can remember one of my early dinners with them, before I knew him.

When I arrived, she took me to him and said, "John, I think it would be nice if you showed Mr. Wheeler your Chinese collection." And he, like a dutiful son, undertook to do this, and did it very thoroughly. We always got along fairly well, except that there were times when his indifference to The Museum of Modern Art really became a problem. We were doing an exhibition about the war that had been directed by [Edward] Steichen, and I got Herbert Bayer, I think, to do the installation, and it was brilliantly presented. I think it was called, Road to Victory, and Mrs. Rockefeller was simply overwhelmed by the effectiveness of what we showed, the way it was done. She was determined that her husband should see it, because she knew that he would respond as she had to it and she called me up one morning and said that [she was going to invite] some friends of her husband's, who he liked very much,...to lunch in the Museum garden. Her husband liked them so much that she knew that he would come if she invited them to join them for lunch and so we had the luncheon. He came, and at the end of lunch, she said, "John, I think it would be nice if you let your friends"--I forget what their name was; they had a son who was a doctor in New York. I think he was the head of the railway that ran from Texas into Mexico.... Mrs. Rockefeller said to her husband, "John, I think it would be nice if you let our friends take you to see this extraordinary exhibition." And, at that instant, he looked at his watch and said, "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I have another appointment." And he ran out of the place like a scared rabbit, to her great disappointment. It was a stunning, stunning exhibition.

SZ: Do you think that he just had no taste for it or that he had no understanding of it?

MW: Both. Well, he was an amazing man, Mr. Rockefeller, when you consider his accomplishments. And his turning over to Nelson, when he was just out of college, the task of finding tenants for Rockefeller Center, which was just being completed in the depths of the Depression....

SZ: Did he often accompany Mrs. Rockefeller to museum functions?

MW: Never. Heavens, no. They had mutual friends who were interested in art, but they

never came to the Museum together.

SZ: Do you think that was a disappointment to her?

MW: No. She was so busy looking after him and the children. No. She had a tremendous understanding of human nature and human behavior. It never disappointed her; I mean, things that were done did not disappoint her because she was fascinated with what was going to happen next. She had the greatest curiosity about what was going on in and around the Museum, and, in the most surprising ways, she concerned herself. I remember one morning she telephoned me--it was at the time when the Rockefeller Foundation was withdrawing from the family and had not been cooperating as fully, perhaps, as they might with what was going on at 53rd Street--and she telephoned me and she said, "Mr. Wheeler,"--she always called me Mr. Wheeler, although her children all called me by my first name--she said, "I hear that you're a friend of Mr. Somerset Maugham and that he's here now, and you know David Stevens, who is the director of [the] Rockefeller Foundation, is a great admirer of literature. I think that it might help our cause with the foundation if you were to invite David Stevens to dine with Mr. Maugham." Well, I did that, and I don't think there were any important consequences, but it was a pleasant evening nevertheless.

SZ: Where did you do that--at your home?

MW: Yes, at my home at 410 Park Avenue. Stephen Clark used to like to come there, too.

SZ: When did you move here from there?

MW: There were two stages: first, David [Rockefeller], when he was president of Chase Bank, tore down the building I lived in, 410 Park Avenue, to put up a Chase Bank building on that site, where it still is; and then I moved, temporarily, when they tore down that building, to 215 East 79th Street. But that was too far from the Museum, so I only stayed there a short time. Just this minute, on that chest, that blue box is full of Tiffany stationery..., which I found in the back of a closet the other day. I was

wondering what to do with it, and I thought I'd better just take it up and give it to the superintendent of that building and ask him to give it to somebody who could use it....

SZ: We were talking about Steven Clark's problems with Alfred Barr and what happened, and we sort of had just gotten to the point where you were telling me that he had trouble with...Barr being late with his publications.

MW: And one thing he didn't like was [that] Alfred Barr walked to work every morning from 96th Street where he lived, between Madison and Park, I think it was, and he would walk to the Museum at 53rd Street, through Central Park, watching birds--he was a birdwatcher, and this morning walk through the park, looking at birds, was his choice of therapy. It was what he did for his health and I'm sure it was extremely good for his health but it meant that he never arrived at the Museum before 11:00, and that also annoyed Mr. Clark, who started a little earlier.

SZ: So, from this, what began to happen?

MW: He fired him, and that was Henry Allen Moe and Stephen Clark.

SZ: Together.

MW: Together.

SZ: Well, do you feel that they had a lot of support on their side for doing that, by that time?

MW: Oh, there was tremendous opposition from the staff, of course, but the support came also from the other trustees who felt that Stephen and Moe were justified in what they did, that they did the right thing. In fact, I vaguely remember a letter that I was told about that Mrs. Rockefeller had written to Alfred Barr, saying that she thought

that it would be all for the best, the dismissal, and that it would be for Alfred's own good, which I don't think anybody agreed with at the time, but it was her opinion and very important as her opinion.

SZ: So, even though Clark and Moe did it, it was not just the two of them.

MW: Oh, no, they had the support of the board.... There was no doubt that the trustees felt that Alfred's dismissal was the best thing for him and for the Museum. He was assigned to an office, or office space, in the library of the Museum, where he continued to work, and it was Mr. Clark's and Mr. Moe's idea that the Museum would benefit by this, because Alfred would have more time to write and that his writings were so important that nothing could serve the Museum's interests better than another book from Alfred Barr. Alfred had agreed to do for me--because, I think, I was director of publications at the time--he had agreed to do for me a little introductory pamphlet to modern art, to be called What is Modern Painting?. That was another thing which Alfred really wanted to do, but he had so many other things to do that it was slow in completion, but it's ever since been the bestseller of all the Museum books. It's extremely well done and still being revised and revised and revised, and it was the first of a series of books. [There was] What is Modern Architecture?, and so forth. I think there were four or five in the series. Alfred devised, on all of them, that they were written by our chief curators....

SZ: When Alfred was fired, did the staff take any kind of action?

MW: You bet. They didn't take any action but they expressed themselves. The resentment was tremendous, and justified you know, because, after all, Alfred was the Museum.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SZ: Do you remember, at the time, what your personal feelings were about his

dismissal?

MW: Well, I tried to believe that it would give Alfred more free time to write books, because I, as director of publications, wanted the books and thought that they were extremely important for the Museum. Alfred really wanted to write the books, but he had difficulty finding time to do it all. Nelson had made up his mind early in the game that René should be the next director of the Museum, following Alfred, because Nelson and René got on like a house afire from the very beginning. I think it was Alfred who introduced them in the first place.... René...I knew extremely well, because his office was next to mine; at the end of every day he would come into my office and review what had happened during the day.... That hour between 6:00 and 7:00 every evening was spent in my office and it was wonderfully advantageous to us both. René was always bursting with ideas relating to installation and presentation, and he would always pull up to my desk and make drawings, extremely clever, depictive drawings of what he thought might be done. We always understood each other perfectly, and Mrs. Hoff told me, this week, that Alfred had said to her that he couldn't understand why he simply couldn't behave better to René, that he was very fond of him and that he wanted to do the right thing but he simply couldn't, and that has stuck in her mind all these years. He told her that he owed René more than he owed anyone else in the world because he treated him so beautifully, and yet he simply could not be kind to him. And if you want to put your finger on something, I suppose that's it. [LAUGHING]

SZ: Are you tired? Do you want to keep going?

MW: I think so, yes.

SZ: What, you want to stop?

MW: Could we?

SZ: Sure.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: AUGUST 7, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SZ: Before we move on to talking about your first years at the Museum, I wanted to pick up on something you said last time in relation to Alfred Barr and....

MW: D'Harnoncourt?

SZ: Well, no. I think when you mentioned conflict of temperaments you were really talking about Barr versus just some of the other people in the Museum. Is that not correct, or was it René d'Harnoncourt in particular?

MW: It must have been d'Harnoncourt, yes.

SZ: I just wanted you to elaborate on that.

MW: He was a very peaceful, pacific man, friends with everybody and understood everybody, and conflicts never arose around him because he was a pacifier at all times.

SZ: Who was? D'Harnoncourt.

MW: D'Harnoncourt, yes.

SZ: What about in terms of, if you could compare them in terms of their intellectual capacities...?

MW: Well, Alfred Barr was certainly his superior as an intellectual. He was a born and trained intellectual. René was extremely well-educated.... [TAPE INTERRUPTION]

SZ: Maybe we'll just leave that subject. Let's go to your very earliest years at the Museum. Now, you came in first not as a staff member. You came in originally to do one particular exhibition?

MW: Well, I had become friendly, while I still lived in Europe, with the first president of the Museum, who was Conger Goodyear. When I returned from Paris to New York in the early '30s, I resumed my friendship with Goodyear. He...had become a close friend of Eliza Parkinson's mother [Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss], who was the wife of the then-president of the Museum [Cornelius Bliss was a member of the Museum's board], and she thought that I would be a suitable companion for her daughter and used to invite me to her family dinner parties in their big apartment on Fifth Avenue. That was the beginning of a very close relationship between Eliza and her mother and Mr. Goodyear, whom her mother later married. Then there was a friend of Lincoln Kirstein's, named Thomas Dabney Mabry, and he got along very well with Mr. Goodyear and joined the little group, and it was he and Mrs. Rockefeller who decided to put me on the staff.

SZ: Mabry?

MW: Yes, Mabry and Mrs. Rockefeller. Mrs. Rockefeller was always very keen on building up the membership of the Museum. She worked diligently among all her friends to get them to join the Museum and to enlist others. An early list of the trustees will show a number of Mrs. Rockefeller's friends, whom she had introduced to me, and I can remember parties that she got her friends to give for the sole purpose of getting more members for the Museum.

SZ: Well, you were brought on staff officially, my notes say, in September of 1938, as the Director of the Membership Department, right?

MW: Was that it? Yes. That's what I've just referred to.

SZ: Right. But before you were put on staff officially, you were, I think, a member of the [Junior] Advisory Committee, right?

MW: Yes. Whether I was a member of the committee in those early days, I don't remember, but at least Mrs. Rockefeller would herself come to the early meetings of what she called the [Junior] Advisory Committee, which were the young people. She thought that they--these people selected by her--that they should eventually become trustees of the Museum, and meanwhile, because they were so much younger than the trustees, that they would be more receptive to more progressive art.

SZ: Is that what happened, in fact?

MW: That's exactly what happened.

SZ: And is it not true that that led to some conflicts between the advisory committee members and what they felt the Museum should be doing...?

MW: Well, yes. There was one exhibition that was promoted by the advisory committee that some of the trustees disapproved of. That was an exhibition, if I remember...directed by Lincoln Kirstein, and the advisory committee encouraged him to take it on. If I remember correctly, it was devoted to mural paintings by American artists [Murals and Photo-Murals by American Painters and Photographers, 1932]. I'll have to ask Kirstein about that.

SZ: Tell me what you remember about that. Why was that so controversial?

MW: Well, this was all about the time when Nelson and his father disagreed with Diego

Rivera about a mural, I believe, that the Rockefellers had commissioned from [him]. Mrs. Rockefeller liked Diego Rivera and had bought some of his work for the Museum. Diego had put a portrait of Lenin in one of the murals at Rockefeller Center and that the Rockefellers didn't like. That was the conflict, I believe.

SZ: You never saw that mural?

MW: No, it was removed...just at the time it was done.

SZ: Do you remember any talk at the time...? I was wondering, specifically inside the Museum, if there were various camps of opinions, if you can remember....

MW: Well, we were always fascinated and we knew what was going on because Nelson had just become...president of the Museum.... You see, Nelson worked very, very hard on the new building, which opened in 1940, didn't it?

SZ: In 1939.

MW: In 1939, yes. Nelson and his mother worked on the opening and the guest list, to see that the right people came.

SZ: Well, she had purposefully put Nelson on the advisory committee early on, or asked him if he wanted to do that, so that he was always, he was among the....

MW: From the beginning, yes, and then friends of his, his generation, came on that committee.

SZ: Such as?

MW: Marian Willard, who had an art gallery of her own in New York, and who was the lady from Princeton?

SZ: These were friends, [and] there were a number of them who later became trustees and fulfilled Mrs. Rockefeller's vision.

MW: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. Jim Soby and Bill Burden and a good many others, Sidney Janis. I remember some of the trustees disapproved of having dealers on the advisory committee.

SZ: What was your feeling about that?

MW: Well, I thought that dealers could be very, they had been immensely helpful to me in my work at the Museum, and I thought that the situation could be controlled and there was nothing to worry about. Sidney Janis, at one point, put on an exhibition in the penthouse for the advisory committee, a Picasso exhibition, which he did very well, worked very hard at and this was all with the consent of Alfred Barr....

SZ: How did it happen that you were invited to do your first exhibition at the Museum? Can you remember?

MW: Yes, that was through the advisory committee because Mrs. Rockefeller encouraged the committee to make suggestions for exhibitions that they thought would be useful. My first exhibitions were proposed by me to the committee. I think the very first one was the modern bookbinding by [Ignatz] Wiemeler, who was a German binder whom I'd met in Paris, a binder of great excellence and beauty. I showed some examples of his work to the advisory committee, and they, and Alfred Barr, thought it would be an excellent idea and encouraged me to go ahead with it. I did, and assembled the exhibition, and Alfred Barr approved of it. He liked the bindings very much. Some of the bindings that were in that exhibition are still here.

SZ: Here?

MW: Were bought by collectors here.

SZ: How did you display them?

MW: I think they were just put in cases. There are some photographs of them in that bookcase there, if you want to take the trouble to fish them out.

SZ: I will. So you were pleased with that exhibition.

MW: Everyone was, yes. It was a small exhibition, but the quality was remarkable, and a few of the bindings that came over for the exhibition were sold and remained here. I remember both Paul Mellon, through his first wife, bought one. Lincoln Kirstein bought one. My friend Barbara Harrison, bought one. I can't remember what my next exhibition was.

SZ: Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators.

MW: Yes. That was a direct consequence of my meeting Ambroise Vollard in Paris, and I think that was the first exhibition in New York of the illustrations made for books by great living artists, and that was very successful. Everybody liked it, and I think the duration of the exhibition had to be extended.

SZ: It had such a good attendance.

MW: Yes.

SZ: Did you start to feel by that time that maybe putting together exhibitions was something that you really liked to do?

MW: Yes, no question about it. I loved doing it and I was encouraged by Alfred and my colleagues. When did Jim Soby come aboard?

SZ: Not until later.

MW: Because he became a close friend and we worked together on exhibitions.

SZ: So while you were a member on the advisory committee, before you were on staff, while you put together these two exhibitions which came one year after another, you were working downtown, was that it? I'm trying to get it straight.

MW: No. Harrison of Paris, the little firm that Barbara Harrison and I did together, had an office in New York because we thought we would try to transfer that limited edition business to New York and we had a little office.

SZ: Where was your little office?

MW: At 362 Fifth Avenue. It was at that time, also through the advisory committee, that I became interested in industrial design. Alfred had encouraged us in that, and John McAndrew was interested in it and I think it was Paul Sachs who also encouraged me in that and thought that the Museum might have a department of industrial design. It was the advisory committee that encouraged me or urged me or commissioned me to make a report on industrial design, a report covering the desirability of such a department.... Alfred encouraged me in that, too, and there is, in the archives somewhere, a report. Have you seen it?

SZ: Tell me how you went about doing that.

MW: I just did it entirely on my own. I had a secretary and what I did was to write to museum directors around the country to find out whether they thought it was a good idea or not; they replied with overwhelming approval and that led to the establishment of our Department of Industrial Design. I don't know whether John McAndrew was the first director or not. Your records would show.

SZ: Originally it was not part of the Department of Architecture and Design, it was its own discrete department.

MW: I think so. A separate department, yes, called Industrial Design, and that led to other projects, especially the one that Charles Eames helped us with, which is something that we did in collaboration with Bloomingdale's. What we did was to have a competition for quality in industrial design and in order to assure success of the designs that won the competition, we [worked] with Bloomingdale's and some other manufacturers or big department stores who were in a position to make a market for these new designs; in other words, we decided we ought to do what we could to create a market for these things. I think Eames won the competition and it was the beginning of his glorious career with IBM. It's interesting, [the Department of] Industrial Design began with Alfred Barr's class at Wellesley, when he gave each of his students in his class a little money, and their assignment was to buy the finest work of art, from an aesthetic point of view, that could be purchased for a few pennies....

SZ: [That department] has had, as we know, such an enormous effect on what people see and what people use.

MW: Yes, because I think one of our early shows was called, Useful Objects Under \$5, and that was an eye-opener to the New York public, to think that anything aesthetically satisfactory could be had for five dollars.

SZ: What you're also saying is that while there were things that were aesthetically pleasing that could be had for everyday life, at the same time, there weren't a lot of things, so that you were also dealing with companies, or department stores....

MW: And mass production.

SZ: Yes.

MW: Exactly. So that part of that competition was to provide the market for them, the demand for them, which department stores helped us with. And that's where Edgar Kaufmann came into the picture because he was a friend of John McAndrew's and

he...later became the head of that department.

SZ: And later exited rather precipitously, as you told me.

MW: He did indeed.

SZ: He was the son, right, of the Kaufmann for whom Falling Water was built.

MW: That's right, and, indeed, it was Edgar's idea to get Frank Lloyd Wright to build Falling Water, which now, I believe, is one of the glories of the State of Pennsylvania....

SZ: Do you remember the show Three Centuries of American Art that was put together and taken to Paris?

MW: Oh, yes.

SZ: Any of the hullabaloo that concerned that?

MW: Yes. I was in Paris at the time, I think, and we'd assigned Allen Porter to go to Paris and coordinate the exhibition, and he did a very good job of it, except the exhibition was not very popular in Paris. This was something that Conger Goodyear was very keen about. He thought it was very important that The Museum of Modern Art should send an exhibition to Paris.

SZ: For the prestige of the Museum?

MW: Yes, but the French liked nothing about the exhibition but the movies, because we already had our department of cinema, and so the cinema was well-represented and the French loved it. It was at the Jeu de Paume.

SZ: How did Mr. Goodyear take to the critics? I read somewhere that the critics were

vicious in France.

MW: Well, it was a great day for Goodyear, because to represent The Museum of Modern Art at this exhibition in Paris suited him perfectly well.... Up to that time, his principal roles had been at the Buffalo Museum [Albright-Knox Art Gallery], where he was on the board. He came into conflict with some of the Buffalo trustees by purchasing living artists like Picasso, and they were not quite ready for it, but he did buy some fine pictures for Buffalo; but he had come into conflict with their board, and it was when Mrs. Rockefeller heard of this conflict that she sent for Mr. Goodyear and asked him to become the first president of The Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: What do you think Mr. Goodyear's major influence was on The Museum of Modern Art or his most important?

MW: Well, I suppose it was sending that exhibition to Paris.

SZ: Why? Did that exhibition enormously enhance....

MW: Well, it was the fact that he did it, the fact that it was done. I dare say he put up some money for it, too. He was the heir of a lumber company in the South, I think. We became very good friends and he used to invite me to his dinner parties. I suppose there were some differences of opinion at the time the new museum, for which Nelson had raised most of the money, opened. Conger Goodyear, at the time of the opening, did not know that the trustees had decided that he should be superseded as president of the Museum by Nelson....

SZ: He did not know, is that what you're saying?

MW: He just took it for granted, at the time of the opening, that he would continue as president. That was sometime, I think, before I had become a trustee of the Museum

but the trustees had come to their decision with Mrs. Rockefeller's assent, and they decided that I should be the one to inform Mr. Goodyear of the imminent change.

SZ: Why were you given this task?

MW: Well, I was friendly with him. They knew that we were friends and I think probably because Mabry was even more friendly with him and Mabry just didn't want to do it.

SZ: Well, did you? Did you want to do it?

MW: No, but it worked out all right.

SZ: How did you do it?

MW: How did I do it?

SZ: Yes.

MW: By just referring to it as if it had always been true and as if, of course, he knew it. He didn't know it, but that was the way I handled it.

SZ: Was this over dinner or....

MW: No, it was in his office on Madison Avenue. I was also working on the opening ceremonies, and who was it we got? A famous professor at Columbia University we decided would be the ideal person to write [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt's address for the opening.

SZ: We'll find his name. [Irwin Edman]

MW: He was related to somebody on The New York Times Magazine section. He was a fascinating man. I knew him well, extremely entertaining, and it was a wonderful

speech, but we all worked on it.

SZ: Who delivered it?

MW: Roosevelt.

SZ: Did he come...?

MW: On the radio, national hookup. We all worked on the speeches that were given that night. They asked me to write a speech for Edsel Ford, who was on the board at that time, and I can remember how strange it was to hear Edsel Ford read the words that I had written.... Edsel Ford's widow succeeded him on our board and was very helpful to us.

END TAPE 5, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 2

SZ: I want to know about the opening, but before we talk about [it], maybe we can just talk a little bit about...what the two years were like when you were in temporary quarters.

MW: Yes, we took space from Henry Luce of Time, Inc.; they gave us the basement of their building there on, was it 49th Street?

SZ: Fourteen West 49th Street.

MW: Yes. That was our temporary headquarters, and that's where Herbert Bayer did the first of his important exhibitions for us. I think that John McAndrew worked on that too.

SZ: Do you have any memory of those two years being difficult, of having to operate from

space that wasn't really your own, or in space that wasn't particularly congenial to what you were doing?

MW: Well, of course we just had to make the best of it. It wasn't ideal. I presume the actual use of that space must have been arranged between Harry Luce and Nelson....

SZ: At this time, Nelson was pretty involved.

MW: Totally involved, at his mother's instigation. I suppose we have tapes of those speeches that were delivered at the opening.

SZ: Well, I know that there's a transcript. I don't know if there are tapes. Was it Mrs. Rockefeller who got President Roosevelt to agree to do that?

MW: No, I think it was Nelson. She was always very shy about delivering speeches.

SZ: Did the staff have a lot to say in what the new building was going to look like and how space was going to be allotted?

MW: Well, through Alfred, yes. Alfred was very close to it all and Alfred worked with Nelson. I remember one point in the design--I may have mentioned this to you before--when Nelson, I suppose speaking for more conservative trustees, felt that the design of the building could be altered to make a conventional building that could be used for other purposes than a museum, just in case the Museum failed in its new quarters. I don't know whose foresight that was. It didn't sound to me exactly like Nelson. It may have been his father, who never liked modern art anyway. Question?

SZ: Yes. Getting back to you, personally, my records say that in September of '38 you became the Director of Membership. There had not really been a membership

department before. Mrs. Rockefeller, you mentioned before, just would have friends to her house and, I guess, try to....

MW: Yes, and it was just person-to-person all the way long.

SZ: So did that change with your appointment?

MW: Yes, I guess it did. Yes, once we had a department called Membership Department, we were able to have special events of all kinds, and the membership, from that point forward, grew immensely.... I remember Henry Allen Moe telling me one time that he was astounded by the number of members we were able to get, but, after all, we gave them a lot for their money. Movies helped enormously, and Jock Whitney helped us with the movies. We enlisted his support. He was investing in Hollywood movies at the time. He financed Gone with the Wind....

SZ: You did not stay very long as Director of Membership because, I think, just a year later you became the head of publications.... How did you get appointed to that position? Do you remember?

MW: I'm trying to think, because there was a woman who preceded me, the one whom Alfred Barr had installed.

SZ: Ernestine?

MW: Fantl, her name was, and she was a friend of Joseph Blumenthal, who printed our first publications and who became one of New York's greatest printers.

SZ: Well, I believe I read somewhere that Nelson appointed you to that position.

MW: He did, and that's because of my publication experience in Paris.

SZ: What had happened to your attempt to start Harrison of Paris in New York? It didn't

work?

MW: Well, no. I just moved over to the Museum and lost interest in it.

SZ: And Barbara Harrison, did she lose interest in it too?

MW: Yes, eventually, yes. She lost interest in Harrison of Paris at about the same time I did. In other words, she came to New York following me and married the brother of my friend Glenway Wescott.

END TAPE 5, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: AUGUST 13, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 6, SIDE 1

SZ: There were a number of changes shortly after the Museum opened, or around the time of the Museum opening.

MW: That's right.

SZ: What can you tell me about that? Maybe we can start there today.

MW: That's when Nelson appointed me as Director of Publications, wasn't it?...

SZ: Who preceded you?

MW: I think it was Ernestine Fantl. I'm not sure; she was a friend of Alfred Barr's.

SZ: Wasn't there also someone about whom there was rather an interesting tale or two-- Frances Collins, [who was] working in the publications area?

MW: Yes, she was. She was a friend of Joseph Blumenthal, our printer.

SZ: He was a special printer, right?

MW: A very fine printer. Still living and, I believe, still printing. He's a member of the

Grolier Club.

SZ: Was he someone that you found for the Museum?

MW: No, he was already there, working for Alfred Barr on the early publications....

SZ: When Nelson Rockefeller appointed you to be Director of Publications, you were already Director of Membership, so you took on this second hat. But what I was asking about, and what I was hoping you'd talk a little bit about today, were those changes in general that occurred at the time of the opening of the Museum. I don't want to put words into your mouth, but would you say that it really was moved into a second generation as an institution?

MW: Yes, when Nelson became president, and that was according to his mother's desires. She wanted him to succeed her in the Museum, and she had many talks with Nelson about her hopes for the Museum. And then, who was that man from Dartmouth [Artemas Packard] who Mrs. Rockefeller employed to make a survey of what the Museum had done and should do?... He was a professor at Dartmouth....

SZ: Artemas Packard.... It's interesting that you say Mrs. Rockefeller employed him.

MW: She's the one who had met him and been very much impressed by him....

SZ: In [Russell Lynes's book Good Old Modern] he says that it was Nelson who...wanted that study done. It was like an efficiency study.

MW: But he and his mother did it together. That's right. He was a very intelligent man.

SZ: Who was?

MW: The Dartmouth man.

SZ: Was he a friend of Nelson's from college?

MW: I think so. At least, he certainly knew him at that time. Whatever became of him, I wonder?

SZ: I don't know. Do you feel that, thinking back on the way the Museum was running at that time, that it was particularly inefficient?

MW: No. After all it was so small that it was easy to keep order and do things the right way.

SZ: Then what do you think, really, was behind having that study done?

MW: Well, the Rockefeller family just wanted to do everything right and they felt that this would help them to get on the right track. It was an interesting study but no different from what any intelligent man would have done in the circumstances. The Dartmouth man [Packard] liked it because it enabled him to live in New York. And Nelson's son and grandson, both of them at Dartmouth, are still very much concerned with fulfilling Nelson's ambitions for Dartmouth. Who is the president now? The man they got from industry. They needed a new president and they took a man not from the academic world but from the business world, from some big industrial company.

SZ: When this study was being done was the staff cooperative or did they really wonder why it was being done? Did it cause a hullabaloo at all?

MW: No, not at all. The man was so amiable everybody liked him, and they just thought it was bound to be beneficial to the Museum.

SZ: What were some of the things that happened in the Museum after that study was completed?

MW: There wasn't much change. I can't remember whether any of the projects that he proposed were actually realized. They were all good ideas, but I don't think that he helped us motivate them. They were proposals which everyone agreed were desirable.

SZ: Russell Lynes also said that around that time there was a lot of dissension and backbiting among staff.

MW: Well, I don't know who was supposed to be doing all that. Did he say?

SZ: No. He just said that that was an attitude, and then, of course, there were a number of departures, and I was wondering if those departures were directly related to that study.

MW: Not that I recall, because he went back to teaching at Dartmouth.

SZ: Well, why did Mabry leave? What do you remember about his departure?

MW: Mabry married a member of the Junior Council, whose...name was Ethel Haven. Her father was, I believe, a businessman and he was very well-connected with the New York Four Hundred and his nickname was Woody. They called him Woody Haven, and I believe that he was a friend of Mr. Frick, who did the Frick Museum. He had two or three daughters, one of whom was Ethel, who married Mabry. He [Mabry] came from the middle South, and he had always missed the South and wanted to live there. After he married Ethel, they moved to the South. I believe they had children and she never came back to New York, I think, although New York was her home.

SZ: What sort of a man was he? What were some of his strengths?

MW: I think he was a pretty good scholar. He'd been to Harvard, with Lincoln Kirstein.... Mabry was very close, not only to Lincoln Kirstein but to his sister, Minna,...who was a teacher at Smith College.... She was a wonderful teacher, apparently, a remarkable personality, and the students all have remained very devoted to her, including Anne Lindbergh....

SZ: What did she teach?

MW: She was a prima donna professor of English, a really remarkable woman....

SW: Was Mr. Mabry remarkable?

MW: No. He was intelligent.

SZ: Did he get along with the trustees?

MW: Quite well, I think, and with Goodyear, who was then the president. Goodyear had an office at the corner of Madison Avenue and, I believe, 60th Street and Mabry used to spend a good deal of time with Goodyear at his office.

SZ: Now, Mabry departed around this time. Frances Collins departed. I know that there's a story about some pranks she played during the opening.

MW: Oh, now I remember what that was. Something that she and Blumenthal cooked up. They did an imitation of an invitation to the opening of the new museum. That must be in Lynes's book. It read something like this: the trustees invite you to attend the opening of the Museum of Modern Oil, and they thought that was very amusing. Nelson did not and I think that as a result of that, she left. I don't know if that's in Lynes's book or not.

SZ: Did you get that invitation?

MW: No, but I saw it.

SZ: Do you think it was amusing?

MW: No. I thought it was very bad manners....

SZ: At that time there were those people associated with the Museum [who] really sort of felt its creative part, were aligned with Barr in the early days of really putting the thing together, and then there were those people...in fact, my understanding of it is [that] it was Mrs. Rockefeller's project, it was Nelson's project, and that they really held the power.

MW: They did, because, after all, Mrs. Rockefeller transferred a good deal of her authority to Conger Goodyear and he took it very seriously, because to be Mrs. Rockefeller's assistant meant a great deal to him. He had entertained a good deal and it meant a great deal to him, socially, to be connected with Mrs. Rockefeller, although I don't think Mrs. Rockefeller's husband, John D., Jr., ever paid much attention to him.

SZ: You mean he didn't like him?

MW: I didn't think he paid much attention one way or the other. He had his own interests.

SZ: Well, that's what you told me last time about his attitude towards the Museum, too.

MW: His Chinese porcelains, which he was buying at the time from Joseph Duveen-- Joseph Duveen had been made a trustee of MoMA and, in the early days, I think he was a benefactor. I don't know if there's any record of what Duveen gave us in the early days. It didn't last very long. He transferred his allegiance, I believe, to the Tate Gallery or the National Gallery in London; I guess it was the National Gallery, [or] perhaps both. I hear they're looking for a new director for the Tate. The present director wants to retire.

SZ: Do you have any idea of anybody who might be interested?

MW: Well, I know that the curator of drawings....

SZ: John Elderfield?

MW: Yes, is being considered, because he's English.

SZ: John McAndrew?

MW: Well, he became curator of...industrial design.... He married a Boston girl, whom I believe is still living. Was her name Betty? She was a good friend of Marga Barr.

SZ: Well, he was another one who parted around this time?

MW: McAndrew?

SZ: Yes.

MW: What did he do when he departed, I wonder? We all knew him well. He was a very interesting man. He stayed on into the Nelson Rockefeller days, didn't he?

SZ: Not for terribly long.

MW: No. No, I don't think so. Lynes's book ought to say what became of McAndrew.

SZ: I was wondering, from your own experience and from your own memory, if you could recall at all why it was that he left or was let go of?

MW: No, my own memory doesn't tell me that, but Lynes's book ought to say.

SZ: Well, it's my impression that there were a number of significant changes such as these after Nelson became president and after the Museum opened, that there were a lot of things that changed; you had a different building, you had a different attitude.

MW: Oh, because with the addition of space, which we'd never had before, all sorts of things became possible and Nelson kept us from going too far too soon. It was amazing how much Nelson was accomplishing at that time, both for his father and for his mother, because when he left Dartmouth, as I recall it, the first assignment he had from his father was to find tenants for Rockefeller Center, which had just been completed. The buildings were empty and Nelson was given the job of finding tenants for that vast edifice. He did it brilliantly, and at that time he divided his attention between his father's office at Rockefeller Center and The Museum of Modern Art, where he was really serving the interests and ambitions of his mother.

SZ: Did he come to the Museum a lot? Did he spend a lot of time there?

MW: Yes, he did.

SZ: Was he accessible to staff people or just certain people?

MW: Oh, he got on with everyone. Everybody liked Nelson.

SZ: And you had a close personal relationship with him over the years?

MW: Yes, and then that moved on into the war when Roosevelt felt that our relations with Latin America needed strengthening and Nelson was appointed by Roosevelt to be the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. So Nelson then moved to Washington in order to do this job, and he took his friends with him, including me and Wallace Harrison.

SZ: Now why did he do that?

MW: Because he wanted to serve Roosevelt and he did it extremely well.

SZ: Yes, but he took you and Wallace Harrison as advisors?

MW: Well, we all had titles of one kind or another. I can't remember what my title was.

SZ: But what did you do?

MW: Went back and forth between New York and Washington, and I even had an office in the State Department in Washington with a man named Walter Prendergast, who had been in the State Department before and had been assigned to Nelson. I think

he worked with Wallace Harrison, and at that time, Nelson depended a great deal on Harrison.

SZ: For what, specifically?

MW: For the administration of that whole [Office] of Inter-American Affairs.

SZ: So you were there in an administrative capacity, also, for your talents in that area.

MW: Yes, because I worked also with Harrison. Suddenly, this all seems so remote.

[LAUGHING] All I can remember at the moment is standing up in the train between New York and Washington because the trains were so crowded.

SZ: Because it was wartime?

MW: Yes.

SZ: It's a long way to have to stand.

MW: It certainly was, but we were young then. The airplanes were all reserved for the top brass and the people from MoMA got no preference.

SZ: Not even Nelson?

MW: Yes. Nelson, of course, went by air.

SZ: Did you do that for the entire length of the war?

MW: No, only for a year or two, but one of the things--I don't know if I mentioned this before--that we felt would improve our relations with Latin America, which was the object of the whole enterprise, was to publish guides, like Baedeker's, to all the Latin American countries. We subsidized that enterprise and it was assigned to an American publisher for accomplishment, to a firm called Duel, Sloan and Pearce, three partners who were friends of mine. Another person who became involved was Archibald MacLeish, who had been on the board of MoMA. Archibald MacLeish brought into the picture John Beal Bishop, and he assisted us in the realm of publications because the goal was to have translated and published in English the major literary works of the Latin American countries. It also went into the field of music and that involved The Museum of Modern Art, to some extent, because we had concerts of Latin American music at the Museum.

SZ: During the war?

MW: During the war.

SZ: Did you have occasion to visit Latin America during that period of time?

MW: I don't think I went much farther than Mexico, but our relations with Mexico were very

close, and, after Nelson became president, he went to Mexico to see the President of Mexico.... They decided that there should be, at The Museum of Modern Art, a great exhibition of Mexican art, which I believe was called Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, and Nelson handled the relations with the President of Mexico. They, through some political arrangements, decided that, for the prestige of Mexico, that the book on this exhibition should be printed by Mexicans, in Mexico. Unfortunately, they were not equipped to do this well, and I was sent to Mexico to oversee and assist in this project. It was a heartbreak, because the Mexicans didn't have the facilities to produce a book of Museum of Modern Art quality, and there was a lot of trouble. One of the things that was specified was the Mexicans didn't have any good paper. Paper would have to be bought in the United States and shipped down and when it arrived there, the Mexican import authorities wanted to be paid for permitting the paper to come into Mexico. The whole thing was held up, and I remember I got René d'Harnoncourt--who by that time had been put into power by Nelson--to come down and help me free the paper for our own book and get it into Mexico. [Miguel] Covarrubias was helping us, and I remember a trip that Covarrubias and René d'Harnoncourt and I made across Mexico in pursuit of the President, who was traveling in the west of the country, to catch up with him and get his authority and permission to unscramble this confusion.

SZ: That's how you first saw Mexico?

MW: No, it wasn't my first, but it was an unforgettable trip.

SZ: Why is that?

MW: Well, we finally caught up with the President, who was eating his supper at some little impromptu tables in some small Mexican city, and that's where we brought René in touch with the President and the problem was finally solved, but it was typical of the complications of dealing with the Mexicans at that time.

SZ: What was Mexico like at that time, traveling across? Was it comfortable at all?

MW: No, it wasn't very comfortable, but it was fascinating. Morelia--I think the town was called Morelia....

SZ: You finally caught the President and...?

MW: And we got the paper released, but the printer was just a very poorly supplied and poorly trained printer; the book was finished, but it was, from my point of view, a tragedy, because the quality of it was so mediocre.

SZ: Did you tell Nelson that?

MW: He couldn't help it. They couldn't do any better. It was all Nelson's fault because Nelson had consented to let the Mexicans do it.

SZ: So what happened? You had to bring the book back and you distributed it, sold it?

MW: Yes, we distributed it and sold it and the text was alright, but the production was frightfully mediocre.

SZ: And I guess that you felt a real proprietary....

MW: It broke my heart, yes, because I knew what good printing was, but the Mexicans couldn't provide it.

SZ: Was the color wrong in the reproductions? Was that one thing?

MW: Yes. Everything was wrong....

SZ: Well, while you were doing all this with the publication, the Museum had various curatorial people down in Mexico hunting up works of art?

MW: No. That was another thing that Nelson had done with the President and the people around the President who wanted positions of authority when it came to the selection of the works to be exhibited in New York. We had the greatest authority on pre-Columbian Mexican art, who was Alfonso Caso--Caso and I became very good friends--and then the man he trusted with the selection of the colonial art was Manuel Toussaint.... There was a huge folk art section, which was entrusted to a man who later became the director of the Museum of Folk Art in Mexico City.

END TAPE 6, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 6, SIDE 2

MW: ...and then the modern section was entrusted to Covarrubias, because he was a living modern artist, and at that time, there was very little awareness of modern art in Mexico. They had their favorite artists, one of whom was Covarrubias, and, of course, at that time a great transition took place when Covarrubias became an authority on pre-Columbian art. That brought in René, who knew a great deal about pre-Columbian art, and he had been passing everything that he knew to Nelson, and Nelson and Covarrubias were close friends. So there was this trio working together, and if we'd only had a better catalogue, it would have had a greater influence.

SZ: What was your assessment of the show itself?

MW: Well, it was a fascinating show, because we brought painters from every corner of Mexico and brought many things that had never been shown in the United States before. Covarrubias and René d'Harnoncourt had known each other in Mexico and become close friends.

SZ: Some of the Mexican officials actually came up to New York for it [the opening], and that was supposedly unusual at that time, is that not correct?

MW: Yes, I think that's true.

SZ: Do you remember anything about it, other than that?

MW: Well, of course, all those four directors of the four sections of the exhibitions [were there], I'd been in Mexico working with them on putting the thing together.

SZ: What you're saying, though, is that this was as much a diplomatic coup, if that's the right word....

MW: It was, yes, because working with us were friends of the four directors, the directors of the four sections. I can find their names in the catalogue.

SZ: Was your going to Washington with Nelson part of military service, or did you do all of that as a civilian?

MW: No, I was a dollar-a-year man. For a long time I used to keep these checks for one dollar for a year's services.

SZ: Would you have been in danger of being drafted if that hadn't...I was just trying to figure out--you must have been 41, I guess, at that point.

MW: That's right.

SZ: That's too old to be drafted, right?

MW: Right.

SZ: Anyway. Are you tired? Do you want to go on a little more? Would you like me to stop?

MW: Well, I think that's enough for today.

SZ: Okay.

END TAPE 6, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 7, SIDE 1

SZ: You've had a long relationship with the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, and he was here just last week visiting with you. Tell me how that friendship began and just whatever you can about him and his relationship to the Museum.

MW: My friendship with him began in Paris, where I first met him--either in Paris or the Riviera--with a mutual friend who was a fine French poet.

SZ: By the name of?

MW: He was a friend of an American painter named Eugene McGowan, and his name, the poet, was René Crevel. He was already something of a celebrity in his day, and is even better known now in Paris because he was one of the early Surrealists.... René Crevel knew Henri Cartier-Bresson, who was also an early Surrealist, and that's not very well known, but it is emphasized in our new book, which has just been published, with a superb text, in my view, by...Peter Galassi.... It's more than a catalogue. It's a superb picture book, and Peter has really done a superb job. We've been extremely fortunate, at the Museum, with our books on photography, beginning with the Newhalls--Beaumont Newhall and his wife, Nancy, who took over in his place when he was drafted for the war. He's now out in Arizona, I believe.... Anyway, he's part of MoMA's history of photography, which gets richer and riper with every year.

SZ: You feel this is a landmark exhibition?

MW: Oh, yes. Yes, it is, and it's going to travel for years to other places.

SZ: So you met Cartier-Bresson through René Crevel.

MW: He was an immensely popular figure and everybody loved him, I guess, including Henri. Henri is a man of extraordinary sensibility and wit. There came with him, for this great opening, his brother, who was with the Cartier-Bresson thread business in Paris, and his wife and his daughter. His wife has to take his daughter back to school today.

SZ: In Paris?

MW: In Paris, yes, but Henri is staying on for another week or two and he's coming here for lunch with Lincoln Kirstein next week. Lincoln Kirstein, I think, wrote the text for our first Cartier-Bresson catalogue.

SZ: So there's a longtime connection there, too.

MW: Longtime connection. Lincoln's not very good at turning the clock back, but he can be encouraged to do so.

SZ: Are you saying that his memory's not very good?

MW: No, his memory is fine. He remembers everything, but it's the focus, the attention, the willingness to turn back and recapitulate, but he does remember everything. At lunch yesterday he remembered the day when Nelson Rockefeller came to the Museum to see Alfred Barr and to tell Alfred that he should curtail his work with people who came to consult him about their work because Alfred was always willing to talk to students about their problems in the arts and there came a time when this

took a great deal of time.... [TAPE INTERRUPTION]

SZ: And Lincoln Kirstein was remembering this the other day?

MW: He remembered the day when Nelson came and told Alfred Barr that these efforts for other people should be curtailed.

SZ: Was Mr. Barr upset?

MW: Not too much.... [TAPE INTERRUPTION]

SZ: I want to go back to the story, just to the end of it. When you said Lincoln Kirstein was remembering it, was it just the fact that it happened?

MW: Well, you see, Lincoln was very close to the Museum in those early days because he was also very close to Nelson Rockefeller and Nelson was very much interested in his formative ballet company. In fact, when when he [Nelson] was the coordinator of Latin American affairs for President Roosevelt, Lincoln sent his embryo ballet company to South America, and, I believe, went with it. In any case, he and Nelson were very close in those early days because Nelson helped finance his ballet. Between Nelson and Lincoln, both of whom helped finance it, it took off, and now they're trying to raise money for a dormitory for the ballet students who come from all over the world. There's no safe place for them to live here....

SZ: Tell me how your friendship with Lincoln Kirstein began.

MW: Gracious, that goes way, way back to George Platt Lynes, who went to school with Lincoln Kirstein, and in those early days, you see, Lincoln Kirstein married Paul Cadmus's sister [Feidela], who is still living, although in a nursing home. We just saw each other all the time, and George Lynes became Lincoln's favorite photographer

for the ballet company. All those photographs still exist.

SZ: Was it because of Nelson's support of his early attempts to build up his ballet company that he gave a whole collection to the Museum, didn't he?

MW: Yes, he did, and I think later they were transferred to that Lincoln Center outfit. What is it called?

SZ: To the library?

MW: Yes. The theatrical library, yes. Some of those things that are now in Lincoln Center were previously at MoMA.

SZ: Did that ever cause any bad feelings?

MW: No.

SZ: Because I just remember hearing something a long time ago about the collection being taken into the Museum Collections, then it wasn't shown properly, or....

MW: No, it's that later the Lincoln Center library came into existence and it was a natural place for it because they, being a new library, had better facilities for handling it....

SZ: You said he [Lincoln Kirstein] was very close to Nelson Rockefeller.

MW: Very. They were good friends because Kirstein is a fascinating man and Nelson immensely enjoyed his company and admired what he was doing. When Nelson became governor, he gave a ball at the governor's residence in Albany and invited the entire ballet company to come and dance, which they did. They were always close friends.

SZ: Has Kirstein always been closely involved with the Museum?

MW: Always, because he knew Mrs. Rockefeller through Nelson and he advised Mrs. Rockefeller about the personnel in the early days, in the first days of The Museum of Modern Art, with Conger Goodyear, who was the first president. The first manager of The Museum of Modern Art was a man named Thomas Mabry, who was a school friend of Lincoln Kirstein's and had been to Europe with him when they were students, in the early days. Mabry later met and married Ethel Haven, who was a member of the Junior [Advisory] Committee Mrs. Rockefeller had set up to bring younger people into the Museum administration.

SZ: Kirstein and Cartier-Bresson, are they good friends?

MW: Yes. They're lunching here next week.

SZ: Right.

MW: Yes, because they worked on this early show, which you'll find documented in the Museum Archives.

SZ: Will you describe Kirstein for me a little bit, what kind of a person he is?

MW: Well, he's a giant.

SZ: You mean that figuratively.

MW: Figuratively. [LAUGHTER] In many ways. But, of course, he's also...I can remember very well when I was living in Paris in the early '30s and Kirstein, whom I'd known in New York, came to see me in Paris and told me that he wanted to start a ballet company in New York and asked me what I thought of the idea. I told him that he should certainly do it and I also suggested to him, as others may have done too, that he get George Balanchine to start the company, and he did just that. He offered Balanchine the job, which Balanchine accepted, and he came to New York.... New

York didn't agree with him at first, and the first thing that happened after he arrived in New York to create the ballet company was that he developed tuberculosis. I remember inquiring among my friends who should be his doctor. I forget the name of the man now, but he cured him.

SZ: So Kirstein is a giant.

MW: Well, in every way, because he's a prodigious writer and there is in this bookcase here a bibliography, published by Yale, of all his writings, and it's really phenomenal. He's never stopped writing and, fortunately for us, every morning, after an early breakfast, he set to work writing and before other people had even arisen he had written many paragraphs. Of course, he had many predilections and his favorite artist, when I first met him, was Gaston Lachaise, and he was doing everything he could to promote Lachaise. Then, after that, came Elie Nadelman; he did a big book on Nadelman, a magnificent book, which was published by Leslie Katz, The Aikins Press, superbly produced in Italy. That was one of the reasons for my interest and fondness for Lincoln, his interest in writing and publishing. In those early days Lincoln would drive to Northampton, Massachusetts every weekend where his sister had a farm, a beautiful farm, and Lincoln and I would sleep in what is a little adjunct to the farm which she called the blacksmith's shop, and that was for Lincoln and me. We slept there and there was no central heating and it was up there in northern Massachusetts [LAUGHING]. I'd never been so cold in my life, except once, when I went to visit a friend who was at Oxford, where there was also no central heating, just a little, tiny grate in the side of the room. Who was the French writer who got the Nobel Prize? Well, in any case, he was deeply attached to Lincoln Kirstein's sister, Minna, and he used to come up there for weekends too.... She had married a very nice man who...was a member of an old New England family that manufactured sporting goods; he was a very nice man, and then he proceeded to die of tuberculosis. What finally put an end to tuberculosis?

SZ: Penicillin.

MW: Of course. Well, this was all in the pre-penicillin days. Well, Lincoln's sister, teaching at Smith, became a close friend of the president of Smith, and he used to come up to Minna's home for Sunday lunch. His name was [William Allen] Neilson. He was a very popular president of Smith and he became a great admirer of Edgar Wynd, who Nielson employed as a professor of art at Smith College; he went from there to Oxford, and he became the first professor of the history of art in the history of Oxford, and stayed there until he died. After his death, his wife continued to live at Oxford and I believe she's still there. He was a fascinating man, Edgar Wynd, a wonderful talker. I once got him to give a series of lectures on modern art, including Picasso, at MoMA, which were immensely popular and, when the series began, people didn't know anything about him. The first lecture was very sparsely attended, but by the last lecture we had to turn people away. He had the same success at Oxford later on. When I asked him to do a series of lectures at MoMA, I specified that he should give us the text for publication, but he was so self-critical about the text that he could never agree to finish it and the lectures never appeared; but he did write a number of books. He began in Germany as a professor of Renaissance art and I first heard him speak at a meeting of the College Art Association. I think he was talking about Michelangelo. Anyway, I was tremendously impressed and asked him then if he would lecture at The Museum of Modern Art...

SZ: There's one other good friend of yours that you brought into the Museum to do similar kinds of things and that's Marianne Moore, right?

MW: Yes. Well, that's because she was a close personal friend whom I met when I first came to New York, before I went to the Museum and before I went to Europe. I met Marianne Moore through my Chicago poet friends, including Harriet Monroe, and when I came to New York from Chicago I was given letters of introduction and one of them was to Marianne Moore. I also met...Gilbert Seldes; he was the assistant editor of The Dial--so was Marianne Moore in the early days. I became a close friend of Marianne Moore and her mother, who was an enchanting lady and highly literate, and they entertained me frequently in their apartment in St. Luke's Place. Marianne was working in the New York Public Library branch which was across the street from

the little flat they had, and I frequently dined with them. Then, years later, when I went to The Museum of Modern Art, I naturally took Marianne to everything that happened there and I can remember her urging me to have an exhibition of the paintings of e. e. cummings, which she liked. She was very fond of cummings and I was, too, but I was not as enthusiastic about his painting as she was, but she never gave up trying to have an exhibition of cummings's work at MoMA.

SZ: And it never happened.

MW: It never happened, but cummings's wife was a good friend of mine. Her name was Marion Morehouse, and she was the star fashion model for Vogue magazine, and all the photographers admired her because she was such a superb model. Steichen favored her, and so did George Platt Lynes. We all used to see each other because we all knew the fashion editors, like Carmel Snow. But they all, in connection with their own business, paid close attention to everything that went on at The Museum of Modern Art and were always featuring, in their editorial pages, whatever we did and that's why we were all so close to each other. Lola Ridge was a friend of Mary Ann's and all the rest of us, and she was part of the Greenwich Village of those days, and she used to give parties to which we were all invited. She was a poet, too. I don't know whether her poetry has survived or not. And William Carlos Williams we all knew, and I published a little pamphlet of William Carlos Williams's poems which I have still in this apartment.

SZ: That was long ago, not through the Museum, right?

MW: Yes, before I worked at the Museum. I knew William Carlos Williams through Marianne Moore and Gilbert Seldes....

SZ: Do you want to go on a little more or are you tired for today? You've had enough.

MW: I think we've had enough for today, don't you?

SZ: Yes. Thank you.

END TAPE 7, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 8, SIDE 1

SZ: Could you tell me...about your going to France to get some works for the [Henri] Matisse exhibition that he was at one time unwilling to lend?

MW: That must have been in 1951?

SZ: Yes.

MW: I'm trying to think what the problem was.

SZ: I believe, from what I've read, he just was going to withhold some major works that he had in his own collection.

MW: That's right. Alfred Barr had been working on the Matisse exhibition. He had been to Paris, seen Matisse, told him which of the pictures in Matisse's own collection he would need for this great exhibition that he'd been working on for years, and he was given Matisse's consent to lend pictures. He came back to New York to complete the exhibition and confirm the list of pictures that he wanted and in reply he received a letter saying that the pictures would not be available. This astonished and deeply distressed him. He couldn't understand it. I was going to Paris and Nelson Rockefeller, who was also distressed by the refusal that Alfred had received, said to me, "Well, you're the old trouble-shooter. Why don't you see Matisse and see what

can be done?" I wrote to Matisse and told him that I was coming to see him. When I arrived in his bedroom, because he was bedridden at the time, in his huge apartment, I remembered that Matisse had been delighted by a dinner that Mrs. Rockefeller had given for him when he came to New York--not New York, when he came to Philadelphia to see [Albert C.] Barnes about the.... What do you call the arch window?

SZ: Vitrine? You mean the windows that he did for the chapel at Vence?

MW: Yes, but there's a word for it, a common word.... Anyway, he was stopping in New York on his way back from the Barnes' and Mrs. Rockefeller gave a dinner party for him to which her husband [John D., Jr.] also came.

SZ: So Matisse enjoyed that party.

MW: He did, because he never forgot the beautiful girls whom Mrs. Rockefeller had especially invited for him, and one of them was Mrs. [Eliza Bliss] Parkinson.

SZ: And Matisse enjoyed beautiful women?

MW: Exactly. So when I arrived in Matisse's bedroom I began by talking to him about Mrs. Rockefeller, and his evening with her all came back to him and he expressed the greatest delight in having been there. He told about having tried to persuade Mr. Rockefeller of the importance of modern art, which he had been dubious about; but as we talked, he asked me where I was staying and I said I was staying at St. Jean-Cap Ferrat with Somerset Maugham, whom I had known for some time.

SZ: From your Paris days?

MW: I knew him both in Paris and on the Riviera.... Matisse expressed surprise and said, "As you see, I'm bedridden, but do you think you could bring Mr. Maugham to see me, because I tremendously admired and enjoyed his South Sea stories?" I said I

would ask him, and so the next time I was seeing Matisse I asked Maugham if he'd like to go with me, and to my delight, he said he would, and he did.

SZ: Did they get on?

MW: But it was not altogether successful because Maugham was one of those writers...who does not enjoy rereading what he's written, and Matisse wanted to talk about the South Seas. Maugham was not interested any longer in the South Seas, but Maugham did tell Matisse which of his pictures, Matisse's pictures, Maugham owned, and to Maugham's astonishment, Matisse recalled in the greatest detail the pictures that he owned although it had been a very long time since Matisse had seen them. They are mentioned in a book that Matisse wrote later called Purely For My Pleasure. Well, the interview was a success because of Matisse's phenomenal visual memory.

SZ: And he agreed to lend the works?

MW: Yes. It was due to these two incidents: my refreshing Matisse's memory about Mrs. Rockefeller and the coincidence about Somerset Maugham. I was told later that the reason he canceled the loans was that in the interim a group of German museums had combined to have a big retrospective Matisse show in Germany and that Matisse had been persuaded that it would be more important for him to have a big show in Germany than a big show in New York. But I was able to describe to Matisse the lengths to which the Museum had gone to prepare this great exhibition, and Matisse at one point in our interview said, "Well, come back and we'll discuss it again." And when I came back he said, "Now tell me what you want," and I told him the things that we wanted. First were the loan of the pictures, the loan that he had canceled, and second, I wanted him to design a cover for Alfred Barr's book, which we were publishing at the time of the opening of the exhibition. There was a third thing that I wanted which had to do with the publication too. Each time I mentioned what I wanted, he would lift both hands like a priest giving benediction and lower his hands, saying, "Accordé," and that was the end of it, and everything went smoothly

thereafter. I have here in this apartment a copy of the book inscribed to me by Matisse.

SZ: He was bedridden at that time so didn't visit. Had he ever visited the Museum previously?

MW: I'm not sure.

SZ: Was he a great friend of the Museum, would you say?

MW: Only through his son, Pierre, who was always a good friend of the Museum.

SZ: Was that your first and only meeting with him?

MW: Oh, no. No, no. I met him first in Paris when he was living in the boulevard Montparnesse.

SZ: Now, the other exhibition-related story that I was hoping you'd relate to me was on the Turner exhibition [Turner: Imagination and Reality, 1966], which I know it took you sixteen years to see to fruition.

MW: Yes, that's true. Well, the British were very slow to cooperate on the Turner exhibition and I could never understand why they were so reluctant to lend; but I finally met a man named Lawrence Gowing who was in charge of the Turner pictures which belonged to the Tate Gallery, and the Tate finally decided to participate. We had considerable difficulty financing the Turner exhibition.

SZ: Why was that?

MW: Because although many of the British felt it would be a great advantage to Great Britain to send Turners to New York, which had not been done before, there was a problem of financing. In those days, it was before governments participated in the

cost of the insurance and the cost of insurance kept increasing; with every delay the insurance rates would rise. They finally decided to send the pictures by ship accompanied by Lawrence Gowing, the Tate curator who had been given responsibility for the British Government's participation. It all went extremely well because Gowing was a brilliant scholar and wrote the text for the catalog. Later he was made.... What was his job afterward?

SZ: After the Tate?

MW: Yes.... And I believe that he is only recently retired. He was made the director of one of the provincial art museums.

SZ: But it was only with his coming that you really managed to get the loans?

MW: Yes.

SZ: Having the Turner exhibition was your idea, is that not right?

MW: Yes. Mine and Bill Seitz's. Bill Seitz was on our staff--William C. Seitz. He was at Princeton but he also worked for us. He was the one who did our great Monet exhibition [Claude Monet: Seasons and Moments, 1960]. That was directed by Seitz, and when he was doing that he and I talked a great deal about Turner, because it was an exhibition that he wanted very much and he helped me promote it.

SZ: Did you meet any resistance in proposing it?

MW: The resistance was really financial. That is because the cost of the exhibition, the valuation of the pictures, kept rising every month as the British would keep having them reappraised and the value would go up and the cost of the insurance would go up.

SZ: What about the issue of whether Turner qualified as modern art? Was that ever

raised or discussed?

MW: Yes, by Gowing himself in his introduction to the exhibition in his catalog.

SZ: No, I was thinking more as the exhibition was proposed and as you were trying to put it together.

MW: Well, you see, to many people Turner seemed a modern painter. To Gowing and to our own great painter...you know the man. Many people think he was the greatest American painter....

SZ: I keep thinking of Jackson Pollock....

MW: Of equal importance. The other greatest American painter. [LAUGHING] There are two of them.... There was tremendous legal....

SZ: Oh, [Mark] Rothko.

WM: Rothko.... Rothko took the greatest interest in the Turner exhibition, and so when we were installing it I asked him to come down to see it and he made the strangest remark. He said, "You see, Monroe, I did it all first." And, actually, he [Turner] was about one hundred and fifty years earlier. But there had been Americans interested in Turner at the beginning, including a man at the New York Public Library who bought two Turners, which were in the New York Public Library at the time for a Turner exhibition, and there was also a magnificent one called The Burning of the Houses of Parliament at the Philadelphia Museum [of Art] which Philadelphia refused to lend to our Turner exhibition.

SZ: What was your feeling about the exhibition?

MW: Well, I couldn't stay away from it. I went to it every day it was on. It aroused amazing enthusiasm in every corner of the art world, because Turner had been so little

known. When we first decided to have the Turner exhibition I asked Kenneth Clark, whom I had known previously, about it, and he said, "Well, if you're going to work as a codirector of the exhibition, you should first see every one of the nineteen thousand drawings and watercolors which Turner left to the nation, as I have done," and I said, "Oh, I don't think I could ever do that." "Oh, yes," he said. "It will take you two weeks but it will be well worth the trouble." So I rented a room in a small hotel behind the British Museum, where the drawings were stored, where the drawings and watercolors were stored, and went and spent every day there looking at the works, because Gowing had said, "We're doing the exhibition together and I would like to select the paintings but I would like you to select the watercolors and drawings," which I did.

SZ: And how long did it take you to go through nineteen thousand drawings and watercolors?

MW: Just a few weeks, because I did nothing else.

SZ: Was this your favorite exhibition from all your years at MoMA, would you say?

MW: Well, it's strange that my favorite exhibition, which in many ways it was, should have been of an artist who was not a modern artist at all. I don't know whether, according to attendance figures, the Turner show was the most popular show we ever had. I think it may have been.

SZ: It was until Picasso?

MW: Until Picasso, yes. And Turner wanted to have the government to which he left everything establish a Turner museum, and it's taken until now for that to occur, and they've just opened the new Turner museum, adjoining the Tate.

SZ: Well, the last thing I had on my list of things, other than the Barr/d'Harnoncourt situation, was the fire and what you recall of that day and then the aftermath. Where

were you when you...

MW: I was in my office on the fifth floor overlooking the garden when the superintendent of the building--no, my first indication of it was when I smelled smoke in the corridor of my building and soon after that the superintendent of the building appeared in my office and said, "There's nothing to worry about. It's all under control." His name was Bob Faeth.

SZ: This is during working hours, right?

MW: Yes.... Everybody was in the building and then smoke began rising in the staircase and we realized that it was a serious matter, and I went down the staircase.

SZ: Which staircase?

MW: It was not the main staircase.

SZ: One of the interior ones.

MW: Yes, and when I got downstairs Nelson Rockefeller was already there.

SZ: He'd been summoned? Somebody had called him?

MW: Yes. His office was at Rockefeller Center, of course.

SZ: So they left everybody in their offices even though there was a major fire going on.

MW: Well, people were finding their way out and then standing on the sidewalk on 53rd Street.

SZ: It was very smoky?

MW: Oh, of course there was a lot of smoke. The fire had started, they said, by someone throwing a... The second floor was being remodeled, and it was said that someone had thrown a rag saturated with paint onto a refuse pile and that's the way the fire started.

SZ: Spontaneous combustion?

MW: Well, there must have been something to ignite....

SZ: I think there was a report that maybe a worker had been smoking in the galleries...

MW: Perhaps.

SZ: So you got down there and Mr. Rockefeller was there already, on the second floor?

MW: Yes. The great problem was the Seurat Grande Jatte, which was on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago; I remember how amazed we all were at how quickly Dan Rich, the director of the Art Institute of Chicago, arrived on the scene, but the picture was removed to safety. There was also a [Georges] Braque exhibition at the time, and the Museum employees were marvelous in the rapidity with which they removed all the Braque paintings from the Museum to the garden under the leadership of Dorothy Dudley, who was then the registrar at the Museum.

SZ: So there was a great deal of frantic moving around when you got downstairs?

MW: Well...nobody but the fire force and the staff were allowed into the Museum at the time.

SZ: Now, there's an old story that Mr. Rockefeller went in and actually rescued a painting or two himself.

MW: He helped. Yes, he did.

SZ: It must have been a very traumatic day.

MW: Frightful. Worst day of my life. Imagine having the Grande Jatte....

SZ: Was it the painting that suffered some damage? One or two were destroyed I know.

MW: Yes, they were. A [Candido] Portinari was destroyed that was on exhibition. Portinari was the Latin American painter. At the time they were putting up a Portinari mural at the United Nations. In any case, Portinari was in public view at the time and Portinari came up here with his wife and little son and he is now, I believe, just considered the greatest Brazilian painter.

END TAPE 8, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 8, SIDE 2

SZ: Finish the sequence of the fire, if you can. So a lot of things were taken out into the garden and the fire was put out.

MW: Yes, it was brought under control very quickly, but the great loss was that when the renovation of the second floor was begun...we had put the large paintings, before the fire, we had put the large paintings in the walls, and when the fire occurred, the walls behind which a painting had been put for safety caught fire, and that's how the paintings were lost.

SZ: Somebody died, too, in the fire.

MW: One man died.

SZ: It must have been terrible.

MW: From smoke asphyxiation, I think....

SW: Shall we stop? Are you tired?

MW: Well, I seem to have run out of stuff.

SZ: Okay.

MW: I wanted to say something about Henry Allen Moe. He was the president of the Guggenheim Foundation and he was very close to Olga Guggenheim, who was one of our greatest benefactors. It's rather interesting how she came into the Museum.... Her husband was Mr. Simon [Guggenheim's] brother, and one Sunday afternoon she had been to see an exhibition of the embryo[nic] [Solomon R.] Guggenheim Museum, which was in temporary quarters on 54th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues, and she went to this exhibition of these paintings that Mr. Guggenheim had acquired, and then she went from there to see what was going on in The Museum of Modern Art. She found the Guggenheim Museum empty and The Museum of Modern Art was crowded, and she was so impressed by the interest and enthusiasm of the young people at The Museum of Modern Art that a few days later she went to Alfred Barr, who was director, and said she would like to do something for the Museum and that she would like to give a very important work of art. She did this and it would be interesting to say which pictures she gave as a result of that visit to the empty Guggenheim Museum [LAUGHING].... I think it was one every year because she told me that her husband had left her some money which she did not need and she wanted to give this money to The Museum of Modern Art.

SZ: She didn't get into trouble with her brother-in-law?

MW: No. There were seven brothers. I knew the brother-in-law [Simon Guggenheim]. I had met him in Charleston, South Carolina, where he had an estate and, at that

time...I can't remember how we'd got there, but I remember motoring in Charleston with Somerset Maugham. Oh, I do remember. Nelson Doubleday had built a very comfortable bungalow on his estate for Somerset Maugham, who was here during the war, and Maugham had invited me to stay with him in South Carolina. I remember Nelson Doubleday's estate was called Yamasee.... [It was] near Charleston, and I had friends named Cottenet who had a house in Charleston. I remember motoring with Somerset Maugham from Yamasee to Charleston to lunch with the Cottenets, and it was at that time that I met Mr. Guggenheim.

SZ: Simon Guggenheim.

MW: Simon Guggenheim. We became friends and a little later, when he had decided to build the Guggenheim Museum with Frank Lloyd Wright, he asked me to lunch with Frank Lloyd Wright at his huge apartment that, I think, was on the second floor of the Plaza Hotel, where he kept his own collection. His idea of inviting me to lunch with Wright was that I should apprise Mr. Wright of some of the problems that he would face in museum construction, and we lunched together.

SZ: Oh, because you had been through the 1939....

MW: Well, from the beginning of the building of our building. Yes, the whole thing, and I can remember Mr. Guggenheim asking me questions about museums and what problems they would have, and Wright wasn't in the least interested in any of it. He knew the answers to every question before it was asked.

SZ: He was an architect.

MW: Yes, exactly. So as far as Mr. Guggenheim was concerned, the interview amounted to nothing.

SZ: That's a nice story.

MW: Quoi d'autre, as the French would say. What else? Oh, I said I wanted to mention Mr. Henry Allen Moe. He was on our board and he really represented Mrs. Simon Guggenheim on our board. They were very close friends and we often met together, but Mr. Moe not only figured importantly in our relation with Mrs. Guggenheim as a donor of major pictures and sculptures to our collection, but he also was very much interested in photography. When we needed a new director for our Department of Photography to succeed Edward Steichen, Mr. Moe, because of his connections through his foundation with various institutions, took it upon himself to help us find a new director for the photography department to succeed Steichen. It was he, I believe, who discovered John Szarkowski, who did indeed become the next director of our Department of Photography and proved an excellent choice. That's what I wanted to say.

SZ: Thank you.

END TAPE 8, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 9, SIDE 1

SZ: Could you reminisce a little about two exhibitions that were put on, I guess in the last half of your tenure at the Modern? One was The Family of Man, which opened in 1955, which was one of the most popular exhibitions, I believe, if not the most popular ever to be held at the Modern. You had had some memories of it and thoughts about it which I hoped you'd share.

MW: Well, Steichen was an amazing man. He'd had this long and brilliant career in photography before the war, and when the war came, the Navy wanted him to supervise the photography of their forces in the Pacific, and he worked on the big ships and did some amazing photography, and he continued it for years. The photographs were so extraordinary that we decided to have an exhibition of them--I believe it was called Power in the Pacific. He threw himself into the exhibition.... I persuaded my friend Herbert Beyer to direct the installation and he had brilliant ideas. He built a ramp that people walked along and from the ramp looked down on enlargements of the important photographs. Photographs had never been shown in that way before.... It delighted the public. What was the sequence of those exhibitions? Was The Family of Man the last one? Yes, it was.

SZ: Yes, in 1955....

MW: Well, of course The Family of Man was by far the most spectacular because

Steichen wanted to show the greatest art photographs that he could find from around that subject, The Family of Man, which I think he conceived with his brother-in-law, Carl Sandburg. He persuaded Carl Sandburg to write the captions that were placed on the photographs when they were exhibited...Carl Sandburg had been an old friend of mine from Chicago, the early days of my youth in Chicago, and to write his captions he just came to my office and said that he wanted to take possession of it to do his work there, and he moved in a typewriter and sat down and he wrote, himself, all the captions for The Family of Man.

SZ: In your office.

MW: In my office. That was a wonderful experience, because we, by that time, knew each other very well.... Mrs. Rockefeller was immensely impressed by the Steichen shows, and I can't remember which one it was that she was determined that her husband [John D., Jr.] , who did not like The Museum of Modern Art, should see.

SZ: Right. Road to Victory, I think that one was.

MW: Road to Victory, yes. I've told you that, have I?

SZ: Yes.

MW: Yes. Well, you can switch that around to Road to Victory.

SZ: Why do you think that The Family of Man exhibition was so popular?

MW: Well, there was a tremendous human...he [Steichen] struck a human chord that moved everyone. That was something that he worked out with Carl Sandburg. They worked it out together, and nobody could resist it. I remember, at that time, we persuaded Eliza Parkinson to give a party at her apartment for Carl Sandburg and he came and sang. He had the most extraordinary, beautiful baritone voice. He gave concerts all around the country. Anyway, he came to a party for MoMA at Eliza's and

everyone was thrilled by his voice.

SZ: What did he sing? Did he sing Schubert?

MW: No, he didn't sing Schubert. They were mostly folk songs, which he'd always loved. They must be on records. I must inquire into that.

SZ: And the other exhibition we were talking about a bit last time, which you have a very interesting story about, was the exhibition of the [Marc] Chagall windows and how they got there, and the problems of putting that show together and the dream you had in connection with it [Chagall--The Jerusalem Windows, 1961].

MW: Well, I had known Chagall very well during the war here, when he lived here, and had seen a good deal of him. He was very fond of New York and had a lot of friends here and then later, after he'd returned to Europe, he became interested in working in stained glass with, I believe, a Belgian glassmaker. There was a group of Hebrew ladies in New York called Hadassah and they were involved in building a hospital, I believe, in Jerusalem. They persuaded Chagall to make, to design, stained glass windows to be made by this Belgian glassmaker especially for this hospital in Jerusalem and when they were done they were shown in Paris at the Louvre. They were so effective that we wanted to show them at The Museum of Modern Art. I'd seen them in Paris.... The problem was that we had other exhibitions scheduled and there was a limited time when these windows were available before they were shipped to Jerusalem. Our problem was that we did not have any space available for these windows and this worried me very much. While I was worrying about whether or not we'd be able to accommodate these splendid windows, I had a dream that I had seen them installed all around the main staircase of the Museum. The next morning, I told René d'Harnoncourt about my dream and he said, "Well, let's measure," and so we got the superintendent and the staff and we measured all the available space and decided that it would be possible to fit them in--I think there were about a dozen of them--around the main staircase, and there would be, I think, three or four left over that we could install in the adjoining space on the north side of the

third floor. So we could fit them in, and we held the exhibition. It was an immense success, and Chagall was delighted to have them shown in New York and he came over for them [the show]. He was one of the most lovable of all the artists.

SZ: Why was that?

MW: His temperament. His interest in everything that went on.

SZ: Who was among the least lovable?

MW: I'll have to think about it, because there were so many. [LAUGHTER] There are so many. I saw a great deal of [Georges] Rouault. He was fascinating because he was a great raconteur. Do you want me to tell you now about going to dine with him?

SZ: Certainly.

MW: I had seen him and his daughter a couple of times and then they invited me to dine at his apartment. There was some misunderstanding about the time of the dinner. I think they invited me to come at eight.

SZ: Where was this?

MW: Rouault's apartment in Paris.... He was carefully attended by his daughter, Isabelle, who is also a painter. Anyway, they invited me to come to dine one night at 8:00 and I thought that that meant an 8:00 dinner and I went prepared to have dinner. When I arrived, Rouault was sitting in the living room all dressed as if for a wedding, with stiff white cuffs, and he was seated at a table looking at a large volume of reproductions of William Blake. I was working on the Rouault show at the time and I proceeded to ask him a few questions, and every one turned on a lever that reminded him of the life that he had lived at the time that he did those pictures and the problems that he had with Ambroise Vollard, who was his publisher and who worked with him on his huge aquatints that he was making at the time. I knew Vollard, too, and he was so

exigent in the quality that he desired to obtain from Rouault that he worked with him almost every day in order to keep him producing. At the time, Rouault felt that he had been victimized, but eventually I think he got over that and realized that Vollard was a very great man in his own right. I've just thought of a link between Chagall and Rouault because I had a friend in New York who had been to Vollard's funeral--he was killed in an accident in Paris--and this friend who had attended Vollard's funeral had been standing with Picasso, who was also there, and Picasso had said to him, "Regardez, il n'y a qu'un qui pleure"--only one person is crying--and pointed at Chagall. I visited Vollard in his apartment where he lived, where the Cézannes were stacked against the walls by the dozens. All of his favorite painters were there in the apartment in quantity. He was very kind to me and I was, at the time, enamored of these prints that he was making, and I think one [of the] earliest shows at the Museum, was of the prints of Georges Rouault which had not been shown in New York elsewhere, and Rouault helped me with that exhibition. Now, I remember showing them to...what is the name of that splendid movie actor who collected art? He had a beautiful collection which he lost when he divorced his wife.... Edward G. Robinson. I remember showing the Rouault prints to him. He had not seen them. What he did about them I can't remember, but I know that he lost his collection which had to be sold to divide his resources with his wife, and his collection was bought by...[Aristotle] Onassis. And I saw it later at Onassis' home in Paris.

SZ: The one part of this story that you didn't complete was you were telling me about this dinner invitation at Rouault's. Well, first you said he was a great raconteur, and then...to dinner?

MW: Who?

SZ: Rouault.

MW: Oh, yes.

SZ: And you were telling me that you went to dinner, and you got the time wrong.

MW: Well, I just misunderstood. From Rouault's point of view, I was simply invited to spend the evening with Rouault and not invited to dinner so I arrived undined [LAUGHING] and found him sitting at this table all dressed up for a wedding.

SZ: To just talk.

MW: Exactly. And then his daughter, Isabelle, took her place at a--what do you call it?--a stenotype machine in the corner of the living room, a small living room, and there she worked until 11:00, typing or stenotyping every word that her father said. His talk that evening was mostly about his anguish about working with Vollard, but Vollard got what he wanted and poor Rouault thought of himself as a victim.

SZ: But you said that that wasn't really true.

MW: No. I think Rouault obviously was taking satisfaction in what he was doing.

SZ: What was Vollard's reputation?

MW: Well, as the greatest dealer of his day. If you wanted a Cézanne you had to get it from Vollard, but he was very well known to all the artists, Vollard, because he used to give little suppers in his gallery. I think it was on the ground floor, I mean the basement of his gallery, that he would give dinner parties and invite the artists, chiefly, but also some collectors. Robert Miller, the New York collector, has recently taken enlarged galleries at the corner of 57th Street and Madison Avenue and has had a restaurant built into these new quarters for the entertainment of his clients, as Vollard did in the early days.

SZ: You said you liked Chagall very much. Who else, of the artists that you knew did you particularly like?

MW: Well, many of the artists who came here during the war. [Fernand] Léger was one of

them, and I enjoyed him immensely. Braque I knew in Paris and I remember going to a performance of the Viennese opera of *Così fan tutte* with Braque and his wife. After the performance, Braque took us to a cafe in Montmartre that he had frequented in his youth. [It] was a popular rendezvous of prizefighters. Braque had been a boxer in his youth and he knew everybody in this café in Montmartre, every one of them, and they were all prizefighters. I was delighted by the admixture of Mozart and prizefighters. There was a famous Spanish dancer who used to come to Paris when I lived there. What was her name?

SZ: I can't help you with that.

MW: Famous, famous, famous.

SZ: Was she a flamenco dancer?

MW: I don't think it was flamenco but she was immensely popular with the Parisians. Well, I can find out. I can ask her name because everybody knew her and admired her and I remember I was taken to one of her performances at Theatre Champs Elysees by a French lady. We sat in a box and when the performance was over she said, "Ça me fait mal aux jambes"--in other words, the agility of the dancer made her legs ache....
[LAUGHING]

SZ: You knew [Pavel] Tchelitchew quite well, right?

MW: Yes, very well. He was particularly entrancing because of his use of the English language. It was most imaginative. He had ideas on every subject and he always expressed himself in a highly amusing way.

SZ: Did he not speak English particularly well?

MW: Well, he was one of those people who was very sensitive to the response of his auditors to his imperfect English and he rather exaggerated the imperfections of his

English in order to amuse his listeners. But that brings up James Thrall Soby, who was one of the early admirers of Tchelitchew and who introduced Tchelitchew to Alfred Barr. Alfred Barr was not particularly keen about Tchelitchew in the beginning, although he recognized that he was a brilliant craftsman. But it was, finally, I think, Soby's influence upon Alfred Barr that persuaded Alfred Barr to ask Mrs. [Simon] Guggenheim if she would buy, for The Museum of Modern Art, his greatest picture, which was called Hide-and-Seek, and I think she did. Did I tell you about Mrs. Guggenheim and her brother-in-law's museum?

SZ: Yes.... The one person that you really haven't talked about is Soby.

MW: Soby was the most lovable [person] who ever came to the Museum, and he was a man who had this overpowering passion for modern art. He helped us, particularly with, well, you can say all of the exhibitions which he personally directed for us. He was very close to Alfred Barr and he wrote a whole string of books for MoMA in relation, chiefly, to the exhibitions which he directed. Alfred greatly admired the Italian Futurists and that led us to schedule an exhibition.... Their interest in Italian art was mutual, and when we did an Italian show, Alfred and Jim Soby, together, went to Italy to see what was there and to assemble the exhibition.

END TAPE 9, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 9, SIDE 2

MW: ...and we had the good fortune to have the assistance of an Italian, one of the few Italians who was particularly enthusiastic about the contemporary art of his own country. His name was Romeo Toninelli, and he helped us finance the exhibition in New York--he came over here for it--and he also helped us negotiate with the Italian collectors, most of whom lived in Milano at the time. Now what was her name? We had some opposition on that exhibition from a lady who was the director of the Brera in Milano...what was her name? It's all over the place. Because, at the time of the exhibition, she came over to give a lecture at the Museum on the restoration of

Leonardo's Last Supper, which they'd been working on for years because it had been in terrible condition. The paint was actually falling off the picture like cornflakes.

SZ: Why was she in opposition to this exhibition?

MW: Because she hadn't been asked to do it herself. She was extremely dynamic and she was a friend of all the collectors. The collectors had agreed to lend to us for our exhibition, and she disapproved of this because she had been left out of the selection. She felt [that], of all the people in Italy, she was the one most qualified to select the works for the show in New York. We didn't agree with that. What she had done was to persuade her friends among the collectors to withdraw their loans.

SZ: So did that happen?

MW: It did, and I went over and who was the man? He was the collector who was the head of the great electricity [company] in Italy. Fura. He was a collector who had withdrawn his loans, and so I went to Milano and visited the sculptor. What's the name of the great Italian sculptor?

SZ: Brancusi?

MW: Not Brancusi....

SZ: [Alberto] Giacometti.

MW: No, another. I knew them all. I was talking with Cartier-Bresson the other day about Giacometti, whom he knew extremely well. Who is the sculptor? Marino Marini.

SZ: Oh, Marini. Of course.

MW: Marino Marini had been a friend of mine and he decided to help me in this situation with Fura and the director of the Brera. What he did to help the situation was to give

a party in his studio for all the people involved, including the people who had refused to lend, but he said that prior to that I should get the support of Fura, because everybody had great respect for him at the time. I couldn't locate Fura, and then I saw that he had developed some opposition among one of the labor unions that had put up posters around Milan saying "Kill Fura." But I succeeded in locating him and invited him to dinner at a restaurant that had been recommended to me and that I had been to several times. I can't remember the name now. But Fura was, at the time, one of the most important people in Italy, and he picked me up at my hotel and we went together to the restaurant. When we arrived, the maître d'hôtel, who by that time knew me, greeted me very cordially and apparently didn't know Fura at all. Anyway, during the dinner he agreed that Italy should have this show in New York and that he would do what he could to help me; and then I discovered that Fura was at that time having a romance with the director of the Brera....

SZ: So you stepped right in the middle of that?

MW: I did. So, thanks to Fura, he helped me make a rendezvous with the director of the Brera, and so I went to a florist and found a huge flowering tree in full blossom in the shop and I arranged for them to have it delivered to the office of the director of the Brera at the exact moment that I had a rendezvous with her. I must say, it had some effect. Then the famous meeting with Marino Marini took place and they all came and at that time peace was made, thanks to Fura. I think I've run dry.

SZ: Okay. Let's stop today. That's a great story.

END TAPE 9, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: OCTOBER 5, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 10, SIDE 1

MW: I was about to tell you about reading the manuscript of E. M. Forster's Maurice.

SZ: Oh, Maurice.

MW: Yes. Well, however we pronounce it.

SZ: Well, I'm sure that you pronounce it more correctly than I.

MW: Well, I think that Maurice...is pronounced "Morris"--Maurice. In the early days it was [pronounced] "Morris."

SZ: In French it would be Maurice, right?

MW: Maurice, of course, is the French pronunciation, but I think Forster called it "Morris." It was a very early novel and he didn't want it published in England, and so after a delay of about forty years he decided to give the manuscript to his dear friend Christopher Isherwood, to be published in the United States, and once when I was in England he asked me if I would take the manuscript to Christopher and give it to him to be published in the United States and I brought it to him and he gave it to an agent to be sold for Christopher's benefit and the agent sold it for....

SZ: So he sold it?

MW: The agent sold it for, I believe, \$135,000. Forster wanted the proceeds to go to a young English writer and, I believe, the National Institute of Arts and Letters arranged that.

SZ: Which young English writer? Do you know?

MW: No. I can't remember his name but I could find out from Miss Mills.

SZ: Was he a friend of yours, Forster?

MW: Yes. I met him in London. I knew a lady in London who lived in the town in England where Forster's mother lived and it was she who introduced me to him. What was her name? She knew Forster, I believe, in Rome, had met him in Rome.

SZ: Have you been to see the movie yet?

MW: No. I want to see it but with my arthritis it's not easy. You haven't seen it, have you?

SZ: No, not yet.

MW: People seem to like it.

SZ: Are you a fan of the Merchant/Ivory films in general?

MW: Well, I haven't really kept up to date with them but they're much admired.... I went to the city of India that Forster wrote about....

SZ: When was that? Was that the same trip when you went to, where was it, Singapore?

MW: No. My brother's just been to Singapore. No, I was there long ago when I went with

Sam and Florene Marx [Schoenborn]. She's coming to the dinner on Wednesday at the Museum, her husband having recently died, and we've just installed the Matisses that she gave to the Museum. It was done by Bill Rubin. He's directing the show on Wednesday.

SZ: So you were with them and you went to India. Was that a museum trip or a pleasure trip?

MW: It was a pleasure trip. Florene Schoenborn's brother wanted to go on a safari to India, a tiger hunt, actually, and Florene and her brother and her husband and I all went together, although the brother was the only one who shot a tiger. Those tiger hunts in India were rather commercialized and they had been arranged to--what do you call it when you get the tigers in order so they can be shot?

SZ: I don't know. Do you mean where it's set up?

MW: Yes, they set it up and manage to drive the tigers past a certain place where they can be shot. I never found that idea very sympathetic. But I was interested in seeing the temples and Forster was too. Some of the temples were in this place that Forster wrote about.

SZ: How long ago was that that you went to India? Was it before the Second World War? No.

MW: I think it was after. I've got, somewhere, some notes that might interest you that I jotted down from time to time. I think they're in the bedroom.

SZ: On this trip or notes that you've jotted for me?

MW: No, I've not done anything for you.

SZ: When you made a trip like that to India, how would you travel there? Did you fly there

or would you take a boat?

MW: Oh, we went by boat. My first trip to India was with Barbara Harrison. We went together to visit an American friend of hers named Bernadine Szold. She had married a mutual friend of ours who was a broker in Shanghai and they invited us to visit them. Barbara and I were living in Paris and this friend of ours and his wife were living in Shanghai where he was in business and they invited us to come and stay with them. We decided that when...it's all beginning to come back. We decided to go by boat from Venice to Shanghai because the Italian line had decided to inaugurate a service from Venice to Shanghai and we were told by our Shanghai friends that Sir Victor Sassoon was going on the initial trip of this liner with his sister who was married to an Italian prince. So my friend Barbara Harrison and Victor Sassoon and his sister found ourselves on the same boat for this trip to Shanghai. The boat stopped in Bombay where Sassoon had been in business, and he took me ashore with him to buy jewels because he knew where they were to be found and that was the place to buy jewels in those days. Sassoon introduced me to the jeweler, and because I was a friend of Sassoon's, the jeweler gave me a jewel which was very beautiful and I gave it Barbara. I don't know whether she gave it to her daughter or not, but I can remember being astonished by the jewels which Sassoon's friend showed me. Sassoon had moved to Bombay from London because the British...I'm trying to think what happened because I heard it all from Sassoon.

SZ: You mean why he moved his business from Bombay to London?

MW: No, it's the other way around. He moved to Bombay from London because there was some....

SZ: Well, actually, I think he did a lot of business-- Singapore, I thought, was his main...I mean Shanghai, not Singapore.

MW: That came later. First he moved because the British had changed their laws about Shanghai--no, no, no, changed their law about Bombay. In other words, when Sassoon first moved to Bombay the British in Bombay were not taxable and then the law was changed.

SZ: I see. So that's why he moved on.

MW: But Sassoon always had friends in Bombay.

SZ: What was he like?

MW: Well, he was a fascinating man. He was an investor who had made immense investments in Bombay and then, when the law was changed by the British, he picked up his marbles, his investments, and moved everything, all the Sassoon fortune, from Bombay to Shanghai, and he built a magnificent hotel in Shanghai called the Cathay. When I went to Shanghai to visit my friends Chester Fritz and his wife, their home, where Barbara and I were staying, was a long way from Shanghai and Sassoon and I had become friends on the ship from Venice to Shanghai. I remember that Mussolini's daughter...what was Mussolini's son-in-law named? Anyway, I remember dancing every night with Mussolini's daughter on the ship. We became very good friends. She had a cast in an eye....

SZ: But Sassoon, was he a very outgoing man? What did he look like? Was he a big man?

MW: No, he was not. He was my height. He was a sort of diplomat.

SZ: He was Persian, wasn't he?

MW: Persian? I don't know.

SZ: I think his family was Persian.

MW: Really? He was a good-looking fellow, and that's why Mussolini had married his daughter to him and Mussolini had made him the Italian minister to Shanghai, to China, and that's why he was going out on this ship, to take up his post.

SZ: He was Jewish, you know.

MW: Was he?

SZ: Yes. I mean, it's interesting that Mussolini would have had him in the family that way. Well, that was early, I guess. It was in the '20s, right?

MW: You mean Mussolini's son-in-law?

SZ: Well, Victor Sassoon was.

MW: Oh, yes, Sassoon was.

SZ: Oh, you mean his son-in-law was going to be minister? I'm confused.

MW: No, you're right, his son-in-law. Mussolini had made his son-in-law the minister to China and he was going out to take up that post.

SZ: But that doesn't have anything to do with Sassoon except that they were all on the same boat.

MW: That's right.

SZ: Well, we got way side-tracked.

MW: Yes, I'm afraid we did.

SZ: Well, it's okay. It's interesting.... Last time, in terms of the Museum, we were talking about Soby, and you were telling me a little bit about him and you told me a couple of stories. He ended up having quite an extraordinary collection. We were talking about Italian Futurists, right?

MW: That's right.

SZ: Like [Giorgio] de Chirico.

MW: Well, Jim Soby and Alfred Barr worked together on the exhibition of Italian art which we had and they went to Italy together to assemble the exhibition.

SZ: Right. We talked about that and Soby, of course, left some of his de Chiricos to the Museum.

MW: That's right.

SZ: But there was also a little bit of a hullabaloo with a Balthus?

MW: Yes. Soby greatly admired Balthus and owned an important one, but Soby's Balthus was considered improper by some of Soby's neighbors in New Canaan. Soby told Balthus that his neighbors thought the picture improper, and Balthus repainted [it] for Soby so that it would not be offensive to his neighbors. Just last year, the Metropolitan Museum bought an enormous Balthus, which is now on view there, called The Mountain, which is much admired.

SZ: What did Barr think of Balthus?

MW: He admired him.

SZ: Somebody in the Museum didn't care for him. Is that not right?

MW: I don't know. Bill Lieberman liked him and it was Bill Lieberman, I believe, who bought for the Met this large painting called The Mountain.

SZ: Would you tell me a little bit about René d'Harnoncourt, because he's appeared only peripherally in our talks.

MW: René was tremendously important to the Museum. It all began with Nelson Rockefeller, who immensely admired René. It all began in Mexico, when Dwight Morrow was our ambassador to Mexico and both Dwight Morrow and his wife became close friends of René because René taught them about Mexican art.

SZ: Well, after Barr was demoted, as it were, there was a period of a few years where he really wasn't replaced, and then d'Harnoncourt came in, so it must have been difficult for him in the beginning.

MW: For René?

SZ: Yes.

MW: Nothing was ever difficult for René. He took everything in his stride. He was immensely adaptable. He made friends easily, as his daughter [Anne d'Harnoncourt] still does as director of the Philadelphia Museum. Nelson's favorite story about René: some pre-Columbian sculptures were being sold in Los Angeles and Nelson asked René to go out there and look at them with him.... On their way home in the plane...René made drawings of all the important sculptures they had seen, accurate drawings from memory, and Nelson was so tremendously impressed by this feat of René's that he would mention it again and again with amazement. René was Nelson's chief advisor in the purchase of pre-Columbian sculpture and those things are all in the Metropolitan Museum now in the Michael Rockefeller Collection.

SZ: Well, were René and Alfred very much alike?

MW: No, they were not alike.

SZ: How were they different,?

MW: Well, their temperaments were altogether different but they understood each other, and I believe that they admired each other. I know that at one time Alfred said that he admired René enormously, and that he had helped him in his career at the Museum more than anyone else ever did.... He once said that he regretted that he couldn't be kinder to René, and this was something that I never understood.

SZ: You didn't understand what he meant by that? Did you ever see anything in the way he treated him?

MW: He regretted that he didn't....

SZ: Wasn't kinder. Did you ever see him be unkind to René?

MW: I never did, but apparently he thought that he had been unkind to René, but it never bothered René at all....

END TAPE 10, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: MONROE WHEELER (MW)

INTERVIEWER: SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION: 251 EAST 51ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY**

DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1987

BEGIN TAPE 11, SIDE 1

MW: ...[Max Ernst] was always dreaming up new things, and new episodes, for his life.... I guess he was here during the war.

SZ: Peggy Guggenheim brought Max Ernst over before the war.

MW: Was it before the war?

SZ: I don't know. I'm trying to figure it out here.

MW: Peggy started an art gallery in New York of her own.

SZ: How well did you know Peggy Guggenheim?

MW: I saw her many times, early and late. More frequently in Venice than in New York, but I was here when she was building her art gallery in New York City. I used to see her then. All New York was fascinated by Peggy's gallery.

SZ: And somewhat fascinated by Peggy, too, I understand.

MW: Yes. She was a person of tremendous vitality. Never stopped thinking about her art. You add up.... [TAPE INTERRUPTION] ...advisory committee....

SZ: Albert Gallatin. He was part of the...original advisory committee.

MW: That's right.

SZ: Is that how you met him?

MW: Yes, it is.

SZ: He already had a fabulous collection.

MW: He had a collection, but he hadn't given it to NYU [New York University], which he did later.

SZ: I see.

MW: Later, the collection went to NYU and was quite heavily publicized as a New York museum. But when it moved to Philadelphia, I lost track of it. I think it was broken up. I'll have to ask Anne d'Harnoncourt what state it's in now. She did a beautiful job of presenting that.

SZ: Yes, it's a beautiful book.

MW: Very well done.

SZ: Tell me, you went to the dedication of the gallery for Mrs. Rockefeller last week.

MW: I did, yes. That was a great Rockefeller event, because all the surviving members of the family came. I was particularly happy to see Tod, Nelson's widow. I hadn't seen her for some time, and I saw so much of her in Nelson's day--Nelson's early days.

SZ: So she was there, and Laurance Rockefeller--you told me he was there.

MW: Yes.

SZ: And David of course.

MW: Yes. David spoke extremely well.

SZ: Were his remarks very personal kinds of remarks?

MW: Yes, well, they were all related to what Blanchette [Rockefeller] had done for MoMA, which was immense.

SZ: I guess I'd like you to tell me a little bit about what Blanchette's done for MoMA, because you've talked at length about her mother-in-law [Abby Aldrich Rockefeller], about the influence her mother-in-law had on the institution, because you knew her so well.

MW: And how she came to resemble her mother-in-law as the years went by, that constant concern about the Museum and curiosity about what was going on at 53rd Street. She never stopped thinking about the Museum and what it was doing, and what it might do. I've already told you about the president of Rockefeller Foundation and Mrs. Rockefeller, when they [the foundation] began to lose interest in the Museum. Mrs. Rockefeller didn't like that. She thought of everything she could do to draw the Museum closer to the foundation, and at that moment the foundation was resisting the Museum; but she overcame that. But it was also a question of the slant that the education of her children took, and her efforts to bring them closer to the Museum.

SZ: Are you talking about Abby now?

MW: Yes.

SZ: How did Blanchette come to resemble her mother-in-law?

MW: In her constant concern for the Museum, and her grace and dignity in dealing with all the people around the Museum, drawing them closer to the Museum. All of Mrs. Rockefeller's friends she drew one by one into the Museum circle. I can't remember them all now, but they were...she made a point of introducing me to all of her personal friends who might be interested in the Museum. I can find their names in the early catalogues listing the early trustees. I've already told you about that person, the son of one of Mrs. Rockefeller's close friends, who became the director of the big museum in Washington--what was his name? He remained the director of the Smithsonian....[TAPE INTERRUPTION]

END TAPE 11, SIDE 1

END INTERVIEW