

A TEI Project

Interview of Jake Zeitlin

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1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (June 28, 1977)

GARDNER:

I'd like to start out by recapitulating some of what you already talked about, but to a degree discussing your intellectual underpinnings and background, especially in Fort Worth. You mentioned the group of people that you were involved with in Fort Worth when you were very young. The names I have are [Bertha] Blatt, Resnick, [Morris] Greenspan, and [Aaron] Shambalum. How did you get involved with them when you were a teenager?

ZEITLIN:

Well, of course, these particular people were all Jewish, and they were all connected with the one Jewish synagogue that there was in the town (it was an Orthodox synagogue). Mrs. Blatt, for instance, was not really religious, and certainly was in no way devoted to Orthodox Judaism. She was one of these intellectual Jewish socialists, of which there were quite a few, who actually were actively anti-religious; they repudiated religion as much as they could. But, of course, because she was Jewish and she was living in a small town, she gravitated towards the other Jews in the community. I don't remember where she'd come from. Her husband was a typesetter—compositor, I guess I would call him—who worked for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in the composing room. She was like so many women—much more, had much more to give. She was a woman of considerable intellect, she had read widely, she'd lived in a big city, and here she was in a small town with a great deal of energy and no outlet. We had a small group, really a very harmless group, of no more than seven or eight people in all, who used to meet socially and then, about once a month on a Sunday afternoon, would hold a meeting offering culture to whoever wanted to come and get it in the local Hebrew Institute. (The Hebrew Institute had a small library, which consisted mainly of a set of [Charles William] Eliot's Five-Foot Shelf [*Harvard Classics*] and a few other books.) Somebody would undertake to give a talk on some subject. Now, on one occasion, I think she decided to talk about Karl Marx and the history of the communist movement, and word got around about that, so we were

immediately labeled as a bunch of Reds. But most of our meetings were in somebody's kitchen, or on the hot nights on the front stoop of somebody's house. We would often go down to the one local delicatessen there was in town, order corned beef sandwiches, argue, and stay until it was closing time-- not any different in that way from the big-city coffeehouse groups.

GARDNER:

About how old were you at this time?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think I must have started in with these things when I was about sixteen.

GARDNER:

Were there others your age?

ZEITLIN:

No. I was the youngster of the crowd. I still can't understand how I happened to circulate as I did and develop the friendships that I did. For one thing, I was never self-conscious, and I must have been a bumptious young man, because I never thought anybody was taller than I was, so that if I heard of somebody that was an authority on geology or botany and that I wanted to learn something from, I would just go and knock on their front door and then tell them I was interested, would like to talk to them. And they were all very kind and hospitable, and lent me books, and invited me back, and took me on field trips and so on. So I think maybe my curiosity bump was bigger than normal, [laughter] and as a result of that I would seek these people out, talk to them, listen to them, and I learned. Practically all I learned was either through reading by myself or through these informal tutors that I sought out.

GARDNER:

Was it about the same time that you met Ben Abramson? His role with you must have been an important one.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I guess I haven't recorded there how it happened that I met Ben Abramson and Jerry Nedwick. My father [Louis Zeitlin] had a business which involved the bottling of vinegar, the manufacture of table condiments, the

packing of spices; and we would take these out to the various grocery stores. First we had a salesman, who would go around and take the orders, and then we would make up the orders and go out and deliver them. My brother [Sam] or I had to go on the truck with whoever did the delivering. I had forgotten why that happened, until my brother reminded me the other day that when we would send out deliverymen on the trucks and they would deliver the goods, they usually got paid cash by the merchants; they would take the bill along. And when they collected enough cash, they would just leave the truck on some street corner and walk off. [laughter] And so after a few times of that experience, why, my father decided that either my brother or I would have to go along and handle the cash. My father had an understanding with the local police that if they arrested any Jewish boys, he was to be notified, and he would come in and find out what kind of an offense they were being held for. And if it was a serious offense, he'd bring a lawyer in to the thing; but if it was a minor offense --most of the boys were picked up for riding the rods, for hoboing--why , he would just pay their fine and take them over to his place, help them find a place (usually a boardinghouse in town) to stay, get cleaned up, and he'd put them to work. They'd work off the money that he'd paid out to get them out of jail, and then they'd stay and work awhile until they went somewhere else. Now, sometimes they were not Jewish; sometimes they were Russians, who, strangely enough, would get way out there in Texas, without being able to speak a word of English. So, after a while, anybody who spoke a strange language that the police couldn't understand was likely to have my father called to go and talk to them. Well, if they spoke Russian, he could talk to them; or German, he could communicate with them. On this particular occasion, he was called in, and there were these two young men there who had been picked up in the railroad yards riding the freights. One of them was named Ben Abramson, and the other was named Jerold Nedwick. Now, Jerry Nedwick was put to work inside the place, washing bottles and packing the various goods that we sold, but Ben was assigned to work on the truck with me.

GARDNER:

Now, they weren't foreign-speaking.

ZEITLIN:

No, they were English-speaking. This man, Ben Abramson, was a rather squat-looking man, a stubble of red beard and red hair.

GARDNER:

About how old?

ZEITLIN:

He was in his twenties. And he wasn't very talkative for quite a while. This big truck that I drove had to be cranked to start--we didn't have selfstarters on trucks in those days; that was about 1919, and I think it must have been June of 1919--and this fellow Ben Abramson was left-handed, and he couldn't crank the truck. So I would have to get down and crank it. And one day I got back up beside him, and, a little bit irritated, I said, "You know, somebody recently published a study in which he said that left-handed people were not as bright as right-handed people." Well, he started off right away and gave me a lecture on left-handedness. It seemed that he was very well informed on the whole subject, how many great men had been left-handed and so on. I was quite surprised. I asked him more questions, and it turned out that he had worked in a bookshop in Chicago, McClurg's bookshop, which had the famous Saints and Sinners Corner that Eugene Field had written about. There he had met the great Middle Western writers of the day--people like Sherwood Anderson; he'd seen Amy Lowell smoke a cigar. He knew about Harriet Monroe and *Poetry* magazine, which I had read about; and he knew Carl Sandburg, who was my great idol.

GARDNER:

Were you already writing poetry at this time?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I was already trying to write poetry. I'm not sure whether I'd already won a prize. Baylor College for Women at Waco, Texas, offered a state poetry prize every year, and I won a first or a second prize one year. And this, of course, immediately made me something a little out of the ordinary among the people in my town. And so, of course, the fact that he knew Carl Sandburg excited me very much. Well, every day from then on he talked. The fact is, he was a nonstop talker. He had a tremendous memory. He had memorized a great

many prose passages, and he had also memorized Oscar Wilde's "Panthea," Oscar Wilde's "The Sphinx," and, of course, Ernest Dowson's "Cynara," which was the favorite poem of every bohemian in the English-speaking world at that time. And, as we'd drive along the Texas prairie in the sunset, he would recite "The Feet of the Young Men" of Rudyard Kipling. Well, I was enchanted, and I decided the greatest thing in the world would be to be a bookseller. Jerry Nedwick, who was Ben's friend, didn't act or talk like he was interested in books or culture at all. As soon as he could, he quit and used to sit around down by the railroad tracks and watch the baseball games. He and Ben lived in a roominghouse run by a Mrs. Levine, who had a very homely daughter [Ida]. Well, after no more than three months, Ben suddenly announced that he and Jerry were leaving and going back to Chicago. To go back a little bit, the circumstances under which he left Chicago were kind of interesting. He was on his way to getting married. Jerry Nedwick was his best man. Jerry said to Ben, "Do you really want to marry this girl?" Ben said, "No, I really don't know why I said I would marry her. I don't think I'm ready to get married, and I'm not sure she's the one I want to marry," and so on. And Jerry said to Ben, "Ben, I'd like to stop over here at a bar and get a drink, because I think I need one to sort of prop me up when it comes to the wedding." So they stopped at a bar, and the next thing Ben knew he woke up in a boxcar outside Oklahoma City. [laughter] By the time they got to Fort Worth, Texas, they had been stripped of their tuxedos and were wearing blue jeans with sash cords for belts. What they did with their clothes, I don't know, unless they hocked them for food, or may have been stripped of them by the other hobos on the road. Ben had evidently been romancing the landlady's daughter in my town, so he decided it was about time to get moving before the daughter pressed her demands for him to marry her. Well, they caught a freight train, went back to Chicago, and they went into business. They opened the Argus Bookshop, which became one of the most successful bookshops in Chicago in its day, and Ben published a number of catalogs, which were entitled "Along the North Wall." He would just stand there with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, look at the books on the shelves, and talk about them. And he kept a whole string of stenographers there taking his dictation. And as they would get tired, he'd have another stenographer come on, and the other one would go back and transcribe her notes. He published this whole series of catalogs, which have become quite famous. One interesting thing about all this was that the landlady's daughter

and her mother decided they were going to follow this guy Ben Abramson and his friend Jerry back to Chicago. And so one day Jerry Nedwick came to his house, and here was Mrs. Levine and her daughter sitting there talking to his mother. And Jerry said to his mother, "How come they're here?" And she said, "Why, Ben sent them to us. He said she was your girl." The mother and daughter stayed there in Chicago. The daughter never did get married, but the mother met a man who became a very rich real estate operator, and she ended up a very rich and very happy woman. [laughter]

GARDNER:

You remained friendly with him. Did you keep up a correspondence?

ZEITLIN:

We kept up a correspondence through the years. It was quite voluminous--mostly on his part—but I never saw him again. He was quite successful in Chicago — he was immensely successful--but he wasn't satisfied. He was a curious sort of an egomaniac, and he was so successful in Chicago he thought he could conquer New York. He sold out his business and moved there, and he wasn't the same thing in New York as he was in Chicago. His kind of a rough-talking bumptious way didn't suit the New York collectors and dealers, and he had to rent a place in a loft instead of on the street—nobody could afford a street store in New York, even in those days — and book people just forgot he was there. Finally, he did so poorly that he had to give it up, and he moved out to Lake Monhegan [and] took an old school building. His daughter lived on the middle floor, his wife lived on the top floor, and Ben lived on the lower floor and had all his books there. The sad thing was that Ben was right the first time. He shouldn't have gone back and married the girl that Jerry had tried to shanghai him from marrying. That was an unhappy marriage, and there seems to have been a lot of friction between them over the years. The daughter was the chief means of communication. Her name was Barbara, and she used the name of Barbara Benson. Later it turned out that she got the name of Benson because Ben called her in one day and said, "You know, I've never had a son, so from now on you are 'Benson.'" And she has continued to use that. She has a book business--a mail-order book business-- up in Connecticut now, and she uses the business name of Barbara Benson. She's also a very talkative, longwinded letter writer, very interesting person and very much like her

father. And I've kept in touch with her. I never saw her until a couple of years ago when I went to Norwalk, Connecticut, to a meeting of the History of Science Society; and while I was there, she and her husband came down from Hartford and picked me up, and we went back to New Haven and went to the Beinecke Library. I got a very good chance to talk to her and get acquainted. And since then, she has published a sketch of the life of her father, more or less. And I sent her copies of all the letters that he had written me, and she wrote me very enthusiastically and said that she learned more about her father from these letters than she'd ever known before. The curious thing is that when she published the book, she only alluded once to the fact that we had corresponded all these years and that she had these letters. So this meeting with Ben Abramson was what got me into this rare-book business, or what might be called my life of shame. [laughter]

GARDNER:

You were in your late teens at this point. Was there any thought of your going to college?

ZEITLIN:

It was hardly possible. My family was struggling along. My father had this business which was just barely making a living for us, and my brother and I were needed to help him. I got to be the salesman, my brother got to be the manager of everything that went on in the plant, and there just wasn't enough money. My brother left school in the sixth grade, and he was really a much more talented person than I was; and I think if he had had a chance to have an education, he would have accomplished a lot more. He was the one that they could depend on. I wasn't a very dependable boy. I would up and disappear at almost any time. Even at fourteen, I got up one night, and got on a freight train, and rode off. [I] was gone for- I think it must have been two or three months, until my family found out where I was in Austin, Texas. I can't account for these impulses, why I would just get up and run away, but it certainly didn't improve my appearance of stability or dependability with my parents. My brother, on the other hand, was very dependable and had none of these characteristics.

GARDNER:

About this time, too, you got involved with the Cosmos Club. Now, it may be described to some degree in [previous tapes] , but again, how did you get involved with this group?

ZEITLIN:

Well, there was a man by the name of Peter Molyneaux, a rather colorful character who was the chief editorial writer for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Peter was a very interesting man and was sort of the intellectual ornament of this paper, which to begin with was owned by a Colonel Louis J. Wortham. Later on. Colonel Wortham got himself a circulation manager by the name of Amon Carter. Now, Amon Carter was a very resourceful character not above a little hanky-panky, such as hiring a gang of distributors who would go out and throw the opposition papers in the gutter, and harass their newsboys, and so on. And in time Amon Carter worked himself up to being the controlling stockholder and ultimately owned the paper [and] became the great Mr. Fort Worth. But at the time I first met Amon Carter, he was circulation manager for this paper.

GARDNER:

How did you meet Molyneaux?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I met him in a bookstore. The one bookstore that had a fairly good assortment of current books in town was the book department of a place called The Fair; it was part of a string owned by the Schermerhorns . And the manager of it was a man by the name of Mack Pegues. I would go in there and look at the new books that came in, and Peter Molyneaux would come in there, and he was a very striking gentleman with a rather large nose (probably the result of a substantial appetite for good old southern bourbon) , a shock of gray hair and a typical Southern gentleman style. I met him there, and he invited me to his house, which was where I saw the first private library in my experience. He had read [Alfred] Edward Newton's *Amenities of Book Collecting* [and *Kindred Affections*] . He lent that to me, which, of course, inoculated me with the virus of book collecting. And because he was the editorial writer for the paper—the paper's intellectual—he used to get a great many review copies of books, and some of them he didn't care for, and he'd

pass on to me. And he would invite me to write reviews. So I did do a few reviews there for what passed for a book section, a book page. Well, there was another man whom I also owed a great deal to. I did owe a great deal to Peter Molyneaux. He was a great talker, and he loved to instruct. And also, he and his wife had no children, and he felt very paternal towards me. And then I met another man, by the name of Franklin Wolfe. Franklin Wolfe was there working on a paper that really was a swindle sheet. It was the *Independent Oil and Financial Reporter*, I think it was called. It was supposed to report the happenings in the oil fields of Texas, but its real purpose was to build up the enthusiasm. . . . [phone rings; tape recorder turned off] Wolfe was the editor of the *Independent Oil and Financial Reporter*, it was called. The chief purpose of it was to sell oil stock to a lot of New England schoolteachers. Middle Western farmers, and small merchants all over the country. And they used to send this out beating the drums for certain phony oil companies. It was during the days of Blue Sky. But Franklin Wolfe himself was a very interesting man who worked on the Chicago Daily News . He had been a friend of Carl Sandburg's, he had been a very close friend of Clarence Darrow, and he had been very active in the progressive movement and the labor movement in California. In fact, he had been one of the original organizers of the Llano Del Rio colony, which was headed by a very interesting, hypnotic sort of a character by the name of Job Harriman. His wife had been a city councilwoman very early in the second decade of this century in Los Angeles, and they had been very active at the time when Job Harriman ran on the Socialist ticket and almost became mayor of Los Angeles. He would have been elected if it hadn't been for the [*Los Angeles*] *Times* [Building] bombing. So, of course, Franklin Wolfe was a great star to me, and he was a delightful old gentleman, with wonderful manners, and as gentle as a child. They didn't have any children either, and so he encouraged me and invited me to contribute poems and things to his paper. I would write some poetry and some prose for his editorial page.

GARDNER:

Despite the fact that it was about oil.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, about oil. But he had an editorial page which he kept full of all kinds of his own essays and recollections and columns that he kept running. And Peter Molyneaux, Franklin Wolfe, and I were approached by some other people in the town—I've forgotten. One of them was a doctor whose name I can't remember, the other one was the head of a laboratory that manufactured vaccines and serums, anti-tetanus serums and so on. Another one was a kind of a spectacular personality, a lawyer, whose name I can't remember; and another was a young man—a very striking, handsome young fellow—who was a great dresser, and as a very young man had made a tremendous amount of money in the oil business. Somehow or another, we decided to have a dinner club. I was then only about seventeen; the rest of these were men, mature men, anywhere from thirty on. And they invited me to be a member of this Cosmos Club, they called it; they modeled it after the Cosmos Club in Washington, but it was hardly comparable. And we would meet, I think it was, one night a month. Later we invited one or two other people, or they invited one or two other people in the town, and somebody would give a paper--very much like dinner clubs of the same sort. But once some member would prepare a paper on some subject that he knew a little about—he knew a lot about very often—and this was, of course, very exciting to me. They all dressed in dinner jackets, but I didn't have any dinner jackets. I was very lucky to have a clean white shirt, but they accepted me and paid my dinner bills and so on. And they would have good wines. I learned--the first I ever learned about anything like good wines and good food was with this group. We met in what then was the best hotel in town, the Westbrook, and now when I go past this run-down, shabby-looking little thing, I can't imagine that this was the glamorous place, the glamorous Westbrook Hotel, which I was so pleased to be invited to come into with those people for a dinner with waiters, dressed up for the occasion. They made quite a thing of this. I don't remember how long this lasted--It couldn't have lasted longer than a year or two—but it, for me, was a great experience and, of course, it set me up quite a lot to be the young mascot, as it were, of these people whom I looked upon as great intellectuals.

GARDNER:

At this point, then, I suppose "bohemian" would be the best description of you. You were a young poet. You remained a young poet, I suppose, the rest of your time in Fort Worth.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I suppose--you know, it's curious. . . . Well, I published a poem or two in the local paper; I did a review or two; I won this poetry prize; the local paper published a feature story on me. I'm surprised that I didn't become more conceited than I was, considering the amount of attention I got. I seem to--I must say this with all immodesty--I seem to have always had a knack for getting publicity without trying.

GARDNER:

How did you meet Edith Motheral?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I met Edith Motheral through the sister of a girl that I had been quite mad about, one of the girls that I used to go swimming with down on the river, Elizabeth Fish. I taught her to swim, and later she went off to the University of Texas, on the swimming team and everything; and Elizabeth Fish became quite a sophisticated young woman, far beyond my limits, very quickly after she went off to the university. Her sister, Stella, was also a very attractive young woman; she was followed around by a whole crowd of young men. And she got a job at the telephone office working as a switchboard operator, and I used to come by in the evenings to pick her up to take her out for Chinese dinner, or just to talk and then take her home. She was the older sister of Elizabeth, whom I had a great passion for and whom I taught to swim and who used to go swimming with me. And one night she came down from the office. I met her at the front steps, and she had with her this tall young woman by the name of Edith Motheral. Well, Edith was a very striking, very beautiful, young woman, and she wrote poetry. It turned out she did very good lyrical poetry, and, my, I fell head over heels. And the first thing you know, we were going swimming in the river. (That was my chief way of courting the girls--taking them swimming, and persuading them that the best way to swim was to swim naked on the river at night in the moonlight.) Well, we got so we would go swimming in the wintertime, and then build a fire on the banks of the river,

dry off, and dress. Naturally, after a little while, we became quite passionately involved, and ultimately we were sleeping together. Well, I didn't dare tell my family. Her family was quite receptive to me because she was a very tempestuous young woman who had a temper and was headstrong and was uncontrollable, and about the only way she would calm down was if I came by and took her swimming and out for a hike in the woods. Otherwise, she was always at odds with her father and brothers. So ultimately I commenced to have a strong feeling that the only thing for us to do was to get married. We went over to Dallas and got married without telling my family, and then shortly afterward the natural thing happened: she got pregnant. She was living with her folks, and I was living with my family, and my family didn't know that we were married.

GARDNER:

She was not Jewish, I assume.

ZEITLIN:

No, she was not Jewish. My family was very strongly Orthodox, and it was a terrible shock, of course, when they ultimately found out. And finally, I went to my friend Franklin Wolfe and said, "I'm married to this girl, Edith" —he had met her; I'd taken her over to visit him and his wife and to have dinner—"and she's pregnant, and I just can't stand to tell my family, and we've got to go away." And he said, "Well, where would you go?" And I said, "Well, I thought maybe I'd go to Chicago and get a job with my friend Ben Abramson in his bookshop. I don't know any other place." And he said, "Well, why not California?" He said, "I've got some friends out there, the Calverts, and I'd think they'd put you up for a while. And I've got a friend who is the advertising manager, the public relations manager, of a cafeteria there. Boos Brothers, which is a big going outfit." And he said, "You could go out there." So I sent her out on the train to California, and she wrote back that the Calverts had been very nice to her and had taken her into their house. And then one day I just walked out of the place, left a note saying I was going to California, and hitchhiked. Franklin Wolfe lent me about twenty-five dollars, and I started hiking, and I hitchhiked across from Texas to California.

GARDNER:

That looks like a good place to end this side of the tape.

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

**1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two
(June 28, 1977)**

GARDNER:

Now, you're leaving Fort Worth for Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I think this must have been in April of 1925, and as I said, I started out to hitchhike. I remember walking along the road crossing Pease River, which for me had great romantic appeal because it was the river named in a song that Carl Sandburg used to sing called "The Buffalo Skinners." "'Tis now we cross Pease River, / And homeward we are bound, / And no more in that goddamn country / Will ever we be found." A very gory western ballad. Then I stopped in Clarendon, Texas, to see the man who managed the Wagner Ranch properties, whose name I can't remember right now [Bob Moore], but he was known then as a great amateur ornithologist. And I stopped to see him, and he was very hospitable to me--fed me; and I went on my way and crossed over into Arizona. I think I went up by way of Roswell, New Mexico. I remember going through Gallup—almost got mugged by some tramps in the railroad yards in Gallup. The only thing is, they were talking Yiddish because they thought I didn't understand it, and they were going to get me off into a boxcar and take whatever money I had and my shoes. So when I answered them in Yiddish, they were kind of surprised, and I got away from them. Well, I think it must have taken two weeks for me to get across. I picked up rides as I went along; I walked long distances, crossed the desert; I got hungry. I'm not clear how I got across the Mojave; I think I hitchhiked a ride which took me across most of the Mojave into Daggett. In Daggett I had fifteen cents, and at the Chinese restaurant all I could get was a slice of bread for a nickel. And a man selling dairy products —cheese, milk, and other things--came along in his truck, and I asked him for a ride, and he gave me a ride, and we crossed over into lush, green California. And it certainly did look like paradise to me after

that long, parched desert. We came down into Los Angeles, and I finally found my way to the house of the Calverts with a dime in my pocket. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Down to the last dime.

ZEITLIN:

I arrived here with ten cents and a pregnant wife and no job. These people [the Calverts], I found, were very poor and hardly had room for a bed in one small room in their house, so that of course we couldn't go on staying there, and I started looking for a job. How I came to get a job for a local Jewish paper [*B'nai B'rith Messenger*], I don't know; but I remember a man by the name of Joe Cummings who said, "Go out and interview Marco Newmark. We're going to do a series about the history of the Jews of Los Angeles, and this is your first assignment." So I went and called on this man, Marco Newmark, and we got to talking. He was very friendly. And when he got through talking, I went back to the paper, and I said, "You know, I don't know a damn thing about California history. I wouldn't know where to start to do a story about this man. And unless you can give me some time to do some reading up on this, I can't get you a story." The guy said, "Well, I'm sorry, but you're fired." I think he gave me five dollars, and off I went. I guess then I must have got the job at Boos Brothers Cafeteria, where I got fired for eating an orange.

GARDNER:

A wonderful story.

ZEITLIN:

A friend of the Calverts was a woman by the name of Miriam Lerner. Miriam was a very interesting woman who owned a house up in the hills at the end of Echo Park Avenue, close to what was then the Edendale Station, where the Red Cars stopped. She was a girlfriend of Edward Weston's, and she had been a model for a number of his photographs. She'd been very active in the Young People's Socialist League in Los Angeles. And she was E. L. Doheny's secretary, which was kind of a curious anomaly, but E. L. Doheny was pathetically dependent on her, and she was, of course, very close-mouthed, very loyal. No matter what her personal views were, she never in any way let that interfere

with doing her job for Doheny. And she ultimately decided she wasn't going to be a secretary for the rest of her life. She went off to Europe and was secretary to Frank Harris in Nice and helped, I think, with the writing of *My Life and Loves*. She ultimately came back to this country and worked for [Richard J.] Walsh, who was the husband of Pearl Buck. She was the editorial assistant for his publishing company, John Day and Company, and she helped edit *Asia* magazine. Ultimately she came back here to California. But that time, when she was Doheny's secretary, my friend Mellie Calvert spoke to Miriam Lerner and told her about me, and Miriam Lerner got me a job driving a gardener's truck for E. L. Doheny's oil company. My job was to drive this truck and help mow the lawns of all of the oil stations all over Southern California. I got a marvelous orientation because from Santa Monica almost to San Bernardino, and from San Pedro as far as Burbank, I would drive this truck with this gang and trim the lawns. One of my jobs, of course, was to load the truck every morning with fertilizer, so that I was always covered with this brown fertilizer dust when I would come home. . . . By that time, Edith and I had found an apartment —an apartment house on Wilcox Avenue in Hollywood. It was called the St. Katherine Apartments, and it was run by one of the meanest women in the world. In return for the rent of this tiny apartment, it was Edith's job to do all the slavey work in this apartment house—all the cleaning.

GARDNER:

She had had your child by then, I assume.

ZEITLIN:

No. Yes, she'd had our child by then. . . . No, the child was on the way.

GARDNER:

She was still pregnant.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. When I would come home, this woman said, "You can't have your husband coming in the front door covered with all that smelly fertilizer. He's going to have to come in the back door." And Edith and I said to her, "We're not used to going into back doors, and we're not going into back doors," so

she fired Edith, and we had to leave and find a place to live. So we rented a little house out on what now is part of the grounds of University of Southern California. And I got a job. I went to see Holmes--Norman Holmes--of Holmes Book Company. And I think I have covered that.

GARDNER:

I think that story is in there, right.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. That was my first job in the bookshop in Southern California. I lasted, I think, about three weeks and then was fired for incompetence. And the night I got fired, Saturday night, I went home in tears. We paid the rent, which had been overdue, [and] bought some groceries. I had a friend living with me--one of the crowd that had come out from Texas--a man by the name of Bates Walter Booth. He was sick at the time; he lived in this little house, in one room. And the next morning, by God, the house burned down. Well, we couldn't do anything but laugh—it was too tragic to do anything but laugh about—and we stood out, fought the flames, and laughed. That evening, there was part of the house still standing, and the rafters were opened to the sky. We had some food left, and we made a meal, [and] sat down with candles. My friend Bates said, "Well, Jake, I guess we've had it. We're licked. I think the best thing to do is to get in touch with our folks back in Texas, and they'll send us money, and we can all come home." And I said, "No. I'm gonna have the best bookshop in Los Angeles someday."

GARDNER:

Ah, you didn't really say that.

ZEITLIN:

Yes I did. Absolutely true. I said, "It's going to have the finest rare books in it; it's going to have hangings on the walls; it's going to have Oriental rugs on the floor; and I'm going to have Rembrandt etchings [and] Dürer prints in it. And I'm going to stay here, by God, till I get it." I must say, that like a lot of things when you're young and you don't know what's ahead of you, you've got a lot of spunk and optimism—and it's a good thing. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Apparently at that time that's about all you had, was your spunk and optimism.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. We were all broke, and that night we slept in the attic of a neighbor's house. The next morning we went out to some distant relatives of Edith's that she had found out here. (South Los Angeles—not Compton, but something like that. It may have been Compton.) And we stayed there. The next day I went into the May Company and went to the woman in charge of the book department, a woman by the name of May Perks. May didn't look like much, but she was a very smart woman; and she also was a very sympathetic and good-hearted person. They didn't have much of a book department. As I look back on it now, I hardly see how it could have been called a book department, but it was. And I told her that I was a bookseller, that I'd had experience. I'd worked for Holmes, and I had worked in Texas for a few weeks in the book department of The Fair before I came out here, and I needed the job. And she said, "Well, go down and see the employment manager. I'll call him up and tell him that I'd like to have you in my department. And the next day, I went to work in her book department. Well, she was a very smart woman. She was the first person to get the idea of products connected with the movie stars. And she developed all of the Shirley Temple products--Shirley Temple dolls, books, and so on-- and she ended up a very rich woman. I was there, I suppose, about a month, but I could see I was selling more books than anybody in the place. I could walk up to people and talk to them, and I knew the techniques of selling, which I'd learned partly in working in my father's business; so I was doing very well in terms of sales compared to the other people in the department. But I wanted to be in a place where there were better books, and at that time, one of the better book departments in town was in Bullock's. I went over there, and there was a kind of a burly, feisty woman there, very stern, by the name of June Cleveland. I think I've talked about her in some of the other things.

GARDNER:

That was where you made your first . . .

ZEITLIN:

I told her that I was working at the May Company, but that I wanted to do better, and I wanted to sell better books, and asked if she would give me a job. So she did give me a job there, and I worked there for about a year, and that gave me not only the opportunity to sell books, but also to meet a lot of people who became very important friends to me.

GARDNER:

Right—some of whom were mentioned in that first part, Mrs. [Milton] Getz, for example.

ZEITLIN:

Well, no, [not] Mrs. Getz. I didn't meet [her] until after I had gone off on my own.

GARDNER:

Oh, I see.

ZEITLIN:

The people I met there were Will Connell and Phil Townsend Hanna and Maurice Warshaw.

GARDNER:

Did you meet them through that? There's an area of confusion in my own mind. I'll try to clarify it. Is this now simultaneous to your having *Whispers and Chants* published, and having done the interview with Carey McWilliams and so on?

ZEITLIN:

Carey McWilliams came to see me before I met any of these other people.

GARDNER:

So, in other words, you had the book of poems published then, or at least about to be published.

ZEITLIN:

Well, this is kind of confused. I was working in Bullock's book department. I hadn't had a book of poems published. And the first person that came in to

the department that I met was this fellow Phil Townsend Hanna. He was interested in books; he was interested in Southwestern history. He was kind of a dandy in his dress, and later organized the Wine and Food Society here. He came in, and I started to wait on him and talk to him, and we got acquainted. And he was commencing to edit a magazine called *Touring Topics*, which was the forerunner of *Westways*. It was the magazine of the Automobile Club of Southern California. And after he'd come in, he brought in Will Connell. Will Connell had some friends--one of them was a young woman artist by the name of Grace Marion Brown, a very striking, very fine young woman. And her boyfriend was a fellow by the name of Louis Samuel, who was the business manager for Ramon Novarro. He had gone to school with Ramon Novarro, and then he became the business manager. And these people sort of took me up. They invited me to their houses, and pretty soon we had quite a circle going. That was the beginning of a circle which later published a magazine called *Opinion*. But I met all these people there through Bullock's. One man that came in one day was Julius Jacoby. He owned a wholesale men's-accessory business; he had the franchise for BVDs for Southern California. And somehow or another we started to talking, and he became interested in me. And then one day Carl Sandburg came to town. Well, Sandburg looked me up, and he said, "I'm going out to give a lecture in Beverly Hills at Mrs. May's house. They're paying me to give a lecture there." This was one of these cultural circles of the Jewish patricians of this town. I went with Sandburg, and this man Jacoby was there. The fact that I'd come with Sandburg, I think, impressed him very much, so in a few days he came back into Bullock's and said, "How did you happen to be there with Sandburg?" And I said, "Well, I knew Sandburg in Texas. I met him there, and we've exchanged some correspondence. He asked me to come out with him." And Sandburg also, by that time, had published his *American Songbag*, in which he had a number of songs that I had given him when I met him in Texas. So I think this fascinated Jacoby. Anyhow, he said, "What can I do for you? Is there anything I can do for you?" Well, I said, "Quite frankly what I need right now is a doctor. I need to go and see a doctor because I'm having trouble. I'm losing weight, and I'm coughing, and so on." And he said, "Fine, we'll just fix that up." He arranged for me to see a Dr. Richmond Ware, who in later years became a very close friend. Richmond Ware was the nephew of Dr. Walter Jarvis Barlow, who founded the Barlow Sanitarium. And Richmond Ware looked me over, and

then he reported back to Jacoby and to me that what I needed was to go into a sanitarium for a while: I had a spot on my lung. And, of course, I had a wife and a child; I had no money-- [I] was getting twenty-seven dollars a week. And I said to Jacoby there's no way I could quit work. He said, "Don't you worry about that. We'll take care of that." At that time the Jewish community here was headed up by a very fine man by the name of George Moschbacher, who was the father-in-law of George Behrendt. George Behrendt later was the father-in-law of Olive Behrendt, who is now active in [the] Hollywood Bowl and a lot of other things locally. Moschbacher said, "Don't you worry. We'll take care of you. We'll provide the money for your wife and child. We'll give her an allowance enough so that she can live off of it, and we'll pay for your expenses at the Barlow Sanitarium." And then I asked Bullock's if I could leave, and I went out to Barlow Sanitarium. I wasn't there very long--I suppose about seven weeks in all—but it was a very interesting seven weeks. While I was there, I realized that I couldn't go back to work in the book department at Bullock's. One day a man by the name of Arthur Mayers came to see me, and he said, "You know, we've got a printing company, and I am interested in knowing what you're going to do with yourself and whether we can help you in any way. What do you plan to do?" And I said, "Well, frankly, I think the best thing I could do would be to start a business of my own selling books." And he said, "How would you do that?" And I said, "Well, I've put together the names and addresses of all the people that I sold books to when I was in Bullock's, and I think they're friends of mine and would probably buy from me if I went to see them. I know a man by the name of Odo Stade, who is the manager of the Hollywood Book Store, and I think he would let me have books to deliver to my customers and give me a discount off of them." And so Arthur Mayers said, "All right, we'll print you some business cards and some stationery." Before that, while I was at Bullock's, I had met a man by the name of Jim Blake, who was the western representative for Harper Brothers. I'd actually met him back in Texas--and I don't know whether in the course of this previous tape* I told the story of the princess from the Pecos. [* See Interview History—ed.]

GARDNER:

That was the . . .

ZEITLIN:

Beatrice Molyneaux.

GARDNER:

Yes, you did.

ZEITLIN:

Well, that's how I happened to meet Jim Blake. And Blake had—I'd met him again when I was working at Bullock's; and while I was in this sanitarium, he arranged to have a book a week sent out to me. And one of the books he sent me was Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, just about the worst book a man could read when he was in a sanitarium, [laughter] but it made a tremendous impression on me. Later I had the opportunity of meeting Thomas Mann, getting him to autograph my copy of *The Magic Mountain*, and telling him the story of how I'd gone through all the experiences of his characters. And he told me that this book had grown out of his experiences while he was in a sanitarium in Switzerland.

GARDNER:

Well, how do we dovetail back now to Carey McWilliams and the poetry?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes, I think we can do that. When I got out of the sanitarium. ... I don't know whether I mentioned it; I just wanted to say a word or two about the sanitarium. While I was there, we started a little paper called *The Temp-stick*. There was a fellow by the name of Karyl Marker, who was an actor, a very fine-looking fellow, and he had been quite a success in the local little theater [and] had performed in some of the early presentations of Eugene O'Neill here, and he and I became fast friends. The other man I met there was a man by the name of Sigurd Varian. Sigurd Varian had been a flier. He had developed TB. He had been fired from his job as a pilot on commercial airlines in this country, so he went down to South America. And there he was flying very high altitudes over the Andes, and of course the first thing he knew he was hemorrhaging, and he had to come back to the United States [and now] was in this sanitarium, Sigurd Varian and his brother were the founders of the Varian Associates.

GARDNER:

Oh, my.

ZEITLIN:

No one could have guessed this by the looks of the fellow that was there in that sanitarium at that time. And he and I and Marker used to play chess, and we sort of created a little circle. Right away we generated more excitement than the people in the sanitarium wanted, and they told me that I couldn't stay any longer because the patients were not supposed to be getting excited by all the things that Marker and Varian and I were doing. So that was mainly why I was dismissed. They also felt that I didn't have a serious infection, that it was arrested, and the best thing to do was to let me go out and go to work. So I went back to my house at 1623 Landa Street, which was down a dirt road--without a telephone—and I took my little pack of cards, and I started calling on the people that I had sold books to when I worked for Bullock's. I said, "Now, if you are buying books, tell me what you want, and I'll get them for you. They won't cost you any more, and I'll make a little profit." The first order I got was for twenty-seven dollars' worth of books, and I went to see Odo Stade at the Hollywood Book Store. He gave me the books at one-third off, which was his cost, and I took them out. I borrowed eighteen dollars to pay Stade for the books, took them out and collected the twenty-seven dollars, and I had nine dollars profit. Now, the people who really bolstered me up then were Louis Samuel and Grace Marion Brown, who were living together. They bought books from me. And a fellow by the name of William Conselman--Bill Conselman and his wife [Mina] —he was doing very well indeed as a writer at Twentieth Century-Fox, or Fox Studios, as they were called then, and he had started a comic strip called "Ella Cinders." And very soon he was zooming up, making a great deal of money, and they took practically any book I would bring to them. Soon I had a little chain of people that I could go to once a week or so with a pack of books, and they took most of what I brought them. Jim Blake got me a line of credit with some of the publishers, and I started writing circular letters—direct mail--to my little list, promoting some of the books that these publishers were bringing out; just using the copy on their lists. And this brought me mail orders. I suppose that now, as I look on it, I'm surprised at all of the different things I did, [and] the fact that I had the gumption to do them. Well, I had collected some of my poems, and I wrote to Carl Sandburg and asked him if he'd do a foreword. He wasn't really too

enthusiastic about this, but my friend Frank Wolfe wrote to him and said, "You know, Carl, it would be a great boost to Jake, and you would do him a lot of good, if you would write a foreword." So Carl wrote a very nice brief foreword. It was a kind of a noncommittal thing, saying that if I kept on I might write some good poetry someday.

GARDNER:

Oh, it's much more positive than that, but that does paraphrase it in a way.

ZEITLIN:

And I got Louis Samuel—he said, "I'll put up the money to publish your book of poetry. Let's go up to San Francisco and see the Grabhorn Press." Well, we didn't go to see the Grabhorns, we went to see Gelber and Lilienthal, which was a bookselling firm in San Francisco. It was a very fine firm, selling rare books and first editions, and the financial backer of the firm was Ted Lilienthal, one of the fine families of San Francisco. And Leon Gelber had worked in the book department of the White House, or the City of Paris, up in San Francisco, and had learned the bookselling game. So Gelber was the bookman, and Lilienthal was the backer. And they had a publishing imprint; they called it the Lantern Press. So we went to see them, and Louis Samuel bought quite a few books from them, which buttered them up very nicely. And he said to them that he would like to get them to be the publishers for a book of poems if we could get the Grabhorns to print it. So they said, "Of course." They introduced us to the Grabhorns, and I remember that not only did I meet Ed Grabhorn, but I met Erskine Scott Wood, who was one of the great men of his time. And Ted Lilienthal and Sara Bard Field and Erskine Scott Wood all took me to dinner at Coppa 's in the Alley, which was a great Italian restaurant--a sort of bohemian gathering place — the walls of which had been decorated by Maynard Dixon. It was San Francisco's bohemia. And I had lunch there; my, I was bug-eyed. And I came back down to Los Angeles, and I got the Grabhorns to put out a little circular on the book, so that by the time the book was out I'd circularized all the people I knew and all the people that were buying books from me and everybody else I could think of, and had enough orders to pay for the printing of the book and pay back my friend Louis Samuel for backing it. And when it came out, it was reviewed extravagantly in the *Times* here, and it gave me a kind of a little name. And Carey McWilliams looked me up. At that

time Carey McWilliams was in law school at USC, and he was part time doing stories, personal interviews, and so on for a magazine called *Saturday Night* . He called me up and came out one evening to my shack down on this dirt road at the north end of Echo Park Avenue, spent the evening with me, and did a story about me.

GARDNER:

Now, that opened up another circle, didn't it? Or it seems to have.

ZEITLIN:

Well. . . .

GARDNER:

I'm thinking of Merle Armitage, Lloyd Wright, and so on.

ZEITLIN:

Well, these people all were part of the Will Connell circle--in one way, as soon as I opened a shop, I started introducing these people to each other.

GARDNER:

I see. So you were really the locus, then.

ZEITLIN:

Well, in a way. Will Connell was very much a friend of all these people. Merle Armitage was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera Company, and Arthur Millier was the art editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, and all these people more or less clustered at my shop. And then we would have one of the more affluent ones--like Bill Conselman would give parties. And this grew into a rather wide circle. It included Lloyd Wright, the son of Frank Lloyd Wright; and it included Lawrence Tibbett, who in those days was a very famous opera singer. And whenever somebody interesting would come to town, we'd rope them in. We had Louis Untermeyer one evening, and Lewis Mumford. And the routine was usually they would come into the shop, then I would take them over to Will Connell, and Will would pose them and shoot these oldfashioned, cabinet-type photographs of them. Then we would all go to dinner to a French restaurant on West Sixth Street, Rene and Jean. The food was—I think dinner cost seventy-five cents, and a bottle of wine cost another fifty cents, and we

would then gather at my shop and talk and make a lot of noise and argue and generally have a hell of a good time.

GARDNER:

Well, that gets us ahead of the game a little bit. I should probably double back and get you into the shop. Now, here you are toting your satchel around from place to place. What was it that gave you the impetus to settle down in a store?

ZEITLIN:

Well, that also grew out of this circle of people. Lloyd Wright was one of the people in this circle, and Lloyd said, "Jake, you know you just can't go on this way dragging this heavy satchel of books"--he would see me dragging this book bag around--"and you know, you're going to have to start a bookshop." So I said, "Oh, that's very good, but you know I haven't got any money to start a bookshop with, and I haven't got any stock. I'm doing business out of other people's stocks." And he said, "Well, we'll find a place. We'll find a way to do it." So we went downtown, started looking around, and on the corner of Sixth and Hope Street, there was a T. J. Lawrence Real Estate Company, and they had a back doorway; this was about twelve feet deep and about eight feet wide. Lloyd said, "Why don't we ask those people if they would rent us that with the idea of your putting a bookshop in it." So we went and talked to Mr. Lawrence, and I told him what I wanted to do, and he said, "All right, I'll do it." I said, "How much will you charge me?" And he said, "Thirty-five dollars a month." [laughter] So then Lloyd drew up the plans for this shop, and it included a lot of cabinet work. All the bookcases and the tables and everything were to be prefabricated and then just brought in and put together and stained. And I went again to my friend Julius Jacoby and told him what I wanted to do, and he said, "Well, go out and see a man by the name of Bob Raphael. They've got a cabinet-making plant that's called Southern California Hardwood Company, and they put in store fixtures and things. Take him your blueprints and tell him I sent you. I'll call him up." So I went to see Mr. Raphael, and he looked them over. He said, "Well, it will cost you about \$500, and you can pay me fifty dollars a month."

GARDNER:

There you are for eighty-five dollars a month.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Then I went to Louis Epstein, who had a bookshop on West Sixth Street. Louis, as you remember, had the Acadia Book Shop. One day a man by the name of [Ralph] Howey came in and said, "Will you take"--I think it was—"\$1,600 for your bookshop?" And Louis said yes. So he walked out of the store, gave the man the key, and he was at loose ends. So he would come to see me, and he and I would go out looking for books together. And I told him about this, the fact I didn't have any books on the shelf—and Louis had already started accumulating stock for another bookshop. So he said to me, "I'll lend you some books. I'll let you have some to put on your shelves, but when I start my own shop I want back anything that you haven't sold." So I started with books that Louis lent me, with a few that I was able to buy, and with some books out of the collections of some of my other friends [which] they didn't want anymore; and they said, "Take them and put them on your shelf." So. And that was the way I started my bookshop.

1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (July 26, 1977)

GARDNER:

As I showed you in the outline, number I is bookselling and letter A is early strategies of buying and selling, so I think you might begin talking about your perspective on the book business when you went into it--what you had in mind to sell, what you had to sell, and so forth. Let me intersperse here, when you finished last time, you mentioned Louis Epstein's giving you the stock . . .

ZEITLIN:

Some stock.

GARDNER:

... to open the first store. I thought that might be a good point to begin.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it was not only Louis Epstein but several other people who lent me books so that I could fill my shelves. For instance, Louis Samuel let me have

quite a few books, and there must have been others whose names I've forgotten now. I really started with the encouragement of a few friends. Some of them were in the book trade, and some were not. In the book trade there was Jim Blake, who represented Harper and Brothers and whom I'd met originally in Texas in a very peculiar way. Blake had been a bookseller in San Francisco many years ago; he had been actually a partner of Newbegin's and had started a bookshop of his own, and had failed, but had really found his best medium as being a publisher's representative. And I'm sure that there was no one ever in the book trade who performed the wonderful function he did, had the great role that he did, with all of the booksellers, the book clerks, the book collectors and authors, that he did. He seemed to attract friends everywhere he went, and he seemed to spend more of his time doing things for friends than he did selling books. Every bookseller saved his problems and his troubles for Jim Blake to come around so that they could unload onto his ample shoulders and get his advice and get his help. And he was very willing and eager to help, and I have an idea that he must have lent thousands of dollars to indigent booksellers and book clerks in guaranteed credit. As an example, when I first left Bullock's in the spring of 1927 and went into Barlow Sanitarium, Jim Blake arranged for one of the bookstores in Los Angeles to send me a book a week so that I would have something interesting to read, and I must say that it gave me a great sense of having a friend in the outside world at a time when I had very few. Among the books which he arranged to send to me was Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* --hardly the book to read while you're in a TB sanitarium. But certainly I had the time and leisure to read it, which I have never had since. Jim Blake, when I told him that I was going to start up on my own, suggested that I get out some letters to possible customers, and he arranged with his publishing house and several other publishing houses to guarantee my credit to a reasonable extent, so that I could write a letter promoting a book and then be sure of being able to supply it if I had any customers. And among the first books that I wrote a letter about, promoted, was *Angel's Flight*, by Don Ryan, one of the very good early books about Los Angeles, the Los Angeles newspaper world, and the world of cranks and religious freaks. I had a mailing list made up primarily of the people who had bought books from me when I was at Bullock's—I had managed to put together a card file of their names and addresses—and in addition I was furnished with lists of names by friends; so I had perhaps a couple of hundred

names that I could send out mailings to. And as I look back, I think I can say without undue modesty that they were very good letters. It's surprising what good results I got from them. It wasn't enough, however, to really make any money. What it did mainly was to bring me to the attention of quite a few people --100 people or more around town --so that my name was recognizable. I had a great deal of help, and I can never stop remembering that. There were people who went out of their way to buy books from me who I am sure really didn't want them. There were people who gave me credit, like Odo Stade, who was the manager of Hollywood Book Store, who gave me a [one-] third discount on books, on which I am sure, in many cases, he didn't have that much net profit.

GARDNER:

To what do you ascribe all the generosity?

ZEITLIN:

I have no idea, except that I was young, enthusiastic, innocent, and eager.

GARDNER:

And all those other Horatio Alger adjectives.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, all the other Horatio Alger adjectives. I think that the fact that I published in 1927 this book of poems with an introduction by Carl Sandburg must have given people the idea that I was a promising young poet. It was reviewed in the *L.A. Times* by Paul Jordan-Smith, who became a good friend of mine very early. And this, I think, gave me a certain standing, a certain distinction,

GARDNER:

You mentioned also, after telling that Louis Epstein had given you the books, that there was an interesting story having to do with his wanting them back.

ZEITLIN:

Well, at the time Louis Epstein lent me these books, he had sold the bookshop which he had on West Sixth Street—the Acadia Book Shop—to the Howey brothers, and he set out immediately going around and buying up books. So pretty soon he had a roomful of old books. He would go to the Salvation Army

and the Goodwill, the other thrift shops, and go through their books, and pick out the reasonably good ones, and buy them, and just stow 'em away. He also learned about the auction houses and taught the auctioneers that they could get more than ten cents a volume for their books when they put them up in lots, and so they very often would accumulate their books and let Louis Epstein have them at a knockdown price, rather than put them out at auction at the mercy of the merciless public. In time, the auction houses became a very good source of books for Louis. For some months after I started, he continued to accumulate books, and then, after a while, he found a place of business over on Eighth Street [and] decided to open up again. So he came to me and said he wanted his books, the ones that I hadn't sold and accounted for. And I said, "Louis, you can't have those books because if you do my shelves will be empty." This was all very goodnatured; neither one of us got mad. And I finally turned over to him what books were still unsold. But he's always made a big thing of it and a great joke that I wouldn't give him his books back.

GARDNER:

Were your interests in books similar? It would seem to me that . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, at that time, any decent book interested me. I had a strong interest in English literature, contemporary English literature. And I remember I started in buying from a firm in London by the name of William H. Jackson, who were distributors. They were brokers for publishers, and they would send me over packages of books of the prominent authors of the day. First they would send me lists and I would order five or ten copies of Martin Armstrong, and A.E. Coppard, and H.E. Bates, and Sylvia Townsend Warner, and the other prominent authors of the day, so that they came to me in bundles. And I was the only bookseller, for some reason, who was importing these books. They were seven shillings and six pence, and I think the average retail price was \$1.75. I think one of the things that attracted people to me is that they learned very quickly that these English books in fine condition--the original dust wrappers all new--were coming in, first editions, and that they could get them from me. And as Larry Powell has had occasion to mention, books smell different: a book produced in England smells differently from a book produced

in the United States, and pretty soon the place becomes permeated with the smell of the glue and the cloth and the ink which is used in those books. So I think my shop, after a while, developed the odor of English bookshops rather than the typical American bookshop. [laughter] Now, at that time, I had a young woman who came to work for me. She had been a newspaper reporter on the *Los Angeles Record*. Her name was Marjorie Butler. Marjorie was the most versatile, capable person you could imagine: She could type, she could use a paint brush, she could wrap packages, and she was willing and eager. And I actually gave her a fourth interest in the business and later had to buy it out.

GARDNER:

Would that be on Sixth Street now?

ZEITLIN:

That was on Hope Street. That was at the very beginning. Later I moved around on Sixth Street. But we sort of grew in different directions. We were different personalities. We sort of didn't continue to be simpatico. There was never anything but a friendship and a business relationship, but something didn't work. And at the same time, a very remarkable young man by the name of William Blaine Wooten came to work for me. Bill was a man who, if he had continued along the lines that he was developing when he worked for me, would have become, I think, one of the greatest modern calligraphers and designers. He had a very fine instinct for lettering, he knew types, he was extremely well read, he was interested in the whole movement of William Morris and Cobden Sanderson, he knew good graphic arts, and he had the techniques of lettering and binding and anything having to do with the book arts right at his fingertips. It was he who mounted some of my shows, and did the window cards, and arranged the windows in a very tasteful manner, so that before long I think we had a unique quality about our place, in terms of the taste and the way that his taste reflected the then-growing tradition. We were getting books like the Nonesuch Press books in 1928, after they really got going; we were buying books from Douglas Cleverdon, who was just beginning his bookselling in Bristol--I think we were among the earliest and the largest customers that Cleverdon had in this country. I remember we filled

a whole window with the book on the prints of Eric Gill which Cleverdon had published.

GARDNER:

How did you know to—how did you find some of that Cleverdon? Here you were a bookseller in Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN:

I don't know. I think that I just had the curiosity and the interest, and that I naturally gravitated towards that sort of thing. Where I got my models, I can't say—I think I must have come in contact with them even before I came out to California, but I have no remembrance of just what I encountered which started me off with a sense of the kind of printing and typography that was being produced by Cleverdon, the Nonesuch Press books. I think that together with that fact, I didn't hesitate to write to these people and tell them, that I liked their books, and I would like to sell them.

GARDNER:

Did you find yourself influenced by any other of the downtown booksellers? It seems that even at the beginning, you're setting off in a completely different direction.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think, of course, everybody was influenced by and admired Ernest Dawson. Ernest Dawson was a very generous man. He was a good-spirited man, and he was also a tremendously energetic man who inspired and stimulated other people. I remember that in 1928 on Christmas day, I was in my shop because I'd come down to get caught up on some things. I got a phone call from Ernest Dawson. He said, "I just got in a big shipment of books which Marks and Company" (who were his agents in London) "bought for me, cases and cases of incunabula." These days if somebody has four or five incunabula, it's quite remarkable. In those days Ernest Dawson would bring over a shipment of maybe 150 or 200 incunabula at one time. And he said, "Would you like to come over and see them?" I went over and, of course, here were these beautiful books in contemporary binding, some of them chain bindings. And he said, "I've got a lot of these here, more than I need for my

shop, and if you would like to have some of them for your bookshop, you pick out what you would like, and you can have them for 10 percent above my cost." He didn't need to do it; he could have sold them all himself. I have no reason--I cannot understand why he was moved to do this, but I certainly am grateful for the fact that he did. So I was able to take over to my shop maybe twenty or twenty-five of these beautiful fifteenth-century books. And when I opened after Christmas, I had something to show people that was really outstanding—would be distinguished today, more distinguished even I think than then, when fifteenth-century books were being brought over by Dawson and other booksellers--although nobody as much as Dawson--in large quantities.

GARDNER:

I read a story—and I can't recall where it was, I'd have to shuffle through my notes, and I don't think I will--that Maggs came over here at one point and made contact as well.

ZEITLIN:

Well, in 1928, I think it was, Ernest Maggs came over. I had written to Maggs Brothers, and I said, "I would like to have your catalogs, and if you need someone, I would like to represent you in the United States and do anything I can to show your things to people. If you want to send them over for me to show, if you have things that you think I can sell, I would appreciate your giving me an opportunity." So Ernest Maggs came to town, and he stayed at the Ambassador Hotel, and he called me up. I came down to the hotel, and he said, "I want to go out to Mrs. Getz"--who was then one of the most important book collectors in this part of the world —"and would you like to come with me?" So I went out. He was very well received, and she had known me before [and] was very nice to me. And then he went out to see Mrs. Doheny. I don't remember that I went with him then. He had brought along with him a collection of first editions--*The Deserted Village*, *Tom Jones*, *Gulliver's Travels*. He had, oh, thirty or forty outstanding books, among other things a very good copy of, as well as I remember it, the second or third folio of Shakespeare. And he said, "Why don't you take these? I'll leave them with you. I don't want to take them back to England. Sell what you can. The rest of them, we'll let you know when we want them, where you should send them. " And I said, "Mr.

Maggs, you know, I'm not worth a cent. If those books were to be damaged or lost, I couldn't possibly pay for them." And he said, "Don't be foolish. Just take them, and I'm sure that you will be responsible." He loaded me into a taxi and sent me home with these books, so here I was right away with a beautiful collection of important English first editions. I never realized, really, what an exceptional collection I had, and I didn't know who to go to. At that time I hadn't yet contacted William Andrews Clark. I showed them to the people that came into my shop. I tried to sell some to Mrs. Doheny, but she wasn't prepared to take them seriously, so that instead of my selling them to her direct, one of the New York booksellers got an order from her for a set of *Tom Jones*, or something like that, which I sent to him in New York, and he sent it back to California. But the same thing worked the other way around. There were collectors in New York who wouldn't buy from New York booksellers. I would buy from those booksellers, quote them to the collectors in New York, and mail them back there. That was true in the case of a man by the name of Charles Kalbfleisch. Charles Kalbfleisch was a stockbroker on Wall Street. His office was a very short distance away from Byrne Hackett's Brick Row Book Shop. Byrne Hackett didn't have a very good reputation, unfortunately. He had a tremendous nose for good books and was a very imaginative, creative bookseller, but he evidently had a bit of the rogue about him. His brother was a well-known writer of the time. He did a book about Henry VIII. I'm trying to remember . .

GARDNER:

Francis Hackett?

ZEITLIN:

Francis Hackett, yes. But Byrne Hackett had a distinguished stock of books, and he was a very brilliant bookseller, but he unfortunately had this tendency to want to play the rogue once in a while, and this got him in bad with quite a few people. So I would order books from Byrne Hackett, or Byrne Hackett would write me and offer me books; I would in turn offer them to Mr. Kalbfleisch a few doors down the street from Hackett; Mr. Kalbfleisch would order them from me, and I would have to have them sent out here and then sent back to New York because I didn't want Mr. Hackett to know where I was selling the books. And so this thing works two ways. There's always the

glamour of distance. People seem to feel that if you offer them something, it is as if you've newly discovered it, that it has been buried in cellars or attics for 100 years, or that it's been created out of nowhere, there's a certain magic about it if it comes from a long way off. So that I have customers here in Los Angeles that would rather buy from dealers in New York and London, and in some cases the books they buy are books which these people have bought from me. And it works the other way around. I have customers in New York and London [and] other parts of the country that buy books from me that they wouldn't buy around the corner.

GARDNER:

Early on, who did your clientele consist of? Was it through the circle of friends that you made, or were there a lot of people who dropped in the shop?

ZEITLIN:

I had wonderful support from a man by the name of Bill Conselman and his wife, Mina . If I needed money, I could just load up a pack of books. They were mostly interested in authors like James Branch Cabell and Theodore Dreiser, so I'd go out to their house, and they'd feed me and buy a couple of hundred dollars' worth of books. It saved my solvency more than once. Then along about 1928, Elmer Belt came in one day on the way to his office.

GARDNER:

This is when you were still on Hope Street?

ZEITLIN:

I was still on Hope Street, and he and his nurse, a Miss Theil, stopped, and he was so warm and friendly. And I remember the first book I ever sold him. It was a great big thick book, bound in vellum, and the title was *Sepulcritum*, and before long I'll remember the author. It was a book of post mortems, a seventeenth-century book, the first large collection of pathological case histories that I think had ever been put together. Bonetus was the author. This book had been left with me by a man by the name of Charles Lincoln Edwards. Edwards headed the department of natural history with the Los Angeles public schools. It was a sort of teaching museum, and he also used to go around to the different classes and lecture. He was a lovely, inspiring man, and his wife

was a charming woman, too. They were extremely well read people of very good taste. He had been a professor at Stanford University. He was brought out from the University of Texas, where he taught before, by [David Starr] Jordan, who had been hired by Stanford to form Stanford University, and put together a staff. Charles Lincoln Edwards had then come down here to Los Angeles and had set up this department connected with the public schools, but finally the politics of the public school system closed up his whole museum, and his library, and all his lectures. There were lots of people until very recently who used to remember Charles Lincoln Edwards and his nature lectures. He was a very fine man, who, among other things, published what is probably the first American book of folk songs. It was a collection of songs from the Bahamas, *Bahama Songs and Stories* (Boston, 1895) , which, I am glad to say, I have a copy of inscribed by him. He was quite an elderly man when I got to know him in 1925, and he was very kind to me. He and his wife took me into their house, encouraged me, treated me with great consideration, talked to me about all of the people they'd known in the world of science. They'd known David Starr Jordan very well, [and] a lot of other people; they were full of anecdotes, good spirits. I think they were very sad in their later years. They made unfortunate investments in avocado groves in Southern California, which everybody hoped to make their fortune with. They didn't go. And they had a son who was a newspaperman and worked on the *Los Angeles Examiner*. I remained friends with him after they died. But Charles Lincoln Edwards had accumulated a number of good books over the years, and when I think back on it now, I think what a pity it was that I didn't appreciate these books more. He had bird books of Gould and Elliot; he had very fine color-plate books of flowers. And he turned these over to me to sell for him. And it was out of the work that I did describing them and the research that went with it that I developed my interest in early science and the history of science.

GARDNER:

Is that so? That was the origin.

ZEITLIN:

I think that, probably more than anything else, except of course I'd always been an avid reader of what now would probably not be looked upon as very

high grade scientific thought. I had read Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science*, and I had read everything, every line, that John Burroughs ever wrote. I had read everything of Jean Henri Fabre — *The Life of the Bee*, *The Life of the Fly*, and so on—and I still think that he is one of the most poetic nature writers that ever lived. Of course, along with that I read Ernest Thompson Seton, and a man by the name of Roberts--some of the people who substituted fancy for fact in their treatment of animals. But generally, somewhere along the line, I acquired a sense of the difference between science, the rigors of scientific logic, and the non-scientific way of thinking. I think that, really more than anything else, sort of set my course.

GARDNER:

Mrs. Getz was also one of your important early clients, wasn't she?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, she was really the client upon which I depended most, and I think without her I would never have gotten started as a real book seller. And it was her friend Julius Jacoby who called me and said, "Call up Mrs. Getz. She is collecting rare books, and she'll buy some from you if you call her." Well, as a matter of fact, she called me first. She called me up, and she said she wanted a set of the [Konrad] Haebler portfolios on incunabula, which at that time were being distributed in this country by E. Weyhe. The whole set probably didn't come to more than \$1,000 or \$1,200. Recently I sold a set for \$10,000. But I naturally didn't have that kind of money, and I knew that Weyhe wouldn't give me credit, so I called up Mr. Jacoby and I said, "Your friend Mrs. Getz has given me an order for these books, and I haven't got any money to buy them with. How am I going to supply them if I can't get the money?" And he said, "Go down to the Union Bank and ask for Mr. Joe Lippman." Well, it happened that Mrs. Getz's husband was the vice-president of the Union Bank. His name was Milton Getz. Her father was Kaspere Cohn, who had founded the Union Bank. But of course, Mrs. Getz didn't want them to know that she was buying rare books--at that clip, anyway. It wasn't good for your business associates to know that you were indulging in luxuries like that. Her brother-in-law, Ben Meyer, was the president of the bank also. So I went to Joe Lippman and said, "Julius Jacoby sent me to see you and borrow some money. And he said for you to call him up." So he called up Jacoby, and Jacoby said to him, "This

young man is a young man with a future. He's a very respectable young man who's in the book business, and he doesn't have any money, and I want you to lend him some money. I will guarantee his account up to \$5,000." There was absolutely no reason for this. And as a matter of fact, Julius Jacoby has always had a reputation--as a misanthrope. When I talk to people now, they say, "He was a mean son of a bitch. How did he ever do that for you?" But he did, and he never expected anything back. I never could do anything for him to compensate. In any event, with this guarantee, I had some credit, so that I could go to the bank and borrow a couple of thousand dollars and buy books and deliver them and get the money and pay them off and take the profit. The first thing I bought was this group of Haebler. There were five volumes in all. There was German incunabula; west European incunabula, which included Holland and England and Spain and the Flemish country; and then there was the Italian incunabula. And these were beautiful portfolios which contained single sheets from a number of the outstanding printers of all Europe. And among others, the set on west European incunabula contained a Caxton leaf, which in itself has become more valuable than the full set was then. It was Merle Armitage who told me to write Carl Zigrosser, the manager of the print department at Weyhe. That was then the outstanding art-book store in the United States. Weyhe himself was a real genius, a man of tremendous taste and great energy, and a very sharp businessman. And the man in charge of his print department was Carl Zigrosser, a young man who was just commencing his career, and in the course of time became the outstanding American authority on the graphic arts. Artists were attracted to Weyhe. He exhibited them in a little gallery upstairs. It wasn't much of a place. I had an idea this was a great big handsome gallery. It wasn't. It was just a wall and a balcony upstairs over the bookshop. But Weyhe had a great talent for accumulating books and for attracting artists, and he showed a great many of the first American printmakers, along with a lot of the very good prints of older artists. But what he really specialized in were people who for the moment aren't so well known—Erail Ganso, [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi, Rockwell Kent, Marie Laurencin. And he had prints by Picasso and Matisse for very little money. He had an enormous business built around his very special taste, and people flocked from all over the country to Weyhe 's to see his exhibitions and to buy these new printmakers. He had a great deal to do with the graphic arts renaissance of the twenties and thirties. Carl Zigrosser responded very kindly to me and

sent me out several exhibitions for my one wall which I always reserved for prints. I had an exhibition of Marie Laurencin; I had an exhibition of Rockwell Kent. The prints were provided to me; they gave me a discount, I sent back what I didn't sell. And then my first local show was Peter Krasnow, the lithographer who lived in Glendale and is still alive. My second show was the photographs of Edward Weston.

GARDNER:

By this time, of course, you're on Sixth Street.

ZEITLIN:

No, I was still around the corner. Then I moved. I'm shuttling back and forth, but it's all in the 1927, 1928 period. And I think the fact that I was giving these exhibitions generated some excitement. Arthur Millier of the *Times* gave me little reviews; there were people who came in who were aware of all these new developments in the arts--in the graphic arts--[who] came and bought prints from me. There wasn't anyone else who was doing this. And small as my effort was, it was the only thing of its kind.

GARDNER:

As small as your shop was.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. But I had a lot of encouragement from people like Arthur Millier, who was the art critic of the *Times*; Merle Armitage, who was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera at the time and a collector of prints and graphic arts. And very soon this little shop of mine was a very busy place. I started getting out little brochures. I would send out postcards in which I reproduced an artist's work and announced that I had an exhibition. I didn't have any idea how insignificant these things were by comparison, and I was right.

1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (July 26, 1977)

GARDNER:

We were talking about the relative insignificance of . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, my wall was about 6 feet x 8 feet, but it was the only wall in which these things were being shown, and through some peculiar stroke of luck I managed to get publicity for it. At that time no one else was doing this sort of thing; today it wouldn't be exceptional. Now, showing Edward Weston was for me the beginning of what I continued to do through the years, and that is to show photographers. I didn't really know much about Stieglitz. I simply knew that in my opinion photography could be an art in the hands of a man who had the right eye. And I decided that I would show and offer for sale prints of photographers along with prints by wood engravers, lithographers, and etchers. Strangely enough, while they sold for very little, there were people who bought them. Now, they bought very few in the long run, and I can remember—I have letters from Edward Weston in which he speaks very gratefully of my sending him twenty dollars. Finally we accumulated a tremendous number of his photographs and offered them for sale. Edward decided to change the size of his print, the style of his mounting and everything, and suggested that I offer them for sale for \$2 apiece. So now some of the prints which turn up on the market for \$1,500 and \$2,000 each—and now even \$10,000 — are those prints which I had for sale for \$2.

GARDNER:

I'd like to stop you here and get some digressions on some of these people you've mentioned-- just short sketches, personality sketches--because so many of them were crucial in the era. Merle Armitage, of course, became an important man around Southern California.

ZEITLIN:

Well, at that time Merle Armitage was the managing director of the Los Angeles Grand Opera Association. There were two impresarios in Southern California at that time; as usual, they were spectacular personalities. One of them was L. E. Behymer, who really deserves a monument, and for whom there should be a special biography because I think that Behymer brought more culture to Southern California from the turn of the century on into the thirties than any other individual. He was the concert manager of Southern California, and every great musician of any sort was presented by Behymer. When Merle Armitage came out here, it was as assistant to Behymer, in

association with a concert manager in New York by the name of Charles Wagner. Before that, Merle had been a sort of an assistant to Charles Wagner. He had been the company manager of the Diaghilev ballet when it arrived from Russia and traveled across the country, and that was very exciting, a very strange and bizarre adventure. This taught him a tremendous lot about being resourceful and dealing with temperament. For a while, he was associated with Behymer, but then he broke off from Behymer and I think he became a concert manager on his own or in association with Charles Wagner, who managed certain important American stars. He had a very close association with Mary Garden, and soon he was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera Association. He was a spectacular personality. He had style about him; he dressed as an impresario should. He had been born in Iowa. He had grown up in the Middle West. His name was originally Elmer Armitage, but he saw the advantage of changing it to Merle.

GARDNER:

It's an anagram, too.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. And he, as is the case with a lot of impresarios, was a combination of genius and con man. But I'm glad to say that I enjoyed the benefits of the best sides of his character. He had a great zest for living. I met him first in this group which circulated around Will Connell, this group that never had a name, that used to meet at my shop occasionally and that published this magazine called *Opinion*. And in October of 1927, I think it was, Arthur Millier said, "Why don't you come on a trip to the Sierras with me." And I met Merle and Arthur at the end of Echo Park Avenue at the corner of Altivo Way. They picked me up, and off we went. Merle sported a Packard roadster, which was just about the peak of smartness. The only thing that exceeded it was a Stutz Bearcat. We started out and traveled along the east side of the Sierras. We swam in the streams; we ate at all of the out-of-the-way restaurants—and there were some very good Basque restaurants, there were some very good lumberjack restaurants, in places like Sonora. We went up the east side of the Sierras. We stopped at towns like Bridgeport and Carson City. We went past Mono Lake when it was really a very dramatic, somber place, to June Lake in the snow. For me it was a great experience, a really coming into life again. We stopped

at Reno. We visited the cribs of Reno, which have just been closed down. (I read in the paper today that a last-minute effort to make them a cultural monument had failed.) Lawrence Tibbett, the great baritone, was a friend of Arthur Millier, and he had given Arthur some extra money to spend on the trip, and Arthur shared it with us. We drank good cognac, and I remember reading to them from John Masefield's "Dauber" in the midst of a storm in one of our camps. We then proceeded to go over the Sierras through Truckee in the snow and down into Sacramento. We went to the State Library Building, which was just being finished then, and Maynard Dixon was painting the murals on the walls. They are there still, and they are really outstanding murals. And this was the beginning of my acquaintanceship with Dixon. We proceeded to San Francisco, where we enjoyed the company of Albert Bender, one of the fabulous characters, Mr. San Francisco of his day. We ate at Coppa's. We met a man who later became one of the outstanding composers in Hollywood, Hugo Friedhofer; I think he was playing an organ in a movie theater or something like that—he was just barely living. We turned back and went up into the Mother Lode country; visited Angel's Camp and Columbia when they were still in fairly good shape. I remember going to Virginia City and going down into what had been the print shop where Mark Twain had worked. We went to Gold Hill, Nevada. We stopped at the Yellowjacket Mine, which was closed down, and the old-timer who was guarding the mine told us the story how Senator Jones of Nevada had gone down into the mine to look it over. It wasn't producing, and they were going to have to decide whether to continue it or close it down—it meant the end of the economic well-being of a whole area. He came up, turned to the reporters who were there and said, "Boys, she's a sucked egg." That struck me as a truly apt description. We went to Gold Hill, Nevada, which was partly in ruins, and there we went to the ruins of a bank, the Gold Hill, Nevada, Bank. The vaults had been broken open, and all the old certificates and the papers and the records of the Gold Hill, Nevada, Bank were laying around on the ground. I took a carton and put these papers, without any selection at all, into a carton and brought it back and just put it away at home. And over the years I have sold hundreds of dollars worth of stuff out of that carton of rubbish that was lying there in the rain and wind. We turned back after going to the Mother Lode country, into San Francisco again, and then came down and stopped to visit Erskine Scott Wood, the man who had written *Heavenly Discourse*, a man who had had a great reputation.

He had published the first edition of Mark Twain's *1601*. He had been an Indian fighter on the frontier, and later in Portland had been a great defender of labor and a great liberal, and later moved down to San Francisco and married Sara Bard Field and remained until his death one of the great American symbols of independence and defenders of free ideas. He looked like the Sunday school leaflet picture of God, with the halo of white hair around his head and his long white beard. He and this lady of about seventy, Sara Bard Field, had built a beautiful house at Los Gatos. Some sculptor up there--I don't remember his name just now, but I will [Benjamin Buffano] -- had done a pair of stone cats which stood at the entrance to his estate, and we drove up the winding road. He met us standing out on the balcony, this grand patriarchal figure. He and this very dignified lady were living in sin, and would have remained living in sin if her grandchildren hadn't forced them to marry. I remember that he showed me Garrick's copy of the second edition of Shakespeare, and I opened it up. And I had a glass of wine in my hand, and I said, "Wait a minute, I have to put this wine aside." And he said, "Oh, no, no. Don't worry. If you spill wine on it we'll just say that it was spilled by Boswell or Johnson or Reynolds or one of Garrick's other friends." From there we went down to Carmel. We stopped and called on [Robinson] Jeffers. He was very hospitable; so was Una Jeffers. They didn't repel us. It was before Jeffers had really got to be very famous. He had published *Roan Stallion* and I think possibly *The Women of Point Sur*, but it was before the masses had started to invade his privacy. And in spite of the fact that he was supposed to be a recluse, we found him very friendly and hospitable. And instead of being the closemouthed character that he appears from his photographs, I learned then--and confirmed later in the times when I saw him--that if he got a chance to be alone without Una, he was talkative to the point of being garrulous, which I'm afraid I am being now.

GARDNER:

That's precisely what you're supposed to be. Did you have any introduction to Jeffers? Had you corresponded, or Armitage or Millier corresponded, with him?

ZEITLIN:

I think I may have written him a letter. When his *Roan Stallion* came out, the Liveright edition, I was in the book department of Bullock's. And I read it, and I said, "That guy is an important poet, and I think this guy is going to be one of the important American poets, and certainly the most important poet of the Pacific Coast." So I persuaded the manager, June Cleveland, to order a quantity of the books, and I started selling them. And I don't know just how it was; I may have dropped him a note. In any event, when I got to Carmel, I wasn't unknown to him. Una was very hospitable, too. She was, of course, very protective, as she was later on completely possessive; more and more as time went on, she cordoned Jeffers off, partly because he couldn't stand the pressure of all the people that wanted to get at him and partly because she was so terribly possessive and didn't want to lose him. There was one rift in our friendship, and that was a few years later when a man by the name of Ramiel McGehee, who lived in Redondo Beach, turned over to me a group of letters and postcards which Robinson Jeffers had written to a foster mother, a woman that lived in Redondo, about himself and Una at a time when Una and Robinson had left Una's husband and gone up north (I think they went to Seattle, Vancouver, and they wrote a number of postcards to this foster mother) . Well, Ella Winter, who was married to Lincoln Steffens, was eagerly collecting anything having to do with Jeffers. And when I got this material, I immediately sent a list of it to Ella Winter. She in turn told Una Jeffers about it, and I got a very heated, very... well, I guess you could call it "disagreeable" letter from Una asking me how I dared offer these things for sale; how could I think of selling anything that was so intimate. And so I wrote back and said to Una I was surprised to discover that these offended her; that these were for sale, that they had been brought to me by a man who owned them who was offering them for sale, and that I had no interest in trying to cause her any embarrassment, and that I had returned the letters to this man and told him I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I'm very sorry I did; I should have bought them from him and put them away [laughter] because today they would be worth a great deal of money. And not only that--they would be essential to the story of the relationship of Una Kuster, as she was then (she was married to a man by the name of Kuster in Carmel), and Robin Jeffers.

GARDNER:

Did he ever do anything with the letters?

ZEITLIN:

I don't know what happened to them. I haven't the slightest idea.

GARDNER:

You never saw them on the market, though.

ZEITLIN:

I never saw them on the market. He died, and they disappeared. And whether they survived and came into someone else's possession, I don't know. This man Ramiel McGehee was an interesting character who had gone to Japan with Ruth St. Denis. He lived in a little house in Redondo, and he was a friend of Edward Weston, and later of Merle Armitage. He helped Merle Armitage produce a cookbook. He stimulated a couple of young fellows living down at Palos Verdes—they were longshoremen who had turned lifeguard--into writing. One of them was Lee Jarvis, who had been an Olympic swimmer, and the other was a very beautiful young man by the name of Grant Leenhouts, who managed the swimming club at Palos Verdes. Grant wrote several good stories, one of which appeared in the *American Mercury*, and then one of them was reprinted in the *O'Brien Best Short Stories*. The group sort of ... some of the group--Merle Armitage; Ramiel McGehee; Edward Weston; an interesting woman, a lesbian by the name of Tone Price, who followed me out here from Texas; and a very beautiful young woman whose name I can't remember right now—well, there were a considerable group of us which used to go down to this swimming club in Palos Verdes. We would hold great parties there at night after the natives of Palos Verdes, who were paying for the club, had gone to bed. [We would] broil lobsters, and have great songfests, and dance, and talk, shout. Later, I introduced a novelist by the name of Myron Brinig into this group, very much to my regret. Myron Brinig was a sort of a sulky baby elephant, and he had a certain way of winning your confidence. He had published a couple of books about his family in Montana, a couple of novels. I took him down there, and later he published a novel called *Flutter of an Eyelid* in which he tried to do a Southwind about this group. He made me into a very ugly character. It was, I thought, very unkind; and it was, more than that, a betrayal of an effort to be a friend to him when he was lonely and needed friends. The publishers made the mistake of sending me a set of the galleys before it came out, whereupon I immediately notified

the publishers that this set of galleys, if they published the book in that form, constituted libel, [and] that I was going to take action. And I got in touch with a friend here, a young lawyer by the name of Homer Crotty, who later got to be one of the very important figures in Southern California. Through him, I got in touch with a man I'd known before, John J. McCloy, a rising young lawyer and a member of the firm of Cravath, Somebody, Somebody, Somebody (DeGardsdorf, Swaine, and Wood), one of the leading law firms in New York City. John McCloy later became the high commissioner to Germany for the United States and is now, I think, the president of the Chase Manhattan Bank. But at that time he was a relatively young man of promise. I asked him what he thought could be done about this book. Well, he got in touch with their lawyers, and their lawyers immediately sent someone out here who got a hold of them and told Farrar and Rinehart, the publishers, that I had one of the most important law firms in the United States representing me. [laughter] They couldn't believe it. They thought this little jerk out here in California couldn't muster any influence or force, and it was purely by accident. So they sent another man out here. First they had Leslie Hood, who was the head of A. C. Vroman company in Pasadena, call me up and come to see me and try to persuade me that it would be all right, that there was nothing wrong about this book. And then they sent their own representative out, and I made a mistake. He persuaded me to go ahead and strike anything I wanted out of the book and let them go ahead and publish it. I should have consulted McCloy and said, "What do you think I ought to do?" I think McCloy would have had them on the carpet for a half a million dollars. In any event, I agreed to their proposal. In the meantime, they had issued advance review copies of this book, and they sent out telegrams and sent personal representatives to every reviewer that received a copy asking for it back. And, I'm told, they've destroyed these. I kept mine, and I have from time to time been able to buy a copy or two. One of the copies I bought was from a dealer in Beverly Hills, Max Hunley. He showed me the book, and he asked me if I wanted to pay fifty dollars for it, and I said, "No, that's blackmail." And he said, "Well, if you won't pay fifty dollars, will you write something in it?" And I said "Sure," and so I wrote, "This book is inscribed in memory of a louse I once knew. —Jake Zeitlin." A few months later the book turned up with an inscription underneath: "Says you. --Myron Brinig."

GARDNER:

That's amazing.

ZEITLIN:

The book was not much of a book. There needn't have been any fuss about it because it didn't sell. Nobody took any interest in it. None of us were prominent enough to make good news stories. The book died on the book counters and was forgotten.

GARDNER:

To return to your trip with Armitage and Millier, was the Jeffers visit in Carmel the last stop?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. We stopped in Carmel—I think those are the last people we saw. We may have stopped in Santa Barbara, where Brett Weston was living at the time and doing photography. And then we came down the coast. It was like an Arthur B. Davies landscape as we drove through it, not knowing how much road there was ahead of us or what there was beside. It was like a dream sequence in a fantasy movie.

GARDNER:

You've described Armitage. Could you describe Arthur Millier a little bit—what he was like then, perhaps, and something about your friendship with him?

ZEITLIN:

Arthur Millier had been born in Great Britain. His father was a music teacher. He came to San Francisco, I think, when he was in his teens. His first job was as an artist in the Schmidt Lithograph Company, who specialized in labels for bottles and cans and boxes. They were the biggest producers of lithographic labels on the Pacific Coast at the time. Now, how he got down to Los Angeles and how he got to be the art editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, I don't know. The man who preceded him was also an Englishman, and I can only remember his first name, Anthony [Anderson]. Arthur became the art editor of the *Los Angeles Times* without any training, I think, either as a newspaperman or in art history or art criticism. Newspapers in those days, if somebody came along who said, "I will write the music criticism" or "I'll write the art criticism," didn't examine their credentials any more than they do now. I mean, a guy like Bill

Wilson or Henry Seldis was never really trained to be an art critic; they're journalists. Arthur had an engaging way about him. I think he tried to stay free of any commitments to the people who had art galleries, but naturally he couldn't help but develop certain friendships, like those with Earl Stendahl, who had a leading gallery at that time and who was really showing some very important things here. I know the first showing of the *Guernica* of Picasso was in Earl Stendahl's gallery. After all, it's the art dealers who provide the medium through which art is exhibited. Without them, you would not have an art world anyplace. And a city like Los Angeles owes a great deal to all the different men—like Earl Stendahl, and Dalzell Hatfield, and Frank Perls—who had the enterprise, the courage, to present some of the important artists of their time, and promote them, sometimes without very much financial success but always with great enthusiasm. I think they proved what artists need to learn over and over again: that art dealers are entitled to make money off of art because they will give half a dozen shows or a dozen shows in which they make no sales at all, and then they have to hope that they will have one exhibition that makes some money. And when they do, very often the artist whom they've put on the map will turn around when he's successful and leave him, try to sell the clients direct or go to a bigger, more influential gallery. I've had that experience myself, and that's one reason why I don't deal in living artists' work. I think the most manageable artists and the most grateful ones are dead artists. [laughter] Well, anyway, I'm not talking much about Arthur Millier. Arthur Millier was a good talker, a good conversationalist. He wasn't a great intellectual, but he certainly wasn't an ordinary man. He had immense charm, and he had great attraction for women --and I think he had great attraction also for men who liked his conversation and his company. He lived in Santa Monica Canyon. When I met him first, he was married to a beautiful dark-haired, dark-skinned woman by the name of Francine. She was half-Indian, and before he had met her she had been part of a racetrack, sporting-world crowd. She was a great friend of people like Baron Long, who ran the Agua Caliente racetrack and built the Los Angeles Biltmore, operated some of the famous nightclubs of the day. But she had married Arthur Millier, and they had had three children and were living quietly in Santa Monica Canyon, and it all seemed like a quiet and settled life. Then they moved out near El Monte, to a small place which had more ground on it. The children could have horses, and they were out in a semi-rural atmosphere. And then Arthur became a

great Lothario. Ultimately he became involved with a Southern woman by the name of Sarah, a public relations woman. And he completely went to pieces. He and Sarah took to drinking. They became impossible at social events and art openings to which they were invited, and they finally got down to living in a single room on Skid Row with nothing but a mattress on the floor, drinking and just down in the gutter. They seemed absolutely helpless. And something happened, something I've never understood and could never explain, but they got out of it. Somebody got them into Alcoholics Anonymous. By that time his wife had divorced him. He ultimately married Sarah. They stopped drinking; they straightened out; they cleaned up; they got an attractive apartment; she again became a public relations woman, which she had done very well before. And in the last years of their lives, they lived very stable lives. He died of lung cancer about five years ago. The one tragedy of Arthur Millier was that he was really a very fine watercolorist and a very fine etcher. About 1936 or '37, I gave an exhibition of his watercolors, and I think they were outstanding. They were in the tradition of the English watercolors. And about the only person that bought any of them was the woman who was the most generous and one of the finest patrons that Southern California ever had, Susannah Dakin. Susannah bought some of his watercolors; I don't know who else did, but very few of them sold. His etchings were in the tradition of Rembrandt and Seymour Hayden. They had great richness and, I think, a very fine feeling for the medium, and they sold very little. I think I had two exhibitions during his lifetime. In his later years, there was an exhibition at Barnsdall Park, and I made an effort to get the sponsorship to publish a book of his etchings; but they never were published, and I think they still should be. And I hope if I live long enough and can assemble the capital that a catalogue raisonne of his etchings will be published, because I don't think a finer etcher has ever worked in the western United States, and I think it's a tragedy that he remains unrecognized.

**1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One
(August 2, 1977)**

GARDNER:

We finished up last time talking about Merle Armitage and Arthur Millier, and I thought it would be interesting to go from that and talk a little bit

about *Opinion* magazine, which was the joint product of yourself and a number of the members of the young literary community of Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN:

Well, *Opinion* magazine was the outgrowth of the social activities, really--the getting together of a number of different kinds of people who used to circulate around my shop, have parties, and eat and drink together. It was a very widely diversified crowd. It contained people of the extreme right, like Phil Townsend Hanna, and people who would have been characterized as pretty far left, like Carey McWilliams. There was Judge Leon Yankwich, who later became a federal judge, who was one of the members of the group. There was a man by the name of Jose Rodriguez, who was a very lively, talented, charming Latin American, and quite a rascal besides, who wrote the perfect kind of yellow journalism that Mr. Hearst liked on his *Examiner*. There was Lloyd Wright, the architect; there was Arthur Millier; there was another newspaperman, by the name of Ted Leberthon; Will Connell, the photographer; Kem Weber, who was a furniture designer; Grace Marion Brown, who was a graphic designer; Henry Mayers, who was in the printing and advertising business and quite a tight-laced teetotaler, quite the opposite of most of the other members of the group. I can't remember the names of all the rest. There was Paul Jordan-Smith, who had written several novels and had edited Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; and Merle Armitage. And somehow or another these people managed to enjoy the kind of free-wheeling exchange of ideas and ribaldry and storytelling and joking that went on in the group. So the idea occurred to some of us that it would be great to publish a magazine. Well, there were about twenty people in the group, and each issue was supposed to be edited by one or more members of the group. They were to gather material from various contributors, and then we each contributed \$5 apiece, which made a total of \$100. Phil Townsend Hanna had a connection with a printing plant, a commercial printing plant, called Wolfer Printing Company; I don't think Wolfer Printing Company made any money out of *Opinion*. We managed to get out a total of seven issues. They had a variety of contributors--Leroy MacLeod, a novelist; Hildegard Flanner, a poet; Carl Haverlin, Gordon Ray; E.T. Bell; and I can't remember who else.

GARDNER:

What was the content?

ZEITLIN:

The content was quite varied. Some of them were essays, and some of it was poetry. Some of them were political opinions, and some was fiction. And finally, of course, it sort of collapsed. It ran out of steam. And it had no opinion, so there was no unifying philosophy behind it and no motivation that would keep it going. This random self-expression wasn't enough. We did get out these six issues. My bookshop was the address of the publication. There was no actual publisher listed, and few copies were distributed. We got a few subscriptions. We mailed out some to other magazines on exchange, and we sent some to libraries, and a lot of them remained undistributed.

GARDNER:

They must be quite a collectors' item now.

ZEITLIN:

I don't know. I don't think anybody is really bustin' his britches to get together a set. [laughter] Certain issues are harder to get than others, and I'm not sure that even I have a complete set of them. The group was never anything like a fixed group. People came and went. They swam in and out of the school, and there was certainly nothing like one directing personality.

GARDNER:

What exactly was your role? Did you have a specific role?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the only role I had was that I would sort of announce to these people, call them up, or get in touch with them as they came in and say, "Well, we're all going to get together next Friday night." Or I would say to one of these people, "Well, you're the editor of the next issue, so you better start calling on all the other people to get some material together." I would set deadlines. And then my chief function other than that was to mail them out and to collect the five dollars apiece and pay the printing bill.

GARDNER:

Did you do any poetry?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it had some of my poetry in it. It had translations of Japanese haiku by Carl Haverlin. It had political essays by Carey McWilliams. It had a short story or two. I can't remember who all the contributors were now; there were contributors outside the group. It turned out, however, that being nonpaying and not promising a very wide circulation, there wasn't much of an appeal. I don't think we ever got anything out of John Steinbeck or Faulkner or Jeffers, but we really never solicited them, either. We might have gotten. . . So this was a little bit of a symptom. I think it can be characterized as sort of a symptom of a ferment that was going on in a place that really hadn't arrived at anything like the cultural maturity that it has now. A great many of the people that were part of this group became successful in one way or another. Some of them reached their limit of success fairly soon and didn't go anywhere beyond that. But it was an interesting symptom of the kind of vitality that there was in the community, and of the variety of interests and impulses that wanted to find expression.

GARDNER:

Was it a monthly?

ZEITLIN:

More or less. [laughter]

GARDNER:

And what was the style of printing, and who was responsible for the printing? Oh, you mentioned the shop.

ZEITLIN:

The cover was designed by Grace Marion Brown, and that was uniform throughout. Some of the design was done, I think, by Merle Armitage and some by Henry Mayers. I really have no idea how it happened to get the particular format it did, because there wasn't anyone among us that was really a typographer. Grace Marion Brown was a designer, and she designed the cover; the general format followed from that.

GARDNER:

What was the size? Was it a regular magazine size or larger?

ZEITLIN:

It was approximately—I suppose it was 8 X 12 or thereabouts. Yes, it was normal magazine size.

GARDNER:

And how many pages per issue?

ZEITLIN:

It must have been twelve to sixteen pages.

GARDNER:

It's a fascinating and little-known part of Los Angeles history.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, well, I don't think that it blasted any new pathways or created any great convulsions, but it certainly had a touch of the big city about it--the big city that was coming to be.

GARDNER:

The next area that I've mentioned to you was the area of your own publication. (I don't mean Primavera Press, because we agreed that we'd try not to talk too much about that since it's so well covered elsewhere.) In going through the archives I found publications like *Booksworm* and *Booksheet*, and of course you did catalogs from the time you were on Hope Street.

ZEITLIN:

I don't remember anything called the *Booksworm*. I used to get out—I would try to write something a little lively for a Christmas sheet. It would be a large sheet that would fold down into a mailer, and it had some exhortations and essays and enthusiasms about books and art. I think that my whole idea of reaching the book buyers—partly influenced by Henry Mayers, of Mayers Company advertising, and then by Dana Jones, a very nice man who loved books, had a particular addiction to Christopher Morley and McFee (both people who are forgotten now, more or less—they certainly have been eclipsed and aren't noticed very much--but who had a large following in their

day: William McFee, who wrote stories about the sea; and Christopher Morley, who wrote charming, sentimental essays about books and bookish things, and also wrote one very good novel, aside from several lesser sentimental things like *Where the Blue Begins*, and *Parnassus on Wheels*, and *The Haunted Bookshop*—all which had to do with everybody's wish to be a bookseller or to have a bookshop on wheels and travel around the world, in other words to have all the advantages of an establishment and not be confined to one place). Dana Jones was in the advertising business. He took an interest in me and made suggestions about these large sheets, which could then be folded up so that you could do the whole thing in one press run without having any stitching or binding to do. And they became a sort of a standard style, if I ever had one standard style. The other thing is, when I first started my bookshop, I made it a point the first thing in the morning to sit down and write ten postcards to ten customers telling them something about some book that might interest them, or just reminding them that I was still there and would like to see them stop in. So as time went on, this did bring a good many people in, the fact that I remembered to write them and say, "There's something in here that interests you." In those days, of course, postcards only cost one cent to mail. Later on, I got a larger mailing list; and when I would have an exhibition, I would put some artist's drawing on the back of the postcard together with a message saying that there was an exhibition—and these went out once a month to everyone. I think they did a lot to get people's attention to the shop.

GARDNER:

What about catalogs? Did you do catalogs from the earliest moment?

ZEITLIN:

The first catalog I did was, I think, in 1928, and Wilbur Needham, who had come out here recently. . . . He'd been a book reviewer on one of the Chicago papers, and his wife, Ida Needham, a very lovely person--both of them really very much loved people. They were innocent like children; they never did grow up. He was deaf, and he was as beautiful as we think the young Shelley must have been. They started a little bookshop out in Santa Monica. He also did reviews for the *Los Angeles Times*. But after a while somebody labeled him a Red, and he was no longer allowed to do the reviews under his own name.

So he did reviews, and in return for the reviews he would get the review copies of the books, which he could sell to bookstores. That was what he and his wife lived off of for a long time, but he did the reviews under pseudonyms.

GARDNER:

What were some of them, do you know?

ZEITLIN:

I can't remember now. But he did the foreword to my first catalog, which was published in 1928 and was a very nicely designed catalog on cream-colored paper-- a pocket-sized catalog, not a large one but one that I figured that people could slip in their pocket and read while they were riding home on the streetcar. And it did fairly well. It could hardly have been called a financial success, but on the other hand, it succeeded in bringing a lot of people in. At that time I had a logo which was a grasshopper. People used to ask me why I used the grasshopper, and I said, "Because like the grasshopper in Aesop's fable, I fiddled and sang in the summertime and froze and starved in the winter."

GARDNER:

Even in Los Angeles. Who did you send the catalogs to at first?

ZEITLIN:

I sent them to libraries. It was easy to get lists of university libraries.

GARDNER:

Nationally?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I sent them around fairly widely. I'd send them to places like the University of Chicago Library, University of Illinois, University of Iowa, University of Texas, and then I would send them to certain public libraries; for instance, Cleveland Public Library was then a very active buyer of old books, and the New York Public Library, of course, was really in its prime and bought very heavily. And the Library of Congress was also buying. And then I sent them to booksellers. And of course the directories of booksellers, the names that would appear in the Book Wanted section, the Out-of-print section of

the *Publishers' Weekly*. There was no *AB* [*Antiquarian Bookman*] when I started; there was a separate section of the *Publishers' Weekly* which was edited by Jacob Blanck, and later on it became a separate publication, the *AB*, and it was bought by Sol Malkin, and set itself up as a separate business from Bowker. *Publishers' Weekly* originally was the medium through which all booksellers and all publishers advertised.

GARDNER:

Bowker still does *Publishers' Weekly*, doesn't it?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes, it still does *Publishers' Weekly*, and it's the chief medium for the publishers to get their books to the attention of the booksellers. It's the outstanding book-trade journal. It does a very good job. I think that I was also responsible for the first book fair that was held in Los Angeles, and that was held at the Los Angeles Public Library. June Cleveland of Bullock's, Leslie Hood of Vroman's in Pasadena, and myself formed the committee. And we got the publishers interested in sending exhibitions and got their representatives to come, and we had a publishers' book fair (it was really not a booksellers' book fair) at the Los Angeles Public Library, and that I believe was in 1927. I even have a letterhead of that. And that was, I'm sure, the first book fair held in Los Angeles. I was the secretary.

GARDNER:

What sort of business were you doing in those days?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think I mentioned before that I had learned about a firm in England that was exporting English authors, and they would get out a regular weekly bulletin describing what was being published by Martin Armstrong and A.E. Coppard and John Galsworthy and whoever was popular in the late twenties and early thirties. And I would order quantities of them--anywhere from five to twenty-five copies--of these first editions of Virginia Woolf and Robert Graves, [and] a great many other of the new authors of the time. They would arrive in packages smelling differently from American books--the peculiarly different smell of the glue and paper and printer's ink--and I would stack them

up with their different-colored jackets and designs from the American books ; and people would come in and buy , and it got to be a regular thing. Some people even said, "Send me everything by a certain author as you get it in." So I had a certain number of customers to whom, for instance, I could send anything by Virginia Woolf or anything by Martin Armstrong, or anything by A.E. Coppard-- these were some of the popular people--or Sylvia Townsend Warner, whom I remember particularly. This, of course, helped keep the business going. There wasn't much profit in any one of these things; in fact, I think that probably they were a loss. The money that a small bookshop makes has to be made out of secondhand books and buying large groups of secondhand books for small prices per unit. You can't make money out of handling new books in a small bookshop, because too many of them remain afterward, and in those days there was no returns policy.

GARDNER:

Especially to England; it would have been impossible.

ZEITLIN:

There was no returns policy to England; and the American books which I ordered, I had to either sell 'em or swallow 'em. And very often I was very much in debt to the publishers for books which hadn't sold and kept accumulating in the shop. I think the easiest way for a bookshop to commit suicide is to buy new books from publishers when it hasn't got the volume of a bookshop like Pickwick or Hunter's or so on, with hundreds of people coming through the place.

GARDNER:

What kind of money were you making in those days?

ZEITLIN:

Very little. I have no idea yet how I managed to keep the doors open. The landlords were very indulgent. West Sixth Street wasn't the street it is today, and there wasn't a great deal of demand for locations. There were some cheap hotels and restaurants along the street, and there were secondhand bookstores and other such things in the area below Grand. We made hardly enough to feed ourselves [or] to pay the rent, and very often we fell very far

behind on the rent and very, very far behind in paying the publishers. Maybe after a couple of years and the publishers kept on digging at us, we'd write to them and say, "Look, we can't pay you. Do you want us to shut up our place?" And they'd say, "No, pay us half of what you owe us, and we'll be glad to let you go on doing business." Because they needed the outlets, too, and everybody was in the same boat.

GARDNER:

You must not have kept carbons of those because not very much of that remains in the archive that I went through.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, there is a lot of correspondence concerning settlements with publishers.

GARDNER:

Yes, that's true. There is some.

ZEITLIN:

If you read Kathy Thompson's account of the shop in those days, you'll find quite a bit of reference to those ups and downs.

GARDNER:

There's a lot of reference, but very seldom is there a copy of a publisher saying to you, "Well, that's okay."

ZEITLIN:

Oh, well, there were plenty of them saying "Pay your bills or else."

GARDNER:

"Or else," right.

ZEITLIN:

Well, in those days I was looked upon as a promising bookseller and used to get visits from Bennett Cerf, who was just starting in; he and Donald Klopfer had worked for Horace Liveright. They had been stockboys and just worked in the place, and they broke off and went into publishing for themselves-- started Random House. Cerf used to come out and visit me. At that time

Bennett Cerf had an interest in fine printing, partly because of Elmer Adler, who was a member of the firm and who separately had a printing plant that he called the Pynson Printers. I was interested in press books and used to buy a lot. In fact, I think I was the largest outlet on the Pacific coast for the Nonesuch Press books and the Golden Cockerell Press books that were being published at the time. Things like the Four Gospels of Golden Cockerell Press with Eric Gill's engravings were seventy-five dollars, and I would take four or five of them, which was really considered phenomenal. Today those same things bring twelve-, fifteen hundred dollars apiece. The Golden Cockerell *Canterbury Tales*, with Eric Gill's illustrations: I had customers who had subscribed for sets, so that I think I may have at one time had standing orders for six or seven sets. And then I remember the Nonesuch Press Shakespeare, for which I think I must have had about ten standing orders; there were projected to be seven volumes, and they were coming out, oh, two or three a year. This was considered quite phenomenal by Random House, which was distributing these books in this country. So they took an interest in me and were very friendly and encouraged me. And at one time Bennett Cerf sent an uncle of his out here with the idea that maybe I would get together with the uncle and we would found a handpress and do some hand-press publishing, but nothing came of that. [tape recorder turned off] A good many of the book collectors in Los Angeles after a while discovered that they could find some of the new press books in my shop. I'd also taken an interest in some of the young printers. The first one that came to see me was a chap by the name of Gregg Anderson, who was working as a page in the Huntington Library. Gregg had the best taste and really the finest character of the whole group of us younger men. And he knew what to select in the way of matter to print; he was able to instinctively pick out good paper and good types. And he printed on a little proof press--whatever he could get ahold of. He called this press the Grey Bow Press, and he would print anywhere from five to twenty-five examples of various things. The best of them was a thing of Llewellyn Powys, an essay which I wish I had kept. I must still have it; I hope it's still around somewhere. Later, Arthur Ellis, a lawyer here in Los Angeles who had an interest in printing, sent over to England for an Albion handpress from the Caslon Company. It took a great deal of trouble for him to get that Albion handpress because they wanted to know what kind of a person he was and whether he was entitled to have one of their presses. And then we got the

press over here, and the Treasury Department wanted to know what he was going to do with this press. Was he by any chance thinking of printing dollar bills on it? But the press arrived, and it was lodged in his barn out in the south part of town, and we tried to get Gregg Anderson to come and work with it. Arthur Ellis quickly recognized the fact that Anderson was an unusual person with a true instinct for printing and types and paper. But Gregg Anderson wrote and said, "I am not ready to do that sort of thing. It's a mistake to think that I'm equal to your expectations." Well, he was then an undergraduate out at Claremont, and later he went up to San Francisco, and he worked as a printer's devil for the Grabhorns. He learned printing, every operation that went into the printing of a book, there with the Grabhorns. Later he went to Boston, and he worked for a while with D. B. Updike, who was really the best printer in the country at the time, a man of exquisite taste and sense of proportion and quality in typography. And then he went to work for the Meriden Gravure Company, a company which pioneered the use of collotype and other reproductive processes and became an outstanding concern in Meriden, Connecticut. Following that, he came back to California. Ward Ritchie was working for me, and I could see that Ward Ritchie didn't really want to be a bookseller. He was standing back in the shipping room doing layouts of books on the wrapping paper instead of wrapping books with the paper, and so I said, "Ward, I don't think you want to be a bookseller. I'm going to fire you and give you a printing job." Phil Townsend Hanna had brought me a book called *Libros Californianos*, which was a selection of the twenty-five best books, rarest and most important books--which is a difficult set of conditions to meet all within one group of twenty-five books. He got Leslie Bliss, Robert Cowan, and Henry Wagner each to select what they considered the twenty-five rarest books, and then he contributed an essay on California books, and he contributed his list of the five-foot shelf of books one should read in order to become familiar with California history. And we got it out in paperback for a dollar and a half, and cloth binding for three dollars, and it sold very well to people who were interested in California books. Mr. Dawson took quite a number of copies. Well, Ward Ritchie, and Gregg Anderson, and some friend of theirs who already had a printing plant all got together and produced these books, and that was the beginning of Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon. Anderson and Ritchie was first, and then Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon. Simon came along much later.

GARDNER:

Then it eventually became Ward Ritchie Press.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Ward Ritchie Press was the publishing outfit, which was separate from Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon.

GARDNER:

I see, which was the printer.

ZEITLIN:

Which was the printing concern. And Ward Ritchie owned and operated separately the Ward Ritchie Press. Now, I don't know how they kept their affairs from becoming commingled and entangled. The Primavera Press was started because of an out-of-luck poet by the name of Leslie Nelson Jennings - a man who wrote rather good sonnets but was an old auntie of a character-- [who] had drifted out here. He had worked for Harold Vinal, a poet who did some publishing in the thirties. Leslie Nelson Jennings was a Southern gentleman. He needed something to do and needed something to make a living at, and he persuaded me that we could do some vanity publishing; that is, we could publish books for poets who wanted their poetry published. He would be the editor, and he would supervise the production, and we would distribute them through the shop. And that is how the Primavera Press came into being. Primavera Press was in its beginnings a vanity press. A few months-- I'd say no less than a year--after the Primavera Press got started, and had published, oh, maybe three or four vanity books, the income from the Primavera Press was not enough to sustain Mr. Leslie Nelson Jennings. He was unhappy and felt it was a disappointment, so he withdrew. And I found myself the owner of the Primavera Press, which was nothing but an imprint and a stock of books of poetry, most of which were unsalable. [laughter] However, that gave me the idea of getting together a few people, like Phil Hanna, Carey McWilliams, Ward Ritchie, and Lawrence Clark Powell, and forming a corporation--the Primavera Press, Incorporated. So that came into being by taking over the books that Jake Zeitlin had published, and then the Primavera Press had published. Now, my first publication in Los Angeles was a book that I got out in 1929 with Bruce McCallister. It was called *Los Angeles in the Sunny*

Seventies, and it was the translation from the German of a book by Archduke Ludwig [Louis] Salvator, an Austrian archduke who had come here in the seventies and described everything within a day's buggy ride of Los Angeles, including Anaheim, and Fullerton, and Santa Monica, and--I've forgotten what the other communities were—Long Beach, San Pedro. But he had published this book under the title *Eine Blume aus derx goldene Land*; that is, "a flower from the golden land." But Phil Hanna had been publishing this translation by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur in *Touring Topics*—which was the predecessor of *Westways*-- serially. He suggested to me that this would be a good thing to publish as a book. So I went to McCallister, and McCallister printed it, and I published it. He got out a very attractive circular, and the thing sold out within a very short while. It was my first and probably most successful publication. We did better than break even, and we had a very nice book to our credit. Following that, I did a book by Sarah Bixby Smith; it was the third edition of her *Adobe Days*. And that's a book that I'm very proud of because it had some very fine personal recollections of growing up in Southern California as a member of the Bixby family.

GARDNER:

That remains a very important -

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it remains a very important book. The first edition of it was published by the Torch Press in Iowa, and the second edition was also published by the Torch Press. And then Sarah Bixby Smith, who was the wife of Paul Jordan-Smith, suggested to me that she would like to get it out in a better edition and add some new material, and I undertook to publish it. That was about 1933. It was a very attractive book, and it sold quite well. But when I merged my publishing with the Primavera Press, the Primavera Press then became a corporate entity; and when the Primavera Press started to falter, and there were not enough books sold to keep paying the small salary that we were supposed to give whoever did the secretarial and bookkeeping work and wrapped the packages and shipped them out, then the whole stock and everything was turned over to Ward Ritchie, to Anderson and Ritchie. And I'm sorry to say that after Anderson and Ritchie had the Primavera Press for a while, a good many of the books were junked. Ward says it was an accident,

that they had left them in the place they were occupying and been told they could leave them there, and that after a while the people that had occupied the place following them had dumped these books without notifying them. But, in any event, a large part of *Adobe Days* was destroyed, went to the dump; and a large part of a book translated by Van Wyck, the translation of Fracastorius ' s [Girolamo Fracastoro] *On Syphilis* also was largely destroyed, [as well as] several other books. So these books are now rarities, not because they were consumed by the public but because they were destroyed before they ever got to the public.

GARDNER:

The more or less definitive work on the Primavera Press is Ward Ritchie's *Influences on California Printing* that was done for the Clark Library in 1970. Well, I'm going to turn the tape over in a second, and when we get there I'm going to ask you a question about some of the printers with whom you worked on Primavera.

1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (August 2, 1977)

GARDNER:

In the Ward Ritchie pamphlet, one of the publications he mentions is something he did of Merle Armitage called *Aristocracy of Art*, and the designer was Grant Dahlstrom.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Grant Dahlstrom was working for the Mayers Company at that time; it was one of his first jobs in Los Angeles. I think he'd first come here and gone to work for Bruce McCallister; then the job ran out, and he worked for the Mayers Company. And then he went back to Bruce McCallister, with whom he remained for quite a long time. Bruce McCallister was the only printer around town in the middle twenties who had any appreciation for the tradition of fine printing or knew anything about early printed books. And he was a great idolater of the work of John Henry Nash. In fact, his devotion to John Henry Nash was excessive and uncritical. Nonetheless, he recognized the fact that John Henry Nash used good types and good paper, and he strove for

excellence in presswork and things like that, and he knew enough to appreciate these things. He also collected printed books, and the first book he ever asked me to find for him was a Jensen's [*Life of*] *Pliny* . Well, I never found a Jensen's *Pliny* for him, and it wasn't until many years afterwards that I finally had one on vellum, which I bought at the Chatsworth sale and sold for \$100,000. Merle Armitage, who was as energetic as he was egocentric, had delivered a speech at the California Art Club, which then used to meet in the Frank Lloyd Wright house, the so-called Hollyhock House. It had been Aline Barnsdall's house. And there, about once a month, there would be a meeting of the so-called California Arts Club; people like S. MacDonald-Wright and Arthur Millier, and a number of other people interested in the critical side of the arts would get up there and debate. Merle Armitage delivered this paper one night on the aristocracy of art and then suggested that I should publish it. I took it to the Mayers Company, but Grace Marion Brown actually designed that. Grant Dahlstrom had very little to do with it, and I'm sure he would be the first to disown it now because he disliked very much that bold black type that was used, and he also disliked the philosophy of Merle Armitage, which was expressed in that, as much as I did later when I came to realize what form of elitism Merle Armitage was advocating. But in any event, I did publish it, and curiously enough I used to have bundles of them. For years I couldn't sell them, and I used to give them away or put them out for a dollar apiece. The other day I went to look for one, and I couldn't find it and the last one I saw offered for sale was priced at eighty dollars.

GARDNER:

Everything's relative.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it's all a matter of changing and growing tastes.

GARDNER:

What about Dahlstrom?

ZEITLIN:

Dahlstrom was one of the first printers I met here. He had studied at the Laboratory Press in Pittsburgh. He had gone back to Ogden, Utah, for a short

while, but he wanted to conquer the big city and learn more about printing, and so he came to Los Angeles. And shortly afterward, his girlfriend, his bride, Helen, came out, and they got married. I think that was 1927. I met them shortly after they were married, when Helen was pregnant with their daughter Anna Victoria. Grant was a man with good taste in everything he did. He wore polka-dot cravats that were just the right color and size, and his pants were always hung right with the right colors to match his jackets and shirts, and I always looked upon him as a man who had innate good taste. He had a good hand with flowers, growing things. We became fast friends very early. I introduced him to Arthur Ellis, and he and Arthur Ellis, with my occasional help, put together the Albion handpress, which was the first handpress established here for the purpose of producing anything like fine printing. Grant has always followed traditional standards and styles in his design. His idea has been not to do anything spectacular but to utilize the materials and processes of printing for giving the best expression to the ideas that were to be conveyed by the materials--the contents which were contained in the vessel of the book. He was, however, very knowledgeable in the traditions of printing, and when Saul Marks came to town, Saul Marks looked him up. Saul Marks was working in a typesetting plant at the time, and he and Grant came to my shop, just as Ward Ritchie and Gregg Anderson did, and we would look at different specimens of printing. We would look at the few good prints, the Durer woodcuts and the Durer engravings that came in the early printed wood-block books, and all this stimulated us all very much. Also, Paul Landacre—we took him into the group. Paul's wife, who was my secretary for a short time, had come around and showed me some of his wood engravings, and I exhibited them and encouraged him and would show him all the new prints that came in. I would take them out to his house and show him different styles of wood engraving-- different artists' work. We got together one night, in 1929, and formed what we called the Thistle Club. We called it later the Rounce and Coffin Club. Gregg Anderson was there and Ward Ritchie and Grant Dahlstrom. And later we took in Paul Landacre, and then we took in Saul Marks. And our idea was that that was all that was ever going to be of the Rounce and Coffin Club. Each time somebody else would be the host--we'd eat at someone's house-- and then we would show each other what we had found in the way of interesting specimens of printing and talk about them. Then we had the idea that each person would do a keepsake, and some of the early

keepsakes are very rare because there were only five of them, one for each member. And the earliest Saul Marks keepsake was really an exceptional thing. Saul Marks had good taste, not only in types and the quality of printing, but he also had good taste in literature. He was reading the Restoration poets and Elizabethan plays and so on. And he chose, I think—I've forgotten now—one of the Restoration poets to do a poem from for his first Rounce and Coffin Club keepsake. In any event, the Rounce and Coffin Club grew, continued to meet, and then somewhere, I think about 1933- '34, Grant Dahlstrom had the idea that we should sponsor a western-books exhibition, and that became the main function of the club and has been the thing which has kept it going.

GARDNER:

When did the expansion start? Around then?

ZEITLIN:

Around then. Well, we brought in various people. Roland Baughman of the Huntington Library was our first secretary, and then Gary Bliss was secretary for a while, and then Archer--H. Richard Archer who worked at the Clark Library. Well, there 've been about six secretaries over the years, and the club has continued quite surprisingly . . .

GARDNER:

And grown.

ZEITLIN:

. . . and grown until now it has a membership of more than seventy and a lot of corresponding members. It once had a set of bylaws, which were never read or observed since the time they were printed, and on the occasion when we adopted the bylaws and constitution of the club (which had been printed for the occasion) , one of our members resigned. He announced that he would not be a member of any group that had a set of bylaws and a constitution.

GARDNER:

Who was that?

ZEITLIN:

That was Raul Rodriguez. I think that was a fine spirit, but none of the rest of us followed his example. The Rounce and Coffin Club differed from the Zamorano Club, number one, in that it wasn't exclusive; and, in the second place, that it was very disorderly; and, in the third place, it never took itself very seriously. It had no regular meeting places or times and has continued in the same way.

GARDNER:

What was your first keepsake? Do you recall?

ZEITLIN:

I can't remember at all. But I think this sparked us all, and the Rounce and Coffin Club remained a sort of a medium through which we all communicated. We stimulated each other, we brought ideas to each other, and I think every one of us benefited greatly, even the ones that weren't printers. There were people like Larry Powell that never did any printing, but it was a meeting through which they could publish some things, write things for the keepsakes. It was a forum for debating ideas about printing or discussing our notions of what constituted a good example of printing and what didn't. The Rounce and Coffin Club in general disapproved greatly of some of the more famous of the local typographers; they looked upon them as bulls in china shops. One of them was referred to as a "stud horse critter," and Bruce McCallister said of him that his ideal would be a book in the shape of a perfect cube.

GARDNER:

Who was this?

ZEITLIN:

Well, this was Merle Armitage that Bruce McCallister was speaking of—since both of them are gone and nobody really cares, I don't think it makes any difference if I tell you.

GARDNER:

I notice Saul Marks and his Plantin Press did one of your early books. When did he first arrive?

ZEITLIN:

It must have been 1933. I think he arrived sooner—he must have arrived around 1930—but actually Marks set up a printing concern in which Grant Dahlstrom was a silent partner. And then he took in another partner, McKay, and the first piece of printing they got out was a sort of a broadside inviting me to give them some printing to do. [laughter]

GARDNER:

What was he like?

ZEITLIN:

Saul Marks was a very sensitive man. He was a man of very high ideals and very good taste. He could be very stubborn, and the more you pressed him to get a job done, the more stubborn he could be. At times, also, if he had an idea that a certain thing was right in the way of typographic format, no matter how much it violated the rules of bibliographical style, he insisted on doing it the way he felt it would look best to the printer's eye. And over the years Saul and I fell out many times, mostly because I would give him a job to print a catalog and by the time the catalog was printed and he delivered it, all the books had been sold and the money had been spent, so that I had a very hard time paying him for a catalog that was no longer of any use to me.

GARDNER:

Except as a collectors' item.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, except as an ornament. One of his other first jobs was a little thing called *A King's Treasury of Pleasant Books and Precious Manuscripts*, written by Paul Jordan-Smith and handset and printed by Saul Marks. And it is a really exquisite little piece of printing. I'm not sure that I have a copy of it left because my scrapbook in which I pasted all of my early catalogs and announcements and so on seems to have been filched; it has disappeared from my house, and I don't know where it is, and I don't know that it would do anybody else any good. So except for other specimens of things that I saved in other places, there's a lot that's missing.

GARDNER:

The scrapbook really is missing? Have you looked through and checked?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I've turned the place upside down. It just isn't here. Well, the best book that Saul Marks ever printed — that he printed in his early years--was *Gil Blas in California*, and that was very much of a labor of love. Ward Ritchie would go over, and they would make up different page layouts, and they would set the type and print them, then hang them up and look at them and criticize them and change them over and so on. No commercial plant could ever have afforded that kind of a thing, so they spent many a night and many a day bringing about what I think was a very beautiful and very well integrated piece of printing--the *Gil Blas in California*. Paul Landacre did the engravings. He did a map of the gold fields, and he did a series of vignettes, chapter headings, all of which I think represent just about as good examples of that kind of thing as has ever been done in a book. It was all around a very beautiful production. And, of course, it bankrupted Marks and nearly put the Primavera Press out of business, but there's no doubt that it was an artistic success. None of us made any money out of it, including poor Paul Landacre, for whom, however, it was a very good medium for showing what he could do; and it later resulted in his being commissioned to do a number of books for the Limited Editions Club. While that was published as a Primavera Press imprint, it certainly was a collaboration of many people, including Grant Dahlstrom, Saul Marks, Ward Ritchie, Paul Landacre, and all of us who were part of the Primavera Press. The book was translated by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur. It was translated from the French, and it was supposed to have been written by Alexandre Dumas—but since Alexandre Dumas had a literary factory, we're not sure that it wasn't written by somebody who came back from the gold fields and was commissioned by Dumas to write it so he could put his name on it.

GARDNER:

The business aspects of Primavera, as I mentioned, are of interest, too, I think, just for your comments. Hanna and Ritchie were 30 percent each, you were 40 percent, and Carey McWilliams was an attorney with 0 percent.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, none of us profited by all this. We didn't get any money out of it, and we did put a little in--I don't think very much. I had already put in all the publications I had, and that was what brought the press about. It was all

ready; there was a Primavera Press. We were very poor businessmen, all of us. If we had been good businessmen, we never would have gone into it, and we wouldn't have produced anything, and that would have been a shame. So I'm not sorry that it wasn't a business success. It did about as well as could be hoped for, considering the impracticality of all of us involved—the fact that we set our ideals of fine printing above our notions of good business.

GARDNER:

That's wonderful. Well, to move away from fine printing and back into the bookstore, in 1928— I guess late in 1928--you moved to Sixth Street, right around the corner.

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

What was the reason for that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the landlord wanted the space. And we didn't have much room. It was a very small space. We had built this shop into the back doorway of this real estate office, T.J. Lawrence Company, at the corner of Sixth and Hope Street, and they were very nice to let us have the space at all. I'm not sure how many city ordinances we violated, and it may have very well been that T.J. Lawrence decided that he didn't want to take a chance on being fined for violating a lot of ordinances. Whatever it was, he said, "I need the space, so you'll have to go somewhere else." So we went around the corner, and we published a little playlet called *Kicked around the Corner*, which was written by my friend Henry Mayers, in which I was asked, "Why are you moving, Mr. Zipkin?" and I would say, "Well, our landlord wants the space." And then the man would ask me another question, and he would say, "Mr. Zeppelin, where are you going?" and so on. He never did once pronounce or spell my name right in the course of the whole play; that was part of the joke of it. Paul Landacre did a little portrait woodcut of me which was used as a sort of a logo in this mailing piece, and I still have some copies of that around. And when I moved in 1928 to, I think it was, 705 1/2 West Sixth Street, Lloyd Wright again designed that

place. It was a very beautiful place, but it was no more practical than the previous one. He always had a great love for putting in lighting arrangements which created a very soft, diffused light. But when the light bulbs went out, you couldn't get at them to replace them, and so gradually, as one after the other of the light bulbs expired, the place got darker and darker. And finally we couldn't use the ceiling fixtures at all, and we had to set lamps around the place in order to keep the shop lit well enough for people to see the books they thought they might buy. It was about that time that I started to import a lot of the books produced by Douglas Cleverdon, who was still an undergraduate in Bristol and had a very fine taste for printing and was a great admirer of Eric Gill. He produced a volume of the collected woodcuts of Eric Gill, and I bought some of the special editions in which each proof was signed by Gill. These sold for, I think, as high as \$150 a set, and today I should think that if one had one of those special copies which I bought, it would bring anywhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000. In any event, I remember filling a whole window with the woodcuts of Eric Gill. I had a wonderful young man working for me then. His name was William Blaine Wooten, and William Blaine Wooten had come to me out of the blue. He had a natural sense of the rightness of letters and the rightness in proportion of arrangements. If he had persisted as a calligrapher and a typographer, I think he would have been one of the very great ones. He would have been in a class with Dwiggins; he was very much in the tradition of Edward Johnston. And I was very fortunate to have him. He designed one catalog which would really have bankrupted anybody but a very indulgent printer like Bruce McCallister, who followed his directions and changed it just to conform to his ideas of the right proportions and the right use of ornament and color. He hung the exhibitions; he wrapped books; he did the lettering of signs. He was a wonderful young man, but after a while he became dissatisfied—he was temperamental—and he left me. And I've always regretted very much that I didn't have the art of keeping him and didn't know what it took to hold onto him and encourage him, because I think William Wooten would have become one of the great typographic designers and calligraphers. He went into the navy, and I don't know what happened to him afterward. He was a very good friend of the Landacres, and they were in touch with him for quite a while. But I do know that from shortly after he left me, he never again did anything with this very great talent he had. I had several very interesting young men working for me at 705 1/2. The first one

was Karl Zamboni--Karl Philip Zamboni--and in those days he was a very handsome young man, having all of the best attributes in physical appearances and personal charm of a combination of Scandinavian and Italian parentage. He was also a very good bookman, and I think that he could have become the outstanding bookman on the Pacific Coast if some unfortunate things hadn't happened to him. But when he was with me, he was very charming, he was very inventive, and he did a lot of things which advanced my business. He was with me for five years, and then he left and came again and was with me for another five years. His wife was one of the most beautiful young women I have ever seen. I remember an English woman author who wrote a satire on Somerset Maugham. Somerset Maugham had written a book called *Cakes and Ale*, which was an attack on Hugh Walpole. And this woman, who wrote under the pen name of Elinor Mordaunt, had written a response to *Cakes and Ale*, which she called *Gin and Bitters*, in which she went after Somerset Maugham with a bull whip and a rapier and really struck some very telling blows. The result was not that Hugh Walpole applauded her, but rather he attacked her in spite of the fact that Maugham had really been merciless in satirizing him in *Cakes and Ale*. And Walpole wrote a review of *Gin and Bitters* saying, in effect, "How could she do that to poor Willie Maugham?" Elinor Mordaunt was quite an older woman when she came here, but I remember one evening her coming to our house, and Cathy Zamboni came in the house. And she stopped, and looked at her, and seemed to stop breathing. And she said, "What a very exquisite young woman." And she was. She looked like a combination of Polynesian and the all-around American girl. But later Cathy left Karl Zamboni, and when she left him, it took all of the drive out of him, and he never became anything like the great bookseller that he could have become. He left me. He went up to Northern California, and he is still living up near Palo Alto and does an occasional catalog, sells books by mail--a great specialist in esoteric trivia. And he has lost all of his very great youthful appearance and handsomeness.

GARDNER:

Of course, another of your early employees --well, perhaps not that early-- your employees on Sixth Street, was Larry Powell.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, before Larry Powell there are two others I would like to mention. One was a young man by the name of E. Digges Graves, Elliott Digges Graves. His father was a sort of an advanced Episcopalian minister, and Elliott and his father both were disciples of Eric Gill and strived very much to follow his example in lettering and in the crafts. E. Digges Graves was a very strange man, who never bore fools gladly and was very impatient with people who would come in and ask ridiculous questions. Finally it came to the point where Elliott couldn't bear the ridiculous questions of my best customers, so he decided to leave. He joined with Stanton Avery, who was the founder of Avery Adhesives and was his early partner. The only thing is that Avery continued to be successful and became an immensely rich man and great business tycoon and, of course, poor Elliott Digges Graves remained the strange man that he was. And another of the young men who worked for me at that time was Fillmore Silkwood Phipps. As I think of the names of these young men, I'm wondering whether they were invented by Trollope or by Charles Dickens. [laughter] Fillmore Phipps was a very handsome young man who dressed in tweedy coats and had a seal ring and was very uncommunicative about his family. It turned out later that Fillmore Silkwood Phipps 's father ran a popcorn stand in the park at Long Beach. Fillmore had higher ambitions; in fact, he left me and was a partner in a book business with a woman who also worked for me at that time. Tone Price; and later, when they dissolved that business, he was in charge of making films for a company that was subsidized by Forest Lawn. And he, poor fellow, started to behave most erratically; started to be impossible and unmanageable to his wife. Finally she put him out, and he was living in a room in Hollywood, in a cheap hotel. And when he died, it turned out that he had a brain tumor; and if it had been diagnosed early, they might have saved him. Apparently that was responsible for his erratic behavior. He left a family of beautiful and talented children and was a very respectable person.

1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One
(August 9, 1977)

GARDNER:

You were about to say what you recalled we closed with last time.

ZEITLIN:

As I remember, I closed with an account of the sort of things that we exhibited--the sort of books that we tried to sell—Eric Gill's book of wood engravings as published by Douglas Cleverdon, and I think I also talked about the design of the shops that I had by Lloyd Wright.

GARDNER:

Right—his lighting systems.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. His lighting systems were only good as long as the light bulbs lasted, and then it was no longer possible to get back of the fixtures in order to renew the light bulbs; so that as the light bulbs blew out or wore out, the light became dimmer and dimmer, and finally we had to set lamps on the floors and find other ways of lighting the place. I don't mean this to be in any way a reflection on the imaginative quality of Lloyd Wright, because I have come to believe that a great deal of what was best in the architecture that his father gets credit for in Southern California was designed by the son, Lloyd. The father would come along, and he would do a tremendous job of selling, and then he would turn loose Lloyd and a team of several of his disciples. and they would go ahead and do the details and creative work on a place like the so-called Hollyhock House (the Aline Barnsdall house) and a number of other places in Southern California. Lloyd was especially brilliant in combining plants with architecture, and he did introduce in every place he designed for me some kind of a plant or a box of green, growing things. And I think in that he was far in advance of many of the architects that have come along since. He was very ingenious, very creative, and certainly produced the most effect for the least money. He wasn't always practical, and the amount of shelf space we got out of the walls, for instance, wasn't the maximum. After a while, the interest was focused so much on the architecture and the interior design of my shops, the customers couldn't look at the books. A great many people would come and look at the architecture and "oh" and "ah" and walk away, and that wasn't really what I was there for.

GARDNER:

That must have stood out on Sixth Street at that time, because most of the other shops must have been very practical.

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes, they were very simple, practical shops. They just took some lumber and built some shelves along the wall, hammered together a few counters, and that was it. And bought some glass cases. There were several interesting shops on Sixth Street. The largest one was about a block east of Figueroa on the south side of the street. It belonged to Holmes; it wasn't his headquarters, but it was the largest shop and the last one that he had. He had about five secondhand-book stores in Los Angeles, and they were really jammed full of what today would be great treasures. The shelves ran up to a very high ceiling on all sides of this big space. He also had a balcony room in which he would store a great many of the things that he bought in quantity, and, among other things, he bought up a number of copies of a little book of poetry called *Flacons and Apples* by Robinson Jeffers. He had found the entire remaining stock somewhere at a printer who had produced them. And if I bought five copies at a time, he would let me have them for a dollar and a half apiece. Later he raised the price to three dollars each, and ultimately we had to pay as much as fifteen dollars a copy, which seemed outrageous. Today, I would say that it sells for between \$650 and \$750 a copy. And when poor Holmes's store was finally closed, there was a large number of them still on hand. At one time he used to auction off books and sets of books on Hill Street around Christmastime, and when the selling got slow, they would give away a few books, including copies of Robinson Jeffers 's *Flacons and Apples*. One of the other bookshops was Rogers. [Warren] Rogers was married to the sister of Ernest Dawson, and he had a substantial general secondhand-book stock. But he was never as imaginative as Ernest Dawson, never had the stimulating style of exhibiting things, or writing up cards about them, and so on; or meeting people with the friendliness and enthusiasm that Dawson showed. Gradually his stock dwindled—he didn't go out and buy aggressively--and he ultimately closed down and went into selling books from an office, particularly books on managing restaurants and hotels, and he seems to have done quite well at that for a while. One of the most spectacular bookshops on the street was that of a chap by the name of Bunster Greeley. Bunster had been a flyweight boxer. He was about five feet tall and very feisty, and he had a secondhand-book shop. He was married to a niece, I think, of Norman Holmes.

GARDNER:

Quite an incestuous street.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. And one of his earliest employees was H. Richard Archer, who later became the curator of the Clark Library and then has recently retired as the librarian of the Chapin Collection at Williams College. Further towards Figueroa there was also Kovach's Bookshop. Nick Kovach was a Hungarian who began, as far as I know, in this country working for a watchmen's service. He used to ride around on a bicycle and patrol the houses over in Fremont Place and along in the area that the Los Angeles Country Club was located in. He happened to meet one of the men whose house he guarded, a man by the name of Arthur Cecil, Dr. Arthur Cecil. Cecil had been the leading urologist of the time in Los Angeles until Elmer Belt came along, and Cecil had resisted, with every device at his command, the growth of Elmer Belt—tried to prevent his becoming a member of the staff of Good Samaritan Hospital. But Arthur Cecil was a rather testy Virginia gentleman who, being a surgeon, had enjoyed all the prerogatives of that role—ordered people around; spoke with a great sense of command to everyone around him. Arthur Cecil had become interested in collecting rare books, and primarily it started with an interest in the first editions of Edgar Allan Poe. Being a Virginian, he acquired some letters of Poe (I think he had one page of manuscript and several first editions of Poe), and then he branched out into a few other things. And one of the outstanding things that Arthur Cecil had was a manuscript of Gauguin which he'd acquired while on a voyage to Hawaii a great many years before. He'd acquired it from a lady by the name of Madame Reviere who lived in Hawaii. I don't know how she had acquired this manuscript of Gauguin; it was an unpublished manuscript covered with drawings and unique woodblocks of Gauguin's, and it was about ninety pages. It was a violently anti-Catholic polemic, and it was unpublished and probably unpublishable. At the beginning of it, there was a long autograph letter from Gauguin to his friend Charles Meurice, in Paris, who had sent him a great deal of money from time to time, and who later edited some of his letters. Anyhow, it was a long and very interesting letter of Gauguin's. But Mr. Kovach had persuaded Dr. Cecil to let him get out a catalog of these things and offer them for sale. It was probably the most remarkable first catalog that any dealer ever got out. I don't know how many copies there were, but as far as I know, the only thing that was sold

from this was one of the Edgar Allan Poe letters, which was sold to Mrs. Doheny. In any event, Mr. Kovach went on to become a secondhand-book seller and opened a shop on Sixth Street. And one of his girl clerks, also a Hungarian, attracted the attention of Richard Archer, and he married her. Her name was Margot—an extraordinarily beautiful young woman and a very sweet and wonderful person. Kovach later became a dealer in periodicals and journals, and also would buy up entire libraries and resell them. He was a great problem, because he would make librarians very extravagant offers for their books, and nobody could compete with him. The only thing is that after he took the books, they could never catch him to get paid. No matter how much he offered for them, they were great bargains; he would turn around and sell them at below-market prices. So he spent a great many years running from his creditors and going from one deal to another of that sort. He was a brilliant man, had a great deal of charm, and if he had used his energy and charm towards a little better disciplined style of doing business, he would have made a great deal more money and been a much happier man. There has always been a mystery about Bunster Greeley's place. One morning when the place was opened up, one of his employees was found dead in the place; he had apparently been stabbed, and no one ever could figure out what happened or how that man happened to get killed. It's always been a sealed book. Another interesting thing: there was an old count who lived up on Bunker Hill who had, over the years, accumulated a lot of interesting things, some of which he inherited. And among other things, he had a painting of a man with a beard. It was old; it needed cleaning; it was brown; it wasn't too easy to see what it was. Bunster Greeley had it in his window, selling it on commission for the man; I think he wanted something like \$150 for it. I took it over to my place and asked several people who were supposed to be knowledgeable about art to look at it, because it struck me that this thing was done by someone of real quality. Well, I remember showing it to Arthur Millier, and he said, "Oh, it's just another beard. Don't bother with it." Finally, some man from up in the Bay Area came along and bought it, and paid something like \$100, \$150 for it. In the course of the years, he researched it; he developed a real background on it, and it turned out to be a very fine portrait by [Giovanni Battista] Tiepolo, probably worth \$200,000 or \$300,000.

GARDNER:

That's amazing.

ZEITLIN:

The other shop on West Sixth Street that I remember vividly was Fred Lofland (it probably had been spelled Loughlin originally, but I think it had gone through the transformations that American ways with names have, and it ended up as Lofland) . And Fred Lofland had a very closely packed shop: I don't know how he managed to get as many books into one small shop as he did. One of his most constant customers was a writer by the name of Gordon Raye Young. Gordon Raye Young had become very successful writing for *Adventure* magazine, and he had a whole series of things going, and then some of them were published as books. In one, in particular, there was a sort of a Conrad-like story. I took it out to Ben Schulberg at Paramount Studios, my first time inside of the office of a cinema mogul--enormous room with a desk perched at one end of it, raised on a dais, and, like Mussolini's office, you had to walk a long way to get to it. However, I must say that Mr. Schulberg was very kind to me, and he did have this thing read and synopsised. But for some reason or another, it never got accepted for pictures. It was called *Siebert of the Islands*, and it had to do with some German plantation owner on a Pacific island. That is all that I can remember of it. However, Gordon Raye Young had an enormous appetite for books, and when he died, he left a large roomful of books up on the top of Echo Park Avenue--one of the Echo Park hills just off of Cerro Gordo Street. He was a close friend of Paul Jordan-Smith. And Paul Jordan-Smith and his wife [Sarah Bixby Smith], Gordon Raye Young and his wife, and my wife and I used to get together and have some very wonderful evenings; we drank lots of wine and ate lots of spaghetti and spouted a lot of good talk. Then when we got into the mood, we would all do our own form of solo dances, our own inventions. Paul Jordan-Smith later wrote about my gymnastic ability when I was inspired. I can't imagine leaping and soaring in the style that he described as I am now, but I'm sure that his visions of what he thought I was doing were very much colored by the redness of the wine.

GARDNER:

What about some of the non-Sixth Street booksellers?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I want to mention one other bookshop that was on Sixth Street which I think ought to be mentioned, and that is Jones Book Store. Jones Book Store was on Pershing Square. It was largely a textbook store; it supplied a great many of the public schools and some of the parochial schools in the Southern California area, and they had large contracts with the board of education. The woman that managed it was a really striking woman. She was Mrs. Lawrence Maynard, and her husband had been Lawrence Maynard, who was the head of the publishing firm of Small and Maynard. They had published a number of good poets and other writers. They had published some of the editions of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and the books of Whitman's disciples. They had published Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey, and they had also published a good many of the good English titles which they brought over to this country. And they had employed some of the very good book designers; I think that Will Bradley must have done some of their books for them. A great many of the leftover stock of Small-Maynard was distributed on the shelves of the Jones Book Store. I can remember seeing them in piles and thinking what perfectly beautifully charming books there were, which I could have bought for seventy-five cents, a dollar, a dollar and a half, and two and a half dollars--and not doing so. She [Mrs. Maynard] was a very striking woman; she carried a sort of a pre-Raphaelite air around with her. And then there was Parker's Bookstore. [C.C.] Parker was a gentleman of the old Southern school. He came to Los Angeles, I suppose at the turn of the century, and he taught elocution and had a bookstore besides. He used to dress very formally, with these high-tipped celluloid collars. He was looked upon as the very [pinnacle] of what one should read and the kind of books one should have in his library. And I must say that his idea was a good one: his idea was to have every good book that was in print of any publisher in the United States, so that you could go through the shelves there and find marvelous books—first editions of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Theodore Dreiser and a great many of the writers of the early part of the century—in mint condition at the price at which they were originally published. And that went on until sometime in the thirties when the business finally had to close. That shop was a marvel; there was no bookstore in the United States (it was said by the traveling salesmen for the various publishers) that carried so good a stock of books as Parker's Bookstore did at its peak. Of course, he got more and more in debt to the publishers; the expenses outran the revenue, and the turnover was very poor relative to the

size of the stock. And when finally the stock was sold off, just marked down and slaughtered, it was astonishing what wonderfully good books there were there. If someone had just taken the trouble to get them out--dig them out from under the shelves, price them, and put them out for sale, there would have been enough money coming in to pay off all the bills which finally dragged Parker into receivership. But there were no bookmen there. One of the troubles, usually, with book businesses which have lasted for a long time is that ultimately the man that had founded them--the genius of the business--cannot hire people or will not hire people who have the ability to appreciate and to sell the books the same way they could, so the stock finally has no one to galvanize it, no one to really present it and price it; keep up with the times with it. That's what happened with this place.

GARDNER:

You say "cannot" or "will not," and that's an intriguing duality. "Cannot" because they can't find them, or "will not" because they don't really want to train someone who will then go into competition?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it's very hard for a man to yield the powers that he has to defer to some younger man. It's a great blow to your pride, very often, to have one of your youngsters go out and sell rings around you, or to take something off the shelf and say, "Look, we've had this long enough, and out it goes. We're going to price it at half of what you've put on it." But that's what has to be done if the business is to go on. And this has happened a few times; in no case do I know where it's lasted for more than two generations. All the great bookshops have sooner or later degenerated because the kind of individuality and leadership that it took to carry them on just wasn't there.

GARDNER:

Is that true everywhere?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it's been true. It was true of McClurg's in Chicago; it was true of Brentano's in New York. In this day of branch bookselling, Kroch, for instance, has remained a great book business, but not in the sense that it was when

Adolph Kroch himself was managing it. It happened with Weyhe's bookshop in New York, which certainly was the greatest art-book shop in our time and in the history of American bookselling. And it happened with Stechert-Hafner, who were great wholesalers and importers of books. I could name many more. It's happening right now with Arthur H. Clark and Company in Glendale, which started out in Cleveland and which has, for almost 100 years, been an outstanding publisher of western American historical books and also a dealer in American historical literature. One of the interesting exceptions is John Howell's bookshop in San Francisco, which has certainly grown and become a much more important book business under the management of Warren Howell, but there is no sign of his developing a successor. And, of course, Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles, which has been carried on in the tradition of Ernest Dawson—not as vigorously as he carried it on, but with the same high standards and principles.

GARDNER:

Well, again, that falls within your two-generation rule, though.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it falls within the two generations, and I can't think of anyplace. . . . There are no Quaritches left, of course, no relatives of the Quaritches left in Bernard Quaritch in London. The Maggses [Maggs Brothers] are the only firm I know of where the management has continued into the third generation, and what will happen there is hard to say. They're all fine people, but there is no one strong head of the firm, and they are continuing largely because of the magnificent reputation that they have and the devoted patronage of people like myself who have done business with them for fifty years and would like to keep it up. The Goodspeeds--the son and son-in-law have carried it on, but I doubt if there will be a Goodspeed's in twenty-five years. The Paul Elder bookshops in San Francisco are no longer; they continued one generation after the founder, and then that was the end of Paul Elder's. And so it seems to go.

GARDNER:

To return, have we completed our tour of Sixth Street?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think we have, except I think I should go on to mention that Louis Epstein started the Acadia Book Shop on Sixth Street. He made a mistake in his article by offering a prize to anyone who could remember the name of his bookshop, but he excluded Max Hunley and me. And then he said that he got the title out of *Hiawatha*. He didn't get the title out of *Hiawatha*—he got it out of *Evangeline*.

GARDNER:

He got that straight in his interview, by the way.

ZEITLIN:

He did. I corrected him, and I'm sure some other people did, too. But he started the Acadia Book Shop on Sixth Street after he had had a bookshop in Long Beach. And one day two young men by the name of Howey came in. Richard and Ralph Howey came in, and they offered him \$1,500 for his bookstore, and he said. "I'll take it." So Acadia Book Shop became the property of the Howey brothers. Richard Howey continued with his studies of economics and acquired a degree, became a distinguished professor and was head of the Department of Economics and Economic History at the University of Kansas, until recently when he retired. Ralph Howey, the other brother, continued the business. He was a very quiet man who really didn't like to meet people. Ultimately he went to Philadelphia and went to work for the Rosenbachs; he remained with the Rosenbachs for five or six years, until the business was closed. Then he went into the business of selling, mostly seventeenth and eighteenth-century pamphlets, which it was possible to buy at one time in large quantities in England. He would catalog them, list them, and sell them to places like the Folger Library, Yale, Harvard, and so on, and has continued to be very successful without having to meet the public generally. He lives somewhere in Pennsylvania now. I'm sure I haven't mentioned all of the bookshops that were on West Sixth Street.

GARDNER:

The only one I can think of, offhand, is Kohn.

ZEITLIN:

Dave Kohn. Mr. Belch! That was a remarkable bookstore [Curio Book Shop] . He had a brother who had had a bookshop on Sixth Street, Soldier Joe, and Soldier Joe's bookshop continued independently. Dave Kohn first started up on Third Street, and he used to sleep, I think, on the balcony of this bookshop. He had somewhere picked up the most enormous stock of old paperbacks, all in mint condition, and none of us had sense enough to know what a treasure he had. I think when he closed that shop, most of them were hauled off to the pulp mill. The most marvelous paperback classics— I just wonder how many copies of the first edition of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, the first book of Hamlin Garland, and a few other things like that, were in that library. Dave Kohn and his sister had an enormous storehouse of books on Sixth Street; it was a labyrinth. There was very poor light. You sort of blundered around in this mess of old books and spiderwebs and dust; and there was no classification whatever, except in one room of this place [where] he had segregated and kept up to date a complete run of Everyman Library books. It was the one place, I think, in all the United States where you could go and get any title of Everyman's Library. He kept the stock up to date and in perfect numerical order, so that if you wanted an Everyman's book, you could take the catalog and go in there, and find it. Otherwise, it was a great, dismal swamp.

GARDNER:

To move, then, from Sixth Street outward, were there any other major dealers of used books around town?

ZEITLIN:

No, there really weren't. Louis Epstein later opened up a shop on Eighth Street [Epstein's Book Shop] , which he continued until the Hollywood bookstore commenced to occupy all his energies. And he closed that and transferred most of his stock to the Argonaut Book Shop, which was operated for him by his brother Ben.

GARDNER:

What about Alice Millard?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Alice Millard was a different kind of bookseller. She was really a very creative woman who had had a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Pasadena called La Collina. It was a beautiful little establishment in which she had exhibitions of original watercolors, of Blake, of the proof sheets of early bindings of the Doves Press and Doves bindery, and of the Kelmscott Press. I remember meeting May Morris at her house. She used to go to London and Paris and buy the best books she could find. She had a great sense of style; she would go to the bankers in Pasadena and say, "I want to go to Europe, and I want to spend \$500,000 and buy a lot of good books and bring them back, because Pasadena needs them." They would lend her the money, and she would come back, and she would sell them not only in Pasadena but she would sell them to J. P. Morgan and to the McCormicks and to people all over the United States. I remember that she always had a big black limousine waiting for her when she went to call on customers like Mrs. Doheny. She dressed elegantly, and she dyed her hair blue.

GARDNER:

What was her background?

ZEITLIN:

Her husband had been George W. Millard, who worked at McClurg's Bookstore in Chicago. He had been in charge of the rare-book department; it was called the Saints and Sinners Corner. It was frequented by people like the Reverend Gunsales, and Eugene Field, and the actor Francis Wilson. He moved out here to Southern California in his later years. He had nicely bound sets and gentlemen's books in his apartment. He would invite customers to come in and see his books, and serving tea for him was this very beautiful lady who looked like something that had been created by Burne-Jones or Rossetti. She was always in the background pouring the tea, helping her husband. And when he died, she said, "I'm tired of this piddling business." So she called in the booksellers and the bookbuyers from around the area, and said, "Here, I'm selling off all these standard sets and these neatly bound Sangorski and Suttcliffe books. I'm through with that sort of thing. I'm going to do some real bookselling." And she did. She brought great manuscripts, magnificent incunabulas, books printed by Jensen and Wynkyn de Worde and Fust and Schoeffer, and so on to this part of the world. She sold Mrs. Doheny a great

many important books in her library, and she educated the rare-book buyers of Southern California to a much higher level of appreciation than they'd ever had before.

GARDNER:

What were her years here?

ZEITLIN:

I can't say that I know. She was already in business in the late twenties, when I arrived, and she certainly continued to be in business until sometime in the forties. There is a chap by the name of Eliot Morgan who worked for her, and I hope somebody gets ahold of him and gets the story of Mrs. Millard from him, because he knows much more of it than anybody else, and he's getting to be a gray-haired oldster like me, now. They'd better get over there soon.

**1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two
(August 16, 1977)**

GARDNER:

I think it's time to move on into the 1930s. Was there a change that came about in the nature of your business with the oncoming of the Depression and so on?

ZEITLIN:

The change that came about was not so perceptible as it might have been to some people who had been doing better earlier. I remember somebody asked Lloyd Wright how the Depression had affected the artists, and he said that the artists have always had a depression, and they're probably better prepared to live in the midst of it than a lot of people who were flying high. They'd always lived on basics and hadn't depended upon the luxuries in order to maintain the certain forms of self-esteem. Now, my business was never a big business; in fact, I'm astonished at how little volume--we did in a month what we exceed now in a day. It seemed to keep us going. Of course, I paid very little. Some of my employees got \$100 a month, some got as much as \$35 a week, some got as much as \$50 a week, but that wasn't very much money. Still, it was more than nothing. A lot of them hung on simply because there wasn't a better thing to go to. I myself drew very little out of the business. I had no

fixed salary because, after all, it was a personal business, and it of course got worse and worse into debt. But nobody closed us down, because there was nothing to close down on; you can't liquidate a business that doesn't have much to liquidate. I must say, also, that I knew very little and was very slow learning how to go about buying books. I bought very few libraries; most of the books I bought were books that came into the shop. I didn't know that I should go around to places like the Goodwill, the Salvation Army, and the other places that some of the booksellers went to regularly. I had a vague sense that buying was the most important thing in the book business, but I really wasn't a very good buyer, and I bought altogether too many new books. For a book business with very little money, the new books are a royal road to disaster because very quickly you get your capital tied up in books which become dated, and within the course of a year, you find that your stock consists of a lot of books that didn't sell when they should have sold and now are on the remainder lists. Publishers didn't have as good a returns policy as they have now, and the discounts weren't very good either. In fact, what I marvel at is how I managed to keep the business going at all, considering how little I knew about the basic elements of buying and selling. I knew more about selling than I did about buying. I knew very little--almost nothing--about management, keeping control of overhead; but when I found a good book, I could sell it. And I was always able to work a deal, every once in a while, selling a collection out of which I made profit enough to resuscitate the dying body.

GARDNER:

Did you have any particular orientation? Were you still selling the same sorts of things in those days?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I was primarily selling books about books, modern English and American first editions, and fine press books. I was also selling prints. And until 1935, when I moved out of 907 West Sixth Street and went to 815 (I think the address was) , I kept the place afloat mostly through buying and selling to collectors, importing books, finding a good book once in a while on which I could make a profit, and having an exhibition from which I sold some art.

GARDNER:

What about the fine printing that you dealt in — did you make any money from that at all, from Primavera?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Primavera Press was never a money-making enterprise. It was an effort to make a place for myself as a publisher, and I hoped that it would become a source of income to the business. It actually started as a form of vanity publishing (I think I already talked about Leslie Nelson Jennings). Between 1930 and 1935, when I was in the location at, I think it was, 705 1/2 West Sixth Street, I went from one crisis to another, and finally I became involved with a man by the name of Alfred Leonard. I had a friend, a young woman by the name of Marjorie Rosenfeld--a very fine, sweet person, about nineteen or twenty--and she was very hospitable to me. She used to bring me home to her house very often for dinner (there were parties quite often at her house) . Her mother was a very smart woman, always very beautifully dressed, and there was some inherited money in the family. There was a kind of a sentimental attachment but never a very active one, and certainly nothing that involved any emotionalism or sex (at least not that I was aware of) . And Marjorie went off to Germany. She was there during the time that Hitler was rising. She met a young German by the name of Alfred Leonard and married him and brought him back here. Alfred Leonard was a very aggressive, very bright, young man, who was quite at a loss to know what to do. He'd brought his father over--or she had helped bring his father over—and his brother, who was a brilliant musician, a blind man but a brilliant pianist. Alfred was taken into Marjorie's family, and she came to me, and she said, "Haven't you got a place for Leonard in your bookshop?" So we worked out an arrangement where we were to set up a partnership, and he was to become a shareholder with the money that she provided. It wasn't very much; I don't think it was ever more than \$5,000. He came in, and he was full of ideas about new plans. Pretty soon he turned out to be overly aggressive and not at all sensitive. The whole staff started to dislike him thoroughly, which bothered him not one bit. And he started drawing more and more out of the business. He went abroad, and he charged it to the business. By 1936, after we had moved to 614 West Sixth Street, it became an intolerable situation. My customers couldn't stand him, I was going into frenzies, the employees were threatening to attack him physically, and something had to be done in order to get him out. I told him

and Marjorie that it was no longer possible for him to go on. He set a very high price on his getting out. I then went to Oscar Moss, who was an accountant and whose wife, Sadye Moss, and wife's family had been friends of mine. They were all interested in art. They were a group that lived up in the Echo Park area, up above Edendale. There was Oscar Moss and his wife Sadye, and there was Maurice Saeta and Sadye Moss's sister, who were married. They were all people who had ambitions and interests in books and in art and music. They were exceptionally bright people. Saeta was a lawyer. Moss was a lawyer and an accountant, and Moss had very quickly developed his firm into a very successful accounting firm. He invested a pittance. We decided to incorporate the business and buy Mr. Leonard out. He told me that he could arrange to do that. And so we drew up the papers of incorporation, and he urged me to go to my friends and get them to become stockholders in the business. I went to a number of them, and, in all, I got \$10,000. Frank Hogan subscribed \$2,500; he was the largest single subscriber. Oscar Moss subscribed \$2,500. Other people subscribed \$100 apiece, and there were quite a few of those, including Harvey Mudd and Mrs. Doheny and Homer Crotty and a number of other individuals in the community. Mr. Moss put one of his accountants in the place to supervise things. We managed to get Mr. Leonard out of the business. He went into the record business and continued in his ways. He became a broadcaster of a music program. He opened a record store on Wilshire Boulevard. He involved a number of people in the business with him and went through a lot of people's money. He also went through a number of friendships and managed to alienate a great many other people. So, as time went on, I decided that it wasn't just my paranoia that caused me to think of him as being the kind of person that he was. It was a great pain to me. It was distressing because his wife was someone that I had great affection for, and she for me, and this became an almost insuperable rift. It wasn't until years later that she and her children came to see me and we became friendly again. And she remained married to him; she became a bright professional psychoanalyst, and it was a kind of an arrangement whereby she carried on her life and brought up the children, and he lived his own life. He went to New York and became associated with one of the big broadcasting companies, remained with them, I think, until he was retired. In any event, it seemed that I could always go out with a satchel full of books and sell; I could always find a few good rare books and keep the place going. I had customers like Hugh

Walpole who bought quite a few thousands of dollars' worth from me. I sold books to Mrs. Doheny. I sold books to Mrs. Getz. But the sense of crisis was always there, and it increased as time went on. The finances were always thin; the whole idea of incorporating the business with \$10,000 was a ridiculous idea. To think that that could go on and carry on over a period of years was really not very practical, and I have no idea why Mr. Moss, who was such a very successful financier and accountant, ever encouraged me to believe that it could. In any event, the accounting charges that his firm placed on the business were quite heavy, and there was never enough to keep ahead of the creditors. We remained there, however, until 1935, when we moved to 614 [Sixth Street] . It was a beautiful shop. It was the third shop to be designed by Lloyd Wright and really the most attractive of them all. I have a number of photographs of that shop that were taken by Will Connell, and it was a unique establishment. My employees were an interesting group. In particular, I had a man who was in charge of the print gallery, by the name of Howard Moorpark, who knew a great deal about prints and who managed to get some interesting exhibitions and put on some good shows. I had friends among the artists here—like Tom Craig, Millard Sheets, Phil Paradise, Milfred Zornes. I did a lot to exhibit the watercolor school that was developing at that time and got out announcements. So there was a stream of people coming into the place constantly, both because of the interesting design of the shop itself and the exhibitions we put on. We had a number of interesting receptions there; in fact, when I opened the shop at 614, I had a party, and it seems to me, now, as I look back on it, like hundreds of people came. It couldn't have been that many, but there was an enormous crowd, and they kept coming, and I had a great sense of having lots of well-wishers. A.G. Beaman, in particular, who was an insurance man and a book collector, and a man who spent more time than he really should helping people like me and supporting literary activities and bookish activities, had written a number of letters. I got all kinds of beautiful letters and telegrams from people all around the country wishing me well; I have framed in my shop, now, a letter from Hamlin Garland.

GARDNER:

So, though you'd been living from hand to mouth, you'd really developed an extensive following.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. What kept me alive was the fact that, no matter what I got, I could always sell it. [tape recorder turned off] It is true that a lot of interesting people came to the shop. A lot of people were loyal and supported it. It attracted a great many people who bought whatever was there to sell, and we managed, somehow or another, in a very unbusinesslike way, to keep a business going. Its position was not improving in terms of profit or its debts. I used bank credit the best I could but was always having to renew loans to pay off in part and then start borrowing again.

GARDNER:

What was the financial arrangement you made with the graphics? Were they a consignment sort of thing?

ZEITLIN:

Most of them were consigned. I bought very little art. I managed to get things consigned from people like Norman Lindsay in Australia, who sent me a great many of his etchings, and I used to exhibit them and sell them for \$75 and \$150 apiece. Now, when I see them selling for \$1,000 apiece in Australia, it's very interesting. He used to send me large groups of them, and now I'm quite astonished at how well we did. I exhibited artists like Paul Landacre. I exhibited the photographs of Edward Weston and used to arrange sittings for him. It was never big, but it all added up. And then Howard Moorpark used to go out and get prints--he had prints consigned from the East, from Weyhe, and from other art dealers. As a matter of fact, it wasn't a great time for graphic arts, and there were very few print dealers. Between 1930 and about 1955 were twenty-five years in which the graphic arts had a very lean time: you could sell the best Whistlers, the best Rembrandts, the best Durers (and there were plenty of them available) for very little money. And we managed to get quite a few of these. We didn't make much off of them; our commission was something like one-third. We also exhibited contemporary painters, but that was not a very lucrative business. We were one of the few places in town, however, that contemporary artists could come with their work and hope for an exhibition. There weren't many galleries. There was the Biltmore Gallery; there was Hatfield, who by then, I think, had moved out on Seventh Street; there was Stendahl's on Wilshire Boulevard; and there was a man by the name of Harry Braxton in Hollywood. Stanley Rose had a sort of a gallery. It's curious

when I think now of the sort of things that he had for sale, which were ridiculously cheap: original blue Picasso paintings, Braques . . .

GARDNER:

Stanley Rose had those?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, Stanley Rose. There was a man who ran a gallery in Stanley Rose's place, [and] his name was Kurt Merlander. Then there was another chap by the name of Howard Putzel. Howard Putzel was a man with extraordinarily good taste and a great deal of knowledge. He didn't have much money--he had a small gallery on Hollywood Boulevard in one of the arcades--but he did bring some fine things there. I remember a [Odilon] Redon drawing that Ed Hanley bought from him, and a great many other things. However, he was an epileptic. He couldn't keep his business alive here, so he went to New York. He became involved with Peggy Guggenheim, and he helped build Peggy Guggenheim's collection. He died quite young, I think as a result of one of his epileptic attacks. But Frank Perls also was getting started. There weren't many places--a handful, four or five--where any contemporary artist could get a showing, and so my place provided an opportunity for things to be exhibited. And that was one more reason why the shop kept alive.

GARDNER:

Were you close to Stanley Rose at all?

ZEITLIN:

Well, we were friends. I knew him over the years, from the time that he started as a stock-room boy at the Broadway working in the book department. Then he went out to Hollywood, and he joined up with Mac Gordon, who had originally managed a big secondhandbook store downtown which belonged to a man in Chicago, Powner's. Mac Gordon moved out to Hollywood next door to the Brown Derby. Stanley Rose joined forces with him, and they really got the cream of Hollywood's book business; they had a spectacular bookshop. Everybody that was coming along in Hollywood was there, coming and going--people like John Barrymore, Red Skelton. . . .

GARDNER:

Now, this would be about the mid- thirties, right?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, the mid- thirties . And, of course, Stanley Rose also was a man who had good friends among the bootleggers. During prohibition you could always get a drink at Stanley Rose's. He knew his way around. He never struck me as being a man who was very literate, and yet he had friends among the sort of the tough-guy school of literature. Jim Tully used to frequent his place. I'm trying to remember some of the names of the people who were regulars at Stanley Rose's. . . . Certainly nobody who came to Hollywood failed to go to Stanley Rose's bookshop, or didn't know that if you wanted a drink at any hour of the night, you could always knock on Stanley Rose's back door, and he was there at the back of the shop with a jug.

GARDNER:

What kind of books did he handle?

ZEITLIN:

Well, he handled best sellers. Mostly he would go out to the studios with big suitcases of books, and he would sell them to the writers and to the directors and producers, and he sold a lot of art books to the art directors. They, in fact, constituted a very important part of the customers of the book business in those days. And the research departments also were considerably active in buying books. The research departments of the studios had great budgets because everything that they needed for a production could be charged to the production. In its prime. Paramount Studios had Miss Gladys Percy, who bought very expensive sets of books; they could buy a set of Diderot's *Encyclopedia* or Napoleon's great set on the Egypt expedition. They had no limits on the amount they could spend, and they bought full sets of things like the *London Illustrated News*, or *Harper's Weekly*.

GARDNER:

And what did they do with these?

ZEITLIN:

They used them for research, background material for the films. The writers used them, the artists used them, and they built up enormous libraries. RKO

had a research library; Columbia developed one later; but MGM must have spent, in the course of the years, I would say, close to a million dollars building their research library. There was a Russian woman there who was head of the research department. I can't remember her name, but she was a very spectacular lady who walked around in a riding habit and carried a quirt.

GARDNER:

What's happened to these libraries?

ZEITLIN:

Well, some of them were given away. They were given to some of the universities--the universities were told to come in and take them. MGM apparently has retained its library; I never found out. I went out once to Twentieth Century-Fox, which had a very well conducted research library headed by Miss [Frances] Richardson. They answered the questions of all the writers, they answered the questions of the art directors, and they provided the background material. A copy of the script was always given to the research department, and the research department immediately set to work to provide background for the writers and the directors, producers, and the art directors. So it was a very essential part of movie-making. Universal finally sold its library to George Macon, one of the employees of the research library, for a nominal sum, so that they would no longer have to pay taxes on it, and he could start all over again at the price he'd paid for it. They leased their space to him, and he then became a sort of a contract research department for the studio. I don't know what ultimately happened to that department. At one time he came to me with the proposal that we set up an independent research library, a research service for the different studios, but it was just one more activity that I couldn't take on. And I think, in the long run, I was very wise not to.

GARDNER:

Well, back to Stanley Rose. In that period of the mid-thirties, the dealerships around town had changed quite a bit, I'd imagine. Who were some of the principal bookdealers around L.A. by the mid-thirties?

ZEITLIN:

Well, there was a woman, Jean French, and she did all her business selling art books to the research departments of the studios. And she worked very hard, but she made a great deal of money and, in the end, retired very well off from just selling art books to the studios. She would go both to the studio heads--I mean the research department heads--and to the individual artists in the art department, and she would sell them books, and they would buy and always be in debt to her. So half the time she was selling books, and the other half of the time she was trying to collect her money. Before that, there was a Miss Marian Blood who sold architectural books and books on art research to the studios. And then along in the thirties, the Rapid Blueprint Company had over the years built up a very large stock of art books, architectural books. They must have had \$100,000 in their book department. They were out on Maple Street. A man by the name of Henry Davis was the head of it, and they decided they were not going to go on with this. So I bought their stock, and I think that was one of the lifesavers— transfusions--which I got to help keep the business going. Because when I think back on the beautiful folios that we took over, all of the great classics in architecture . . .

GARDNER:

How did that happen? Was it open to bid, or was it through a contact of yours?

ZEITLIN:

It was a personal contact. Henry Davis used to come into my shop--the Rapid Blueprint Company was then the largest and most active blueprint concern, very successful--and he was a strange man, so very brutally direct and full of all kinds of aggressions. He hated his brother (Pierpont Davis) , who was an architect here at the time. When his mother died, he didn't go to her funeral. And he was always full of violent threats. But on the other side, he was a man of considerable sensibilities, and he had started coming into my shop to see some of the exhibitions. I would have as a regular visitor here in Los Angeles a man from Bristol, England, by the name of Kenneth Gallop, who represented a firm called Frost and Reed. They had the American agency for Russell Flint's watercolors. And when Mr. Gallop would come to town, he would set up an exhibition at the Biltmore Hotel. He would let me take a number of his good things and hang them in my shop, and I used to bring various customers to

him, and I would get a commission. I sold things to the Huntington Library; I sold things to the L.A. County Museum. He brought good English watercolors, drawings, and etchings, as well as a great deal of material that was purely for the interior decorator trade. But the Russell Flints that he brought at that time, which we could sell for \$250 to \$750, were the kind of things that later I bought back and sold for \$10,000. And Henry Davis became a customer of mine for Russell Flint watercolors; he really became intrigued with them, and he collected a number of them. Some of them were the best watercolors that Russell Flint ever did. And I used to buy a few of them in between visits with Gallop, and I always had Russell Flint watercolors in stock, and other English watercolors. This, I think, also accounted for the fact that we were able to keep going. Henry Davis liked me in a peculiar way, so that when they decided to close out their book department, they just invited me to come up there and take over the entire stock on a consignment basis. At first they were all consigned to me, and I think I got a third on everything I sold. But I could move them into my shop and price them and sell them, and finally, when the residue got down to a certain level, I bought everything from them at an agreed price.

GARDNER:

Now, it sounds as though the art-book business was flourishing in the 1930s.

ZEITLIN:

The art-book business was flourishing greatly. It was a very important part of our business, and the chief market for art books then were the studios.

GARDNER:

What about other dealers around town? What was your basic competition?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think Stanley Rose was an important competitor when it came to the studios. Of course, Dawson's Book Shop imported a great many art books; Ernest Dawson had a constant flow of business. I don't remember who else. I think it was just a great time for selling any art books that we got.

GARDNER:

It sounds as though the competition has mostly drifted away, then, by now.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the market diminished as time went on, and instead of buying heavily, the studios got to the point where they weren't buying at all. And ultimately, within the past few years, they were trying to sell, and if they couldn't sell, they gave their libraries away. They gave a great many of their books to UCLA and to USC. But in the thirties and forties and fifties, the studios were a tremendous market.

GARDNER:

Was Sixth Street still the center of the book universe in those days, or had it split up pretty much?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Sixth Street remained the street of bookshops until, I suppose, about 1945, and then the rents went up. The bookshops couldn't afford to pay the rents; a lot of the buildings were torn down. The people that lasted the longest around Sixth Street were Bennett and Marshall. They remained in the location which I had had near 614--next door to 614--for quite a few years, and it wasn't until, I think, sometime in the fifties that they moved out on Melrose.

GARDNER:

Hadn't they worked for you?

ZEITLIN:

No, neither one of them worked for me. Bob Bennett had worked for Holmes, and Dick Marshall had worked for Dawson's. And a great deal of their stock came from Dawson, because Dawson was very generous about giving credit and selling them stuff at marked-down prices. He believed in buying large masses of stuff, putting a small profit on them and turning them over, and extending indefinite credit to anybody. He was a man who might have been called naive if he hadn't been so intelligent.

GARDNER:

And so successful.

ZEITLIN:

Well, he was successful to a degree. He was a successful merchandiser. He was certainly a successful person. But he didn't leave when he should have. He should have bought the locations which he was renting then; they were offered to him for very little money. And he didn't take the profits he should have taken on his good books. He became impatient whenever a good book didn't sell, and he marked it down rather than waiting for the right buyer to come along. He loved to buy so much that he would sell anything to get the money to buy something else. This becomes a kind of a senseless compulsion among booksellers: they love to buy books, and they'd rather buy books than sell them. I'm sure that that's true of me. I find it very difficult to restrain myself anytime I see a good library, even if I have to go head over heels in debt. But it was because of the studios and what they bought, because of the people who bought prints and drawings and watercolors from me, and because of the collectors, all of whom were very good and very generous to me, that I managed to keep the West Sixth Street shop going until 1938.

1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, Side One
(August 16, 1977)

GARDNER:

Now, as I mentioned, before we get to your move from Sixth Street, there are a couple of areas to talk about, and I guess chronologically, the first one would be Larry Powell and his time with you. And the thought occurred to me (I'll keep interrupting before you can start) that it seems that when he came to your shop, there was more conversation with the local universities, and then especially after he left and was affiliated with UCLA.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I'd like to say, first of all, that my affiliation with UCLA began much earlier than Larry Powell. I started going out there and selling them books in 1927.

GARDNER:

Up on Vermont?

ZEITLIN:

No, they had already moved out to Westwood, and the librarian there then was John Goodwin. The woman in charge of acquisitions was Virginia Trout. I realized that they were building a big research library that didn't have many books, and that they were in the market for substantial reference material. So any time I saw a good set that I thought would fit into their program, I would take it out or I would write them about it, and so on. In those days, nobody else that I can think of was doing much in the way of trying to sell them. They didn't go to bookshops very much, so that I had a great deal of UCLA's business to myself. And they would tell me what sort of thing they wanted. I remember that they told me they wanted a set of the British Museum catalogs, and I located a set. In those days it consisted of over 100 volumes, all great big quartos, and I located a set through Maggs Brothers. It was unbound, it was in the sheets, folded, ready for binding, and Mr. Goodwin said, "Go ahead, we'll buy it." So I ordered that and had it sent. And then the basic guide to reference tools was [Isadore G.] Mudge, and I got a copy of Mudge [*Guide to Reference Books*], took it out to UCLA and got the librarian there to check off what they had and then to indicate what they would like to have. So I was able to work from an actual desiderata list. I didn't take the full advantage of it [as] I should have. I realize now that if I had sent out want lists, and if I had advertised in the various trade journals, I could have done a great deal more business. But I was handicapped then by the fact that I didn't have the capital to do more business than I was doing, so that it was really a case of hand to mouth and not enough in between.

GARDNER:

How about some of the other universities—USC, Oxy?

ZEITLIN:

USC was buying very little; Occidental was buying very little; and Leslie Bliss at the Huntington was buying as little as he possibly could, partially because the attitude of the trustees of the Huntington then was that they ought to conserve their capital, not build the library. And it wasn't until quite a few years passed--until sometime in the fifties --that the trustees realized that they had something like a million dollars in reserve funds which should have been spent buying in the years in between. They called Bill Jackson and asked him what they should do, and he said, "Gentlemen, spend it as fast as you can

on books, because they're going to cost you more every year. Your dollar is going to go down in value, and the books are going to go up in value." But Leslie Bliss was intimidated by his board. I remember Robert Schad telling me how he wanted to get a certain herbal because they had the gardens (they were supposed to be a botanical garden as well as a museum and a library) . And he went to Mr. [Robert A.] Millikan, and after quite a lot of negotiating, he was told, "Mr. Schad, we will give you the money for that book provided you promise not to ask us for any more money to buy books with this year." Well, you were asking about Larry Powell. Larry Powell came to me because he had returned from Dijon, where he had gotten his degree. He had married Fay, and he had expected to get a job teaching at Occidental College. But the then-head of the faculty didn't approve of Larry, and in spite of the goodwill of Remsen Bird and certain other friends that he had there, he couldn't get a job. He really had no money, and he and Fay were living down at Laguna Beach with M.F.K. [Mary Frances Kennedy] Fisher, who was then married to Dilwyn Parrish, the brother of Anne Parrish. Dilwyn Parrish was a very talented painter and he also was a good writer. And he was a fine person. He was the one man that M.F.K. Fisher always was deeply in love with. I got a letter from her a few days ago in which she told me the story of how she went with him to the Mayo Clinic later—I suppose it was sometime in the forties--and they told him that he had, I think it was, some form of a degenerative disease. He had to undergo a series of amputations before he died. But Larry was living down there, and he didn't have any money. And I said to Ward Ritchie, "What do you think we could do about Larry Powell?" I said, "Do you think he'd come to work for me if I offered him a job?" He said, "Well, I don't know, but you can try." So I sent him a telegram saying, "If you want to come to work for thirty dollars a week, come in Monday and start" (something to that effect--I've actually got a copy of the telegram somewhere). And he really didn't like the idea, but it was better than starving; so he came in and went to work. And he and Fay found a little house down the side of a hill on Lakeshore Avenue in the Echo Park area, and he worked for me for several years. He could type, he could write letters, and he had a large group of friends. He made friends very quickly; Larry Powell has always had a talent for friendship. Through the shop, he made a great many of the friends who later were to be his chief supporters when he became the librarian at UCLA, [as well as] his chief links with the community. He had a unique opportunity to establish relationships with the

people who were interested in books and who had influence, both political and financial, because we were located downtown in the area where the men who wielded power in Los Angeles came and went. The California Club was around the corner; the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company was across the street, and the men who managed Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company were customers of ours. There were people like Seeley Mudd and his brother Harvey Mudd of the Cypress Mines Company, who had their offices and came into our shop frequently, and attorneys like Homer Crotty. There were men like Glenn Schaefer, who was president of the Security Title Insurance and Trust Company, which was separate then from the Title Insurance Company. And they all came into the shop at one time or another. Larry Powell met all these people, and he formed friendships with them. He would write them letters and sell them books. One of his jobs was to go over to the Los Angeles Public Library and call on Albert Reed, who was then the head of the acquisitions department of the public library. Albert Reed had first been librarian of the El Paso Public Library; I don't know how long ago, but it must have been about the turn of the century. Later he worked for Fowler Brothers, which was the largest of the new-book stores in downtown Los Angeles, managed by a very interesting character, a very colorful man by the name of Charlie Hixon. Larry went over to call on Albert Reed to sell him some books, and Albert said, "Larry, you're not any good as a salesman, but you'd be awful good on this side of the desk. Why don't you go to library school. I think I can help get you a scholarship, and, one way or another, I think it would be a good thing if you got yourself a library degree to go with your PhD. You would be one of the men who would be fitted to go ahead and advance as a librarian beyond that of most people who had come up through the ranks of library school." So he persuaded Larry to come up to Berkeley and go to library school. Larry had very little money, but he took the risk. I don't know how he managed; I think Dr. Al Cass, his friend, advanced him some money, as other people did. He went up [to Berkeley], became friends with [Sydney B.] Mitchell, who was the head of the library school and evidently a very inspiring man, and got his library degree, came back down here and again couldn't get a job. I hired him again, and this time (it was about 1936) Frieda Lawrence had come into my shop. She'd been brought in by Galka Scheyer; Galka Scheyer was a very interesting, very spectacular Hungarian woman who represented the Blue Four [Die Blau Vier] group of artists--Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, and

Jawlensky. She was trying very hard to get people to buy their paintings and drawings, and she would come to me and say, "Jake, why don't you come up and buy one of those paintings. It will cost you \$300, and you can pay \$10 a month." I didn't have ten dollars a month, and besides, I thought, I was not going to be stuck with those things. So she never stuck me with one of those great paintings, and the only man who really supported her in those days was Walter Arensberg . [noise from street; tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER:

Now, you were talking about Galka Scheyer and Frieda Lawrence. . . .

ZEITLIN:

Galka Scheyer brought in Frieda Lawrence, and they invited me out to Frieda's place that she rented —no, to Galka Scheyer's house-- to discuss what Frieda was going to do about the manuscripts of Lawrence which she had. I suppose Frieda needed money; I don't think she had a great income at that time. So I told her I'd like very much to try and sell them and [that I] thought I could get a good price for them. But what we thought was a good price then was miserably little; she would have taken \$30,000 for all the Lawrence manuscripts at that time. She agreed to let me come out to San Cristobal, where the manuscripts were, on the ranch, in New Mexico. And I must say I'm very confused about this; it was in the fall of 1937. Well, let's stop just a minute; I want to get the exact date. [tape recorder turned off] It was agreed that I was to come out to the ranch at San Cristobal and see the manuscripts. I think it must have been in the summer of 1937 that I finally got out to the ranch. Drove up--it was some terrible, dark night; I don't know yet how I found my way up to the ranch. I had driven from Colorado, and the next morning I met Aldous Huxley and Maria Huxley there at the ranch and Angelino [Ravagalli] who was Frieda's Italian boyfriend. They showed me the trunk in which the manuscripts of Lawrence were kept. They did not show me the *Lady Chatterley* manuscript, which may not have been there then; it may still have been held somewhere for safekeeping in Europe. But it was a very pleasant visit. I remember the squash blossom omelettes we'd have for breakfast. I remember also that Aldous Huxley would get up and type; he was then writing *Ends and Means* , which was, I think, the first book in which he seriously expressed his general philosophy both about mysticism, pacifism,

and the sources of human motivation and man's relation to the universe. And he talked to me--he told me something about what he was writing. I said to him that there would probably be a place for him in Hollywood if he would like to come out and work for the pictures. And he said, well, he would think about it ... he might be inclined to do so. ... I said to him, "I don't want you to make any contracts or any agreements, but would you be receptive if a proposal came to you, if there was someone that said that they would offer you a job?" And he said, yes, he would be, and he wrote me to that effect, saying essentially that he would be open to proposals, that he was not committing himself in any way, there was no exclusive agreement between us, but if I could bring someone to him, he would be interested. And I remember we went down to Santa Fe . We met Witter Bynner there, and all drove to Santo Domingo for the rain dance. It was a wonderful occasion to be sitting there on the ground watching this Santo Domingo rain dance with Aldous Huxley, Frieda Lawrence, Witter Bynner, and Angelino, And next to us, sitting on the ground, was a very inconspicuous little man with dark skin, whom I didn't recognize at all when we first sat down. But he finally came over and said, "Hello, Jake." And it turned out to be Stanley Marcus, the head of Neiman-Marcus. So the Indians danced the rain dance, and it rained —and it rained torrents. We got back to Santa Fe, I must say, a little bit concerned about the flash floods that were coming down, but we got back up and back up to the ranch. I drove back from there to California. And sometime afterward, they sent the trunk to me, and I suggested to Larry Powell that this would be a great job for him--if he would like something to do, he could come and catalog the Lawrence manuscripts. And this he did extremely well. Frieda came in and he met her. He wrote the catalog description of all the manuscripts which we printed in 1937. Aldous Huxley wrote a foreword, I wrote a foreword, Elmer Belt and Susannah Dakin paid for the printing, and it was printed by Ward Ritchie. It was exhibited at the Los Angeles Public Library, and Aldous Huxley was invited to come and speak. This job provided an opportunity for Larry to really use his talents in a productive way, something that combined the use of his literary talents for literary purposes and for commercial purposes. And he did an excellent job. He wrote the essays on each one, short annotations--some longer, some shorter--about the manuscripts. He described them very well, and this catalog now has become a landmark, and it sells for quite a bit of money when it turns up.

GARDNER:

Tell me a little bit about Frieda Lawrence. What was she like in those days?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Frieda Lawrence, in those days, seemed to be a very large person. She had this voice that people speak of which really was a vibrant Germanic kind of a voice, but it reached out and struck you; it was like beating on a bronze cymbal. She had a wonderfully direct way about her. There was no doubt that she was an exceptional person, a person who had met the v/orld with open eyes and had lived her own life quite frankly and in terms of what she felt was the honest way to live. On the one hand, she seemed to be this very strong person; in other ways she was a very weak, dependent woman, and she needed Angelino. They [the Lawrences] had rented a house from him in Italy, and I think there's no doubt that she must have had an affair with Angelo while Lawrence was in his last year. He promised Lawrence that he would look after Frieda. And afterward, Angelo left his family and came to the United States, helped her look after the ranch, and finally did marry her, and they moved down to the ranch. Of course, the ranch, San Cristobal, was given to Lawrence by Mabel Dodge. Lawrence wouldn't take it as a gift, so he gave her the manuscript of *Sons and Lovers* as a token purchase price for the ranch. She also gave him a house down in Taos, a little piece of land, and Frieda and Angelino moved down there, and they spent the summers in Taos and the winters in Port Aransas, Texas. While I was at the ranch, I met the Lady Brett, who had been a sort of a follower of Lawrence. She was never a striking beauty; she painted, but she didn't paint what then seemed to be very good paintings. Later in the years, she developed into a very impressive artist. And she carried around this horn which you had to talk into. It was a speaking horn that deaf people used to use in those days. I didn't meet Mabel. I was always afraid to meet Mabel; I always felt that she was a woman that devoured people. If she took a fancy to you, she sort of took you in and overwhelmed you, and then when she got tired of you, she shucked you off. I didn't want to be one of the people that got caught in her gristmill.

GARDNER:

You talked about Galka Scheyer very briefly. She was really very important in Los Angeles art, and obviously also had contact with you. What was she like?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Galka Scheyer was a little woman. She never asked people to do things-- she told them. And her great devotion was to this group of artists who she felt were very important, would someday be numbered among the great artists of their time--and they have become so. She lived not too well, but she lived off of acting as their agent, selling their things, making a commission off of them, but kept pushing these things at people whether they wanted them or not. She was fortunate that Walter Arensberg was forming his collection, that he appreciated what these people were, and he bought quite a few of them. And some other people did, too, but not nearly as many as should have.

GARDNER:

And would have, twenty years later.

ZEITLIN:

She also conducted classes in art, and one of the things that helped her live, I think, were the classes. They were not so much classes in how to paint as how to look at paintings and what the elements of the new art were. She was a great apostle for the art of the twentieth century.

GARDNER:

How did she happen to come to Los Angeles?

ZEITLIN:

I have no idea. I never knew. She had a nephew living here, but whether he came afterwards I don't know. But I can't say, unless it had to do with a man by the name of Herman Sachs. Herman Sachs was a German architect and designer who came here. He had been associated with the Bauhaus school, and he came here and became associated with the Parkinsons, who were one of the leading architectural firms in town, and he did a great many interior designs for them. They worked on such things as the tile design for the interior of the Union Station downtown, and many other designs in connection with buildings and furnishings in the Los Angeles area. I think they must have had a hand in what went into Bullock's Wilshire, which was certainly a revolutionary design, both in the way of structural architecture and the interior and all the furnishings that went into it.

GARDNER:

Let me finish up with one more subject, unless you feel like quitting now.

ZEITLIN:

Go ahead.

GARDNER:

Okay, I thought to finish up this evening we'd talk about the show you brought in 1937, which was [of] Kathe Kollwitz.

ZEITLIN:

The Kathe Kollwitz exhibition came as a result of my receiving a lithograph--I think it must have been in 1933--as a gift from Herbert Klein, who was then a newspaper correspondent in Berlin. Mina Cooper, who was one of the loveliest people I ever knew—beautiful young woman, marvelous spirit, great sensitivity--had met him here in about 1928 or '29. He came in one day and said he was going to go to work for what was called the Community Chest in those days (the United Fund drive now). And I said, "Well, you're going to meet a very lovely person down there, Mina Cooper." And he went down, he did meet her, and fell in love; and ultimately, when he went to Germany as a correspondent, she went over and met him, and they were married. And one of the people that came there while they were in Berlin to see them was Larry Powell. That was during the time that he was going to school at Dijon. I was very much struck with this lithograph that Herbert and Mina sent me; I think it was for a wedding present. It was so full of emotion, called *The Mothers*. I wanted to know more about Kathe Kollwitz, so I started reading what I could about her. I think the best article I read was by Mary McCarthy in the magazine published by the American Art Association. And so I wanted to know more, and finally I heard that there was an exhibition of her work in Minneapolis at the Walker Gallery, and that there was a gallery in New York also called the Walker Gallery that was handling her things in the United States. I wrote to Berlin and got in touch with Kathe. Kollwitz, and she in turn got the Walker Gallery in touch with me, and I asked if I could have an exhibition. In 1937, in the midst of the agitation against Nazism--there was an antifascist movement in this country which was very radical, of course, and was looked upon as being very dangerous and communistic, which was

developing —I decided that it would be a great idea to hold an exhibition for the benefit of the League against Fascism, I think it was called at that time. So I arranged to get this group of prints here. I got the sponsorship of the anti-fascist organization (I've forgotten what it was called, but I've got all my files on it here), and it was agreed that Melvyn Douglas would chair the opening. One of the speakers was George Antheil, and the other speaker was the man who wrote *Masse Mensch*--Ernst Toller, one of the most important men in Germany at the time of the Spartacist revolution in the twenties, late twenties. He later committed suicide. He delivered a very fine talk on this evening. We had a very large attendance, got good publicity both in the *Los Angeles Times* and in the *Los Angeles Record*. And that was the first show of Kathe Kollwitz on the West Coast. I didn't sell many of her prints to people in Los Angeles, but Albert Bender, who was the patron of everything good in San Francisco, came down about that time, and he bought a complete set of the *Peasant Rebellion* and a number of the other prints. Of course, the prices now seem pathetically low--like eighty-five dollars for a complete set of the *Peasant Rebellion* series, and the prints were selling anywhere from fifteen dollars to seventy-five dollars. I think the highest price was something like seventy-five dollars. I must say that the show got a great deal of attention and moved people emotionally and was a sort of a landmark exhibition. That was the first exhibition, as I said, of Kathe Kollwitz on the West Coast, and later, one of the galleries in Munich published a hundredth-anniversary booklet on Kathe Kollwitz. In it they reproduced a letter of Kathe Kollwitz in which she said, "I've just had a letter from Jake Zeitlin in which he proposes to have *eine Ausstellung* in Los Angeles, in California." It wasn't until quite a few years later that I discovered that I had a facsimile of this letter. Someone was researching Kathe Kollwitz in Berlin and came across the original letter there and sent me a Xerox of it, and then I discovered that I had a copy of this all the time. But it was very nice to be mentioned by her, and this was, of course, the farthest away from Berlin that anyone had ever shown her work.

**1.10. TAPE NUMBER: VI [video session]
(September 9, 1977)**

GARDNER:

We're here to do the video segment of the oral history interview we've been working on now for a month or two. What we're going to do today, at first at least, is talk about Mr. Zeitlin's personal collection and some of the many things that he himself has acquired through the years. Where would you like to begin?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think that it would be very appropriate to talk about some of the books which I have kept over the years, because books are for me the symbols of my ideals, the symbols of my friendships, and the symbols of some of my ambitions. And without books, I'm afraid my life would be hardly anything at all. I've piled up here a few books in a rather haphazard way, and there's going to be very little connection between one and the other except as they pertain to some part of me, either my past or my present. I'd like to say, first of all, that I'm not a book collector in the sense that some people are. I have never attempted to compete with my customers, and there have been times, a number of times, when I've taken home some favorite book like Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in a very fine copy, and the first man that came along and said, "You know what I really would like is a fine copy of *The Origin of the Species*," I could never resist saying to him, "I've got the book for you." That says something about me. It isn't that I'm entirely commercial about this; it's that it gives me such tremendous satisfaction to have the right book for the right man when he wants it. On the other hand, books have been a very important part of my life. They have amulet value, in a way. There are many books I've kept which I haven't read, but I have them on the shelf there because, in some way, they have symbolized an ideal of mine. And, of course, I've always had the feeling, just as most people who accumulate books do, that someday I was going to get to it and read it, and I wanted it there when I did decide to get to it. But in the larger proportion, the books that I've kept have been books that I have read either in whole or in part. I wonder if I could go back and determine which books have been the most significant in my life and have formed my character mostly. I can only remember a few. Certainly Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, which I read when I was somewhere between ten and twelve, must have had a considerable influence on me. I think it had a lot to do with forming my social and political notions. Later on it was the books of John Burroughs which appealed to me very much because of my

interest of Ashley Montagu's *Man's Most Dangerous Myth ; The Fallacy of Race* . It's inscribed, "To Jake Zeitlin, father of this book, with love, from Ashley Montagu, 5th May, 1974." And in the preface, he says, "It was my friend Mr. Jake Zeitlin, bookseller of Los Angeles, who originally persuaded me to write this book." What happened was that I had read an article of Ashley Montagu's in the journal called *Psychiatry*, published by St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, and that article was entitled, "Problems and Methods Relating to the Study of Race." I wrote to him and said, "I think you have a very important idea there, and I think you should go ahead and expand it and make a book out of it." And I said, "My friend Aldous Huxley might very well write a preface to it, because he approves of your approach to the reasons for racial prejudice and racial aggression." So with that stimulation, he started to write, and he sent me chapters which I read and, in a small way, criticized and returned to him. Finally he produced a manuscript for a book. He'd hoped, and I hoped, that I would publish it; but very fortunately for him, I found that I was in no shape to undertake any publishing. I did get Aldous Huxley to write the foreword to it, and, with that, he was able to go to Columbia University Press and get the book published in 1942. It's interesting to see that since then it's gone from a small book of this size to a considerably thicker book of this size in thirty-two years. It has no doubt been the most widely circulated and, I hope, one of the most influential books on the question of race and race prejudice. I hope that it has played an influential part in changing people's attitudes toward the notion of the myth of race.

GARDNER:

I see a Sandburg down there.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the Sandburg *American Songbag* is another book which I've kept because of my close association both with Sandburg and my interest in folk songs. When I was a boy, I worked on ranches in Texas and also had listened to some of the people that worked for my father who went along when I drove a truck--or a team of horses before then--on the long drives, and they would sing songs. I don't know where I got the notion that these things constituted a form of literature, but I felt that I should put them down. So I collected a good many of these songs. Also, on the back lot of a house which

we owned in the black section of Fort Worth, there was a Holy Roller church, and I used to go there and hear them sing, and I absorbed some of their songs. Very early I had the audacity to write to Frank Dobie, and I got a letter back, and I joined the Texas Folklore Society and received some of their early publications, which have now become immensely valuable. I was surprised to see some of these things, which were a dollar and a dollar and a half when they were published, selling for as much as \$250 now. I'm glad to say that I stowed some of those away as they came in. But the *American Songbag* of Carl Sandburg was really his first book, outside of his poetry, that brought him to national attention. It was the first attempt, I think, to introduce the American people to the idea that the folk songs which were sung by the working people and the tramps and the cowboys and the poor Southerners were something which were entitled to be sung in the concert hall and the parlor, as well as in the back room in the bar. I met Carl Sandburg on a very cold February night of 1922 in Dallas, Texas, and he was giving one of his lectures and guitar recitals at Southern Methodist University. We seemed to have the right chemistry for each other immediately, and after the concert was over and the party that followed, he asked me to come up to his room in the Adolphus Hotel. And we sat up till four o'clock in the morning, with my singing a number of songs and his attempting to record them with his own peculiar type of notation. Of course, tape recorders like we have here were hardly thought of, and nobody had one or a lot of people would have saved a great deal of work and a lot of good material would have been preserved as it should have been, instead of through the filter of the bad methods of recording that we had in those days. He told me that he was going to write this *American Songbag*, and he would like to use some of these songs. Later, in 1925, when I moved to California, he kept in touch with me, came to see me when he came out here, and he used some of these songs. I must say that he was one of the men who always took the trouble to give appropriate credit to anyone he took a song from. He made a great many friends that way and, certainly for me, it was a great satisfaction to feel that these things which all my friends thought were trivial and hardly polite were worth recording. He sent me this here and inscribed it, "With thanks, and hoping health and love keep you, Carl." Until his death at over eighty a few years ago, we remained in close touch, although I never had the good fortune to go and visit him in Chicago or at his goat farm in Wisconsin,

or, later on, in North Carolina. His daughter [Helga] later came to see me, and we have kept in touch for the years that followed.

GARDNER:

Maybe we should have you sing one of those.

ZEITLIN:

No, I think that that might crack the record. Now, everyone likes to think that at one time or another he was early in discovering a talent, and one of the books that I feel most proud of having spotted early in its publication is *The Time of Men*, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. I think it's a very important novel, and I think it's important not only for the story it tells but for the way in which it tells the story. The language is pure, the purest kind of poetic American English. There's a cadence to it which I think is unique, and as soon as I saw the book and read a little of it, I took a copy home in its dust jacket, and it has remained with me ever since. It's one of the books which collectors value because of what's called "the point," the point in this being that the title is printed not in black, but in dark blue ink, and I defy anyone to tell the difference unless it's brought to their attention. However, that makes it a first issue, which is not so significant as the lovely language which she used. There is a particular passage I wish I could find in which the man who sold apple trees describes the different kinds of apples. There's nothing I've ever read which gives me so much pleasure for the pure, poetic quality and the simplicity of it; it's the language which these people she describes would have used. I notice, now that I look at it, that this is not a copy that I bought when it first came out; it's a copy that I bought as a remainder from J.W. Robinson Company for fifty cents. I must have given away the copy which I bought when it first came out. This is another example of what happens very often to good books. First editions of Faulkner's *Soldiers Pay* and *Mosquitoes* were remaindered, and we bought them for thirty cents and sold them for fifty-nine cents at Bullock's in 1926 and '27. Now they bring \$250 to \$450 each, so it may be one of the best marks of a book for it to have been above the head of popular taste. One of the friendships that I've always been most proud of, a friendship which I feel very strongly about for a number of reasons, is that which I had with Rockwell Kent. I'd first heard of Rockwell Kent through Merle Armitage, although, of course, I had seen Rockwell Kent's illustrations

in *Vanity Fair* along about 1922, '23, and had seen some of his books, like *Voyaging* and *Wilderness*, very early. But the first person I knew that knew him directly was Merle Armitage, and Merle Armitage in the late twenties and early thirties used to boast of his friendship with Rockwell Kent. Later on, I'm sorry to say. Merle Armitage decided that his superpatriotism couldn't tolerate the point of view of Rockwell Kent, and so he not only disavowed him but he attacked him violently. That was one of the several reasons why, in our later years, I was not as close as I had been to Merle. If Rockwell Kent was good enough for Merle to use as a sort of a stepping stone during the early part of his career, he should have been good enough to maintain a loyal friend-ship for later on. I have a great many photographs of Rockwell Kent. My first personal contact with him was when I asked him to do some illustrations or decorations or initials for Larry Powell's book on Robinson Jeffers. I have a copy of that here; it was the first book that Larry Powell published. I might say that it all began when Larry Powell came in my shop on Hope Street about 1928, and he and Ward Ritchie were delivery boys for Vroman's. We talked about a lot of things, and I expressed my great enthusiasm for Robinson Jeffers, and he and Ritchie both bought copies of Jeffers 's books. They had, of course, a good reason to be interested otherwise, because Jeffers had been an Occidental student at one time, and both Powell and Ritchie had gone to Occidental College. So, later, Powell went to Dijon and there got his doctorate; and his thesis for his doctorate was *An Introduction to Robinson Jeffers*. He sent me a number of copies, which I sold for him. I think the original selling price must have been no more than two dollars and a half (there were only sixty copies printed in all), and the last time I saw one of these sold was at a book fair in San Francisco where someone paid \$450 for it.

GARDNER:

This is the original Dijon.

ZEITLIN:

This is the original Dijon edition published in 1932. Later, when I started the Primavera Press, I got the idea of getting out another edition, a regular edition of this book. I wrote to Rockwell Kent and asked him if he would think of doing it, and he said, well, he would be coming out very shortly, and he would come

and see me. So he did come out, and I drove him down to San Diego, where he lectured. We spent a wonderful night driving back and stopped early in the morning to eat hijacked lobsters and clam broth with a couple of longshoreman friends who lived along the coast of Palos Verdes. And he agreed to do something for the book. He decided that he would do initials instead of illustrations, and he did do the initials which were part of the book. In the meantime, we got acquainted, and we developed a friendship which we continued. I also wrote Kent, I think. It was March 22, 1932, that I got a letter from Rockwell Kent's secretary replying to a letter that I wrote him. [pause, outside noise]

GARDNER:

Now then, before we were interrupted by the local trash pickup, you had found a letter that you were about to read.

ZEITLIN:

I had a letter from Rockwell Kent's secretary dated March 22, 1932, in which she says, "Mr. Kent has been in Greenland since last April, and Mrs. Kent, who is on her way to join him there now, has been away much of the time." Then she goes ahead and says that she has written to Mr. A.N. Kemp telling him Mr. Kent will return sometime in the fall, and suggested he write again at that time. Now, A.N. Kemp was one of my earliest customers. He was connected with the California Bank, which was the forerunner of the United California Bank here in Southern California, and he was a very important man in the financial world. He had the idea of having Rockwell Kent do a bookplate for him, and it was because of that that Kemp wrote Kent. This particular book that I'm holding up here is a copy of *Rockwell Kentiana*, the works and a few words and many pictures by Rockwell Kent. This was published in a substantial edition by Harcourt Brace and Company in 1933. The interesting thing about this copy is that it is inscribed with a special photograph which we had put into a few copies, which says, "Yours truly, Rockwell Kent, to Jake and Jean." And this shows Rockwell Kent at what must have been the age of four or five dressed in a Little Lord Fauntleroy hat--not very consistent with the character we have of Kent as a man who went out into the wilderness of Greenland and Newfoundland and built himself houses in the wilderness. This *Rockwell Kentiana* is both by Rockwell Kent and Carl Zigrosser, who did the bibliography

and a list of his prints. It was dedicated to C.Z. and shows a handclasp with "1910 plus," which indicates that they had originally met in 1910. Carl Zigrosser was a wonderful man. He was, I think, the patron saint of printmaking in America for a great many years. My first contact with him was about 1928 when I wrote him from my first shop; he was in charge of the print department at Weyhe's. Because of Zigrosser, a great many artists got their first showings of prints and their encouragement. Carl Zigrosser later went on to become the curator of prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He wrote some of the most authoritative books on connoisseurship and the collecting of prints, and died a couple of years ago in Switzerland, where he'd gone to retire. It was very much to his credit--is very much to his credit—that he discovered Paul Landacre here in Southern California and encouraged him, came to see him, exhibited his prints at Weyhe's in New York, and helped create a reputation for him. Hardly anyone else in the East has recognized Paul Landacre's genius since then except, of course, George Macy, who used him to illustrate a number of the Limited Edition Club books. And now the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art came to me a few weeks ago and said that they were getting together material for a full-scale exhibition of the wood engravings of Paul Landacre. One of the photographs which I have of Rockwell Kent shows him here with Rosemary Haskell. Rosemary was an extraordinarily beautiful young woman, and Rockwell Kent had a great taste for beautiful young women. This was done, I think, sometime around 1942, when he had come out originally. I had introduced him to Dorothy Wagner, who was another very beautiful young woman. Dorothy was a premier dancer for Misha Ito, and it seemed that wherever Rockwell Kent went, he always attracted extraordinarily beautiful women who attached themselves to him without hesitation or delay. Rosemary Haskell later married Albert Maltz and finally committed suicide after a long depression. One of the most amusing experiences I ever had was long before I met Rockwell Kent, when I was invited to a friend's house to meet him. And I went there, and here was a fellow, about five foot four, with curly black hair and a mustache, who was representing himself to be Rockwell Kent. It turned out to be Mike Romanoff. Can I stop here a minute? [tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER:

We have a few minutes left to wrap up.

ZEITLIN:

Of course, Rockwell Kent was over six feet tall and had a bald head, so there was no resemblance at all between Mike Romanoff and Rockwell Kent. But he used this little gambit on people who had never met Kent, and he got away with it several times.

GARDNER:

Well, Romanoff was a great impostor, anyway, wasn't he?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, he was an amusing impostor, and nobody ever got very mad at him or prosecuted him because he never used it to take advantage of anybody or get money out of them or anything like that. Of course, later on, Michael Romanoff opened a very fine restaurant in Beverly Hills, and we got to be very good friends. He had quite scholarly tastes and used to buy some most erudite books from me, including Greek-English dictionaries and some of the more highly esteemed editions of the classics. Well, I think we've come very close to the end of our time, so I hope that this has given you some idea of the sort of books of a certain type which I've collected. Although this doesn't cover the books of people with whom I've had no personal association and which I've collected for other reasons.

GARDNER:

Now, you did mention very briefly (before we close up here) the collecting of the Brueghel. Is that about the only area that you collect outside of the incidentals? I take it you wouldn't sell the Brueghel material if someone came along and knocked on the door and asked for it.

ZEITLIN:

The collection of books about Brueghel we're not going to sell. But some day we're going to give them somewhere where we hope they'll be kept together and used as a source of reference and study by someone who may want to write more about Pieter Breughel, or by some of the print collectors. It would be a shame for it to be dispersed after these books have all been brought together, and we think that either the Los Angeles Museum or the National Gallery of Art will want to keep them together. In the not-too-distant future

we're going to see what we can do about that. It's been a great pleasure for Josephine to get these books together and to read a great many of them. Of course, as always, a great part of the fun is in the chase.

GARDNER:

Well, Mr. Zeitlin, thank you very much for your time, and I'll be back next Tuesday.

ZEITLIN:

Thank you.

**1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side One
(September 29, 1977)**

GARDNER:

Now, as previewed, you said that there was more than one article that you wrote for *Reader's Digest*. The only one that I had read about was the one in 1936.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think the first one I did was in 1935, and this was the result of my acquaintance with the Reverend Charles Ferguson, whom I had known when he was a young, rather controversial Methodist minister in Fort Worth, Texas. He didn't last long with his congregation there, but I knew him only slightly, in the twenties, when we both lived there. He commenced to write for [H.L.] Mencken's *American Mercury*. He wrote several articles about American religions, and then he later did a thing called "500,000 Brothers" (as I remember the title), which had to do with American organizations such as the Shriners, the Odd Fellows, and all the other civic organizations. In addition, he wrote about American religious cults and American orthodoxy. He naturally followed the general point of view of Mencken and [George Jean] Nathan, which was to ridicule the boobs. And then, much to my surprise, after I got out here and had been here for some time, I heard from him again and discovered that he was an associate editor of *Reader's Digest*. He came out here to visit me, quite without any special plan, and he and a man by the name of Charlie Dunning and I went out to the Huntington Library. Charlie Dunning was a newspaperman who had done public relations work for the movies; before

that he had been on the *Chicago Daily News* and was a friend of Carl Sandburg. It was through Carl Sandburg that I met Charlie Dunning. Charlie Dunning, at the time I met him, was publicity man, general P.R. man for Estelle Taylor. She was married to Jack Dempsey, who had abducted her. She was quite a successful figure in the movies, and Jack Dempsey had got a great passion for her and kidnapped her and took her down to Agua Caliente, which was a great resort then, and married her. She was in mortal fear of him, and I think that she was afraid to not marry him. But in any event, Charlie, who was a pretty heavy man with the bottle, and Carl Sandburg would go off for weekends, usually around Laguna, and stay in a state of mild intoxication for several days and then come back to Los Angeles and visit around with their friends. And Carl would do his usual concertizing. So I got to know Charlie Dunning quite well, and he did some very kind things for me when I had problems later on. But Charlie Dunning came with Charlie Ferguson and me out to the Huntington Library, and we met a Dr. [Lodowick] Bendicksen, a Dutchman who was then in charge of the photographic laboratory at the Huntington Library. Dr. Bendicksen had originated some documentation techniques, including the first microcards and microfiche that I ever saw, and he demonstrated those to us, and he also demonstrated microfilm. So Charlie Ferguson got the idea that this would make a good story, and it was agreed that Charlie Dunning and I would collaborate. So we interviewed Bendicksen, got all the information that we could, and then, between us, we did the articles. Now, a regular practice of *Reader's Digest* was to buy articles from other magazines. But they very often would inspire an article and then refer the editor of the particular magazine to the writer of the article and he would buy it. For instance, the editor of *World's Work*, where our article "Lilliputian Libraries" first appeared, paid us \$45 for it, and then *Reader's Digest* would buy the reprint rights and pay us \$2,000 for it. So we suddenly landed with a very substantial sum of money for each of us- It was this kind of break once in a while which kept the book business going.

GARDNER:

This was the first writing you'd done in a while, wasn't it?

ZEITLIN:

No, I'd always done some writing, but it never appeared in anything except, you know, local magazines, and usually it was about books. Or I tried to write some poetry, which also appeared in places like the *San Francisco Review* and some of the other little poetry magazines. Then the year following, I had talked to Ferguson about the fact that a great many valuable materials, the ephemera upon which history is based, the things which historians need really to write accurately, were the things that weren't worth very much money but that in time would become very valuable and very useful. And I talked about such things as the road maps that filling stations gave away and still give away; over the course of a year, a series of road maps, showing the highways of the United States and their growth and the changes that had taken place, really constituted a valuable documentary source. And I told stories about different things which had come my way which had turned out to be valuable, such as a road map used by the immigrants — T.H. Jefferson's *Emigrant's Guide* from St. Joseph, Missouri, to St. Francisco, published in 1848. This particular one that a lady had brought in to me, which was folded up in a little container no bigger than a cigarette pack, had written on the face of it, "With the compliments of T.H. Jefferson to Benjamin Holliday of the Holliday Stage Lines." So this was a very vitally important map of the Overland Road, the road used by the immigrants, and later it was used by Ben Holliday for setting up the route of the stage lines. I asked the lady how much she wanted for it, and she said twenty-five dollars. And it seemed to me that that was a reasonable price. I really had no idea what that was worth, and so I bought it and then went to Robert Cowan, the man who had done the definitive bibliography of California and who was the librarian for William Andrews Clark, and asked him about it. And he said, "Has it got the little pamphlet giving instructions to the immigrants on where to camp, how to avoid some of the hazards of the overland crossing?" I said yes. "Well," he said, "the only other copy known of this doesn't have that." So finally he suggested I ask \$1,000 for it, but I decided that was too much, so I offered it to Mrs. Doheny for \$750, and she bought it. The next day I got a wire from Ed Eberstadt, who was a great dealer in Western Americana in those days, offering me \$1,500 for it. So I figured I'd lost \$750 on that transaction! Well, it was stories like this that I put into this article, which I called "Trifles Today and Treasures Tomorrow." And this, I think, appeared first in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, also at a price of something like forty-five dollars, and then it was purchased in Reader's Digest

. It was pretending to be a digest of the best stories appearing in other magazines in the country, but they had found that in order to maintain a certain level of the type of story they wanted (which Ferguson said to me was a story that would interest the average streetcar conductor in the United States; now, that dates them very much—you'd have to go a long way to find a streetcar conductor now) , they had to resort to this policy of inspiring stories, planting them in other magazines, and then buying them from the other magazines and reprinting them. It was a very nice little arrangement. This article brought me an enormous flood of letters, over 5,000 letters in all. I never was able to answer them all, but I did answer quite a few, and I got a number of very good things. I got an original Audubon pastel. I don't remember all of the things I got, but one of the most interesting was a twenty-five-page letter from Timothy Pickering. [He] had been postmaster general and quartermaster general [among] many other things under Washington during the Revolution and during his first administration. [The letter was] written after Washington had died, giving Timothy Pickering's reasons why George Washington should not have a monument erected in his honor. It was a characteristic letter, it turned out: it seemed that Timothy Pickering was a man of many grievances who enjoyed his grievances hugely, and he also was a man who felt that people of less talent and less ability had been selected for higher office and honored, when he was more deserving. So he stated in this letter that George Washington had never made any of the important strategic decisions during the Revolutionary War (they'd all been made by General [Nathaneal] Greene) , that he was a man who looked very well in the saddle and on the platform, but was a man of very limited ability to make decisions or judgments, and that all this was a great myth. Well, there were many other letters; I never got them all answered. One of the more interesting letters was from a gentleman in Kentucky who said that he liked the tone of my letter and that he didn't have any rare books, but he wanted his daughter to go to Hollywood--she was a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl--and could he send her to me, because he knew from the tone of my article that I was an honorable man and would see that she was protected from the lures of Hollywood. I never could figure out whether this one hadn't been written by one of my friends as a practical joke.

GARDNER:

She never showed up?

ZEITLIN:

No, she never showed up, thank God. But a number of people did, most of them who had things which were worthless, and it was very pathetic and caused me a great deal of distress to see these people come in. One of them was an old gentleman from Wisconsin who'd read this portion about the Overland map, and borrowed money and came across the country to try and sell me a map, and it wasn't worth fifty cents. So there was quite a bit of that. Some people were very graceful about it and took it in good spirit, and others were very much upset and felt that I had misled them. But in any event, this sort of set the style for collecting ephemera. It stimulated people into keeping not only first editions of famous books but first appearances of significant articles and magazines or significant pamphlets. I suggested that people should save things like the old commercial almanacs that the baking powder people used to give out, and the ladies' cookbooks from the church sewing circle. This article really did stimulate, I think, the whole general movement towards collecting the sort of thing that was looked upon as being insignificant and of very little value. Later on, Van Allen Bradley started a column in the *Chicago Daily News* called "Gold in Your Attic," and that was a direct descendant of the thing that this article started. It was, of course, very useful to me because a great many people read *Reader's Digest*, and I think that if I had known how to exploit this, I could have done a great deal better than I did out of it. I think if I had systematically sent somebody around the country to follow up these letters to the various writers from which they came, I would have gotten a lot more stuff; and the curious thing is that for twenty-five years afterwards, people would pick up that article and write me about things. It continued to bring stuff in for a long, long time.

GARDNER:

Now, I knew about the poetry, but I wasn't aware that you wrote other articles. You said they were in local publications. What were some of those?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the other day I picked up something I had done in 1927 for *Publishers Weekly* on how we promoted fine-press books and developed an interest in

the collecting of press books. I did an article (and I can't remember just where it was now) for one of the Southern California magazines— it may have been *Arts and Architecture*—on the book as a work of art. And later I wrote an article for *Arts and Architecture* called "What Is Planning?" I became interested in the whole business of housing and planning, read a good deal about it, and then wrote this piece, which was noticed by a number of architectural schools. And reprints had to be made and sent out to places like the school of architecture at Harvard, and so on. Then I did a column for *Arts and Architecture* here that was entitled "Doubletalk, " and this was an analysis of such things as the current attack that the American Medical Association had launched against the advocates of health insurance, social security, and the idea of a national health system. It's ridiculous to think now how far we've come since then. They had printed a brochure which was being distributed through the drugstores all over the country which was a direct attack upon the advocates of health insurance, social security, state-supported health services, and even such simple things as group medicine. And I tried to make a semantical analysis of this; that's what the substance of these articles were-- attempts at semantical analysis of different forms of propaganda. And the *L.A. County Medical Association Journal* got ahold of this--or some member did-- and they published an editorial attacking me quite violently, saying that the County Medical Association Library had been a good customer of mine, and here I was biting the hand that fed me. I had advanced my thesis as a sort of a counterattack, to the effect that the good old family doctor had contributed very little to the reduction of mortality from the great killers, but that it had been state-supported researchers, some of whom weren't medical men at all-- like Pasteur who, with the help of public funds, had provided the great discoveries which had reduced death from smallpox, diphtheria, and all of the infectious diseases. And this they really pounced on. So the first thing the trustees of the Los Angeles County Medical Association wanted to do was see that I was made to resign from my job as the secretary of the Barlow Society for the History of Medicine, an organization which I had helped found, and for which I wrote the constitution and bylaws. Much to my surprise, I learned a number of years later that my chief defendant--the man who had stood up for me and refused to let the motion go through—was a man by the name of Dr. Donald Charnock, who was as conservative a Republican as ever existed, but who just believed fundamentally that I had the right to speak my piece and

that it would be an admission of error if the [L.A.] County Medical Association took this step. So I was rebuked by an editorial in the *L.A. County Medical Association Journal*, but I was not asked to resign. And they did not take away their book business from me, although for a while they stopped buying from me. In more recent years, I have sold very little to the Los Angeles County Medical Association.

GARDNER:

For any particular reason?

ZEITLIN:

For no particular reason except that the members of the library board were not the kind of people who were interested in the history of medicine or in expanding their historical collection. They had bought a great many sets of journals from me in the earlier days—that is, in the thirties and perhaps early forties—but then they had reached their capacity so far as the number of journals they could house. They also didn't have the funds to continue to fill in the gaps in their journals, which I had made a strong drive to fill in. But it was a very good working relationship while it lasted, and it was good for me, and it was good for them, too, because it helped to build a good medical reference library. And the Barlow Society for the History of Medicine has continued to exist, by some peculiar miracle. It never has elections; it never has meetings of its members or board for other purposes except to hold the annual George Dock lecture. But it does go on and, somehow or another, has remained as a paper entity.

GARDNER:

Well, if that's all your writing. . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, as I say, I was writing this column for *Arts and Architecture*. I wrote about books for places like the *Publishers Weekly* and in some of the other magazines around here that weren't very important. Then I published a poem in the *San Francisco Review*, I think it was called—it was one of these short-lived literary magazines in San Francisco—for which I was given a prize. And all these things managed to get noticed and help build up a reputation for me.

The whole point was that I wasn't doing something so very great or special, but nobody else in the book business was doing even as much.

GARDNER:

Well put. [laughter] Well, in 1938 you made a major move away from Sixth Street to Carondelet.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, in 1937 Jake Zeitlin Books became a corporation. It was a very poorly managed operation. I think it must have been 1935 that a friend of mine, Oscar Moss, who was an accountant, advised me that my business had to have something done to it to feed some capital into it, and the only thing to do was to incorporate; and that, therefore, I should try and get some friends to advance some money to help me put some capital into the business. But the whole point was that the total amount that we capitalized for, in addition to the worth of my business, was \$10,000; and \$10,000 was hardly enough to see a downtown business through a rather difficult time. And so we struggled along. I was able to make a few good sales and save the day from time to time. I sold some rather large items to Hugh Walpole, who was out here working for the movies at that time. And I had the manuscripts of D.H. Lawrence to sell, and I sold quite a few of those (not a great many, considering how many I had and how important they were) . One way or another, we managed to just about keep our doors open, but it became apparent that we couldn't any longer maintain a staff and keep going at the level which we were trying to maintain. And then the owners of the property served notice on us in 1938 that they were going to raise the rent substantially. This place that I was in at 705 1/2 West Sixth Street was really a very beautifully designed place that Lloyd Wright had done for me, with a balcony, with a very original style of shelving and decoration, and so on. It had a nice, small gallery in which we held a number of good exhibitions. We had one exhibition that Kennedy sent out, of first-rate Rembrandts and Durers, which I wish I had now. We had the first show on the West Coast of Kathe Kollwitz. We showed the work of people like Magritte and a number of other important artists of the time. We had exhibitions of photographers. I carried and sold continuously the work of Edward Weston. I had a good working relationship with the Walker Gallery in New York; had drawings and watercolors by people like Thomas Hart Benton

and John Curry; and original drawings, as well as lithographs, of George Bellows. In addition, I would show local people like Millard Sheets and Tom Craig, Milfred Zornes, Phil Paradise, and quite a number of others of the Southern California watercolor school, which was coming into being at that time. Because of these exhibitions, my shop attracted a great many of the people interested in the arts, the younger people who were looking for a place to show their work. I also utilized good printers and good design in all of the printed matter that I sent out--the catalogs--and I think the distinction of our printing, the kind of exhibitions that we held, did an awful lot to offset the fact that the business was very poorly managed, and that kept us alive. But finally the time came when we had to go somewhere, and I appealed to a friend of mine by the name of A.G. Beaman, who was also my insurance man. A.G. Beaman was a sort of an unofficial greeter for all the literary people, the artists, the collectors who came to town. If a man like A. Edward Newton came to town, it was A.G. Beaman who made it his business to take him around, see that he was entertained, and see that he was taken from one speaking engagement to another, and to meet all the collectors and bookshops. He knew everyone in the burgeoning world of literary and artistic activity--all on the fringes of it, I'd rather say. It was one way that he attracted business (he specialized in fine-arts insurance and so on) , but he was a very goodhearted man and very much concerned about people like myself. He was sort of a counterpart of Albert Bender in San Francisco, who was a great patron, and fortunately fared better so far as finances were concerned and was able to be a patron more successfully. But he was a good man. And he in turn enlisted the help of John Anson Ford. The Otis Art Institute, which was owned and operated by Los Angeles County, had taken over, in addition to the property of the original Harrison Gray Otis house, the property next door which had belonged to Harrison Gray Otis's onetime friend but later archenemy, E.T. Earl, the founder of the *Pacific Fruit Express* and the *Los Angeles Express*, a rival newspaper which was founded out of spite by E.T. Earl. E.T. Earl had built a beautiful house on the corner of Carondelet and Wilshire, and in accordance with the style of the times, he had a fine carriage house in back, two stories—upstairs where the servants lived, and downstairs they kept the horses and the carriages. And this carriage house was ivy-covered and had a curved brick driveway coming up to it. It was obvious this was a dream for a bookshop. And so, at the suggestion of Gay Beaman, and

with the help of John Anson Ford, I decided that the way to avoid the problem of increased rents and the way to stop trying to be a downtown bookshop was to move away from the busy downtown area out here, to give more exhibitions, to deal more in rare books, to send out catalogs, and sort of set the style for an antiquarian book business which was not dependent on the street. And the other advantage was that the rent was only something like sixty-five dollars a month. So, with the help of some contractor friends, I got a design by Walter Bearman, who had come out here to head the new school for industrial design that was being propagated in Pasadena, backed mostly by Susannah Dakin and then enthusiastically pressed forward by Dr. Remsen Bird, the ebullient president of Occidental College who supported a great many things, sometimes with more enthusiasm than good foresight. But Remsen Bird was a warm-hearted man, a man capable of enlisting support. So, with the help of all these people, I closed the downtown shop and moved out on Carondelet Street. In 1938 we held an opening there, sent out an announcement with a map—Paul Julian drew the map, and Gregg Anderson designed the brochure, and it was printed by Anderson and Ritchie--which went out to people inviting them to the opening. It attracted an enormous number of people. I asked Helen Brown, the wife of Phil Brown, to cater this for me. She had come out here and she and Phil Brown had gotten married. She knew a great deal about food and cookery, and she said she wanted to start a catering business. So I said, "Why don't you start by doing something to help this affair? People will come, they will taste whatever it is that you provide, and maybe you'll get some business out of it." She produced the most marvelous shrimp American sauce which everybody raved about. We had wine. I remember Phil Hanna sitting up beside the bowl of sauce and dipping shrimp into it until he literally had to be hauled away. So it did bring her to the attention of a lot of the gourmets in the community, and started her off with my mailing list and with the chance to show what she could do. She did become a very successful caterer, and her husband and she wrote some cookbooks together. She died. Phil is now the advertising manager for Jurgensen's [Grocery Co.], and is really a noted authority on food and wine.

GARDNER:

He remained in the book business for a long time, didn't he?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes. He was in the book business in Pasadena with the son of Charles Yale. Charles Yale had been the manager of Dawson's Book Shop, and then he left Dawson's and opened a bookshop of his own in Pasadena. His son came in, and then later Philip Brown, who had come out here from Owatonna, Minnesota, with Karl Zamboni. Zamboni had worked for me altogether about ten years, the brightest and most promising of all the young bookmen that ever worked for me--a man that really, I think, could have become and should have become the outstanding bookman on the West Coast. Brown came out, and I think he worked for a while on West Sixth Street for Bunster Creeley at the Abbey Book Shop, and then he joined the Yales, and later it became Yale and Brown. Philip Brown practically carried on the business; unfortunately, Phil Yale, his partner, became an alcoholic, and gradually they separated, and the business was finally closed down. But, by that time, Philip Brown and his wife had successfully established a catering business, and Philip had also gotten a job writing gastronomic articles for Jurgensen's bulletin. He went ahead and has really become quite a distinguished person.

GARDNER:

Anyway, back to Carondelet. . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, Carondelet Street opened with this small gastronomic triumph, and a great many people came, I must say, to the opening, and I continued there. But just before Pearl Harbor, one of the men who had become a stockholder—his name was Preston Harrison--and Oscar Moss, who had been my advisor and who originally urged me to incorporate, were so hostile to each other that it became a battle of nerves; and I was in between, and I got so I couldn't function. I went to bed with stomach ulcers, and it became obvious that the business could not go on. So I went to a lawyer friend of mine, a man who had been very supportive and generous to me, a man who had been a tremendously successful lawyer in the oil-lease world, L.R. Martineau. I went to him and I said, "What am I going to do? I can't go on this way." And he said, "You're not worth a damn this way. Nobody would invest another cent in you because you're not your own man. If you were your own man, I'm sure that a lot of other people would feel like I do. But my advice to you is get rid of this. Liquidate it. If you end up broke, you'll be better off." So I think it was 1942

that I finally called in an attorney, who in turn undertook the settlement. Now, I turned over assets enough to him to completely pay off all the creditors, but what I didn't know then is that lawyers who operate in this kind of a business, in the world of liquidating businesses, don't usually manage them for the benefit of the creditors; they manage them for the benefit of themselves and their friends.

**1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side Two
(September 29, 1977 and October 4, 1977)**

ZEITLIN:

I published a notice in the *Publishers Weekly* and, at the same time, sent out a letter to all the creditors advising them that I would personally pay off the balance of anything that wasn't paid by the receiver. And later I did pay 100 percent of every claim there was against the firm that I could get anyone to file. My greatest difficulty in that was to get my biggest creditors to file, like Maggs Brothers, who simply didn't want to add to my burden by filing any claim at all. They finally did, at my own request, and engaged a lawyer who filed a claim. In any event, I came out of it with the corporation wiped clean and no money and all of my employees gone. I had a couple of friends who lent me, I think, one of them \$300 and another \$250. I'd been able at the auction to buy back with my friends' money some of the books that had been part of the stock, but the major part of the books were gone, so I had to go out and buy stock again. I had to restore the confidence of my customers, and I had to produce enough working capital to keep going.

GARDNER:

How did you do that?

ZEITLIN:

I don't know. I still haven't figured it out. It was really a miracle. Josephine [Ver Brugge Zeitlin] worked hard. I ran hard from one customer to another with a bag full of books. I had some credit with printers, got out some lists and catalogs. I had one particular friend, and that was John Valentine, who provided the capital with which to buy a couple of large libraries, and it was out of those libraries that I got my start again. One of them was a library up in

the San Joaquin Valley of a big industrial concern called the Chemurgic Corporation. The war came to an end in 1945, and shortly afterwards the Chemurgic Corporation must have gotten into difficulties. I had a letter from them asking me if I would be interested in a set of chemical abstracts, and I didn't answer the letter. One day I got a phone call from a man up there who said, "We wrote you asking you if you were interested in a set of chemical abstracts. We're about to hold a sale of this entire library up here." And I said, "Have you got a library? Have you got more than chemical abstracts?" And he said, "Oh, yes, we've got thousands of volumes of important journals--scientific and technical journals--and a complete library dealing largely with physics and chemistry." So I went up there. I got in a car and drove up that night, and I got there the next day in the morning. The man who was in charge of liquidating this firm, who was supposed to be representing the bank, was very much irritated to see that I had arrived. Some other member of the office staff had called me because he saw that something funny was going on. And what was going on, I learned, was that the liquidator of this company had made a deal with a chemical company in the Bay Area to sell them the entire library for something like \$2,800, and their bid had already gone in. The bids were going to be closed at one o'clock that day, and I quickly looked around and I saw that this was a fantastically good library, and that you could get \$2,800 out of the first set you sold. So I called up John Valentine, and I said, "John, there's a library up here, and it's fantastic. It's a great collection, and I would like to bid \$4,200 for it, and I haven't got any money." I said, "I have to walk in with a check if I buy it." He said, "You go ahead and write the check. The money will be in your bank." And I waited until five minutes before one o'clock and walked into this administrator's office and said, "Here is my offer of \$4,200. Well, the man was furious. He had set the time for the closing of bids. He told me to get out of his office, and he tried to reach the competing bidder whom he had already made a deal with to let him have it for \$2,800. One o'clock passed, and he came to the door, and he called me in and he said, "You son of a bitch, you've bought it." It took about four big trucks and semis to haul this collection out of that place. We filled the entire garage of the carriage house, and we filled the basement of a place I had rented over on Alvarado Street with these journals and books. This was the time when Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford were all buying as rapidly as they could to try and build up technical libraries in order to develop all of the processes

involved in the making of the atomic bomb. And I had managed to establish a contact with the people who were doing the buying for these libraries. I'd been invited to go up and see them. They had sent me their want lists. They had given me exclusive rights to go out and buy whole sets for them, and I bought things from places like Finland and all over the world, and had them flown in. It was another one of these lucky breaks which gave me the opportunity to build up a business in the field of technical books and journals.

GARDNER:

That's amazing. So the years on Carondelet were difficult years.

ZEITLIN:

They were very difficult years, but they were also the years which pulled us out of the hole, primarily because Josephine had founded, on her own, a periodical business called Zeitlin Periodicals.

GARDNER:

Maybe before you go into that (we'll come back to that, I think) , we ought to introduce Josephine into the narrative at this point, because I don't think you've really talked about her.

ZEITLIN:

No, there's a lot to be said about Josephine and the role that she played, because, in truth, I didn't take her into my business; she took me into her business. She had started a separate business before we were married which dealt in periodicals, and I had encouraged her to do this. There's more to tell about how this came about. The important thing is that when Jake Zeitlin, Incorporated, was liquidated, we then started a new firm which was a merger of Ver Brugge Books and Jake Zeitlin, and that was Zeitlin and Ver Brugge.

GARDNER:

Well, why don't you tell the story of how she arrived in your life. I know that exists in other places, but you can tell it briefly.

ZEITLIN:

Well, this is a story I wouldn't really want to tell too briefly, but I can say that it was the most important thing that happened in my life to sort of turn me into

a much more whole person than I was before, and to give me the solid continuity and backing which I needed in order to make a businessman out of me--and to give me a sense of security. While I was still on West Sixth Street, in the summer of 1937, I received a letter of an application for a job, and in it, the person writing the letter described themselves as a young woman, approximately five foot, eight inches tall, blue-eyed, dark hair, and personable. And she had a bachelor degree from Park College in Missouri and then had done graduate work at the University of Iowa in English literature, and had been teaching school in Missouri and Kansas. She had always wanted to work in a bookshop. She knew something about bookkeeping, she knew something about business because she had helped her father in his hardware business in Reading, Kansas, and she would very much appreciate an interview. I was very much impressed with the style of this letter and also with the description of herself as five foot eight, blue-eyed, black hair, and personable, and said to my secretary, "Well, I haven't got a job, but this Miss Josephine Ver Brugge, who wrote this letter, is entitled to an interview. So why don't you tell her to come in and see me if she can tomorrow afternoon." And the next afternoon, in came this very beautiful Dutch girl. I sat her down in my office and looked at her, and I said, "I know I asked you in here because I thought of you as a possibility for a job, but now that I've had a look at you, I'm not going to give you a job. I like you too well. But don't you leave town or I'll be on your pa's doorstep by the time you get back to Kansas. Come across the street and let's have a cup of coffee." So we sat down across the street, and then we talked some more, and then I went back and called up my friend Remsen Bird and told him that I had a very remarkable young woman here that I wanted to see in a job somewhere, and could he suggest something. And he said, "I think they might need a secretary at the Haines Foundation, but I don't know whether this job is going to be open right away or not. However, you tell her to go and see Miss Mumford, the lady who is the secretary of the foundation. And in the meantime, just sit tight." So with that, Josephine decided not to go back to Kansas to her schoolteaching job. She went and got a job at Bullock's, where they told her they were going to train her as an executive. I think the job must have paid something like twenty-two dollars a week, and this was the way that Bullock's had of getting top material for low prices, with the idea that they were going to be given an opportunity to become executives. Most of these people never got out of the credit office or the bookkeeping office,

the little jobs that they were locked into. Well, she remained there for a while, until finally she was asked to come over and go to work for the Haines Foundation. And while she was working there, I went up to San Francisco and visited my friend Nathan Van Patten, who was the librarian of the Lane Medical Library as well as the Stanford University Library. And Nathan Van Patten took me up into the attic of the Lane Medical Library, and here there were thousands of journals and duplicate books, and he said, "We're going to have to get these out of here, and I think I'm going to have to dump them." And I said, "Well, before you dump them, what will you take for them?" And he said, "Well, what about \$600?" And I said, "Well, give me a little time." I went back down, and I talked to Josephine and told her there was a great opportunity to buy this stock of back files of medical journals. She had a little money that she had gotten from her mother's estate, and she rented a store building on Seventh Street for something like seventy-five dollars a month. There was a man who had been working at UCLA Library by the name of John B. Lee who needed a job, and John B. Lee came to work for something like no more than \$100 a month. A friend by the name of Preston Tuttle, and John Lee, and I went up to San Francisco, tied this library into bundles, and we agreed to pay Mr. Van Patten \$100 a month for six months. Josephine scraped together enough money to pay for the carriage of the books and stuff down, and they were dumped in the middle of this store that was rented on Seventh Street—on the floor into a mountain. We then proceeded to go out and buy apple boxes (in those days you could buy apple boxes for five to ten cents apiece), and we put the apple boxes together and made bookshelves out of them. We got a copy of the *Union List of Serials*, and with that, she and John Lee (she working at night and after hours) proceeded to sort this mountain of journals and put them into order and to catalog them all according to the *Union List of Serials*. They had printed postcards in which they offered to all the libraries listed in the *Union List of Serials* such pieces which they had as were lacking in these libraries. They got out mimeographed lists, and the first thing you know, they were doing a little business. And that was the beginning of Zeitlin Periodicals. With her hard work and with John Lee's expertise and devotion and hard work, they were able to bring that up to the point where she could quit her job at the Haines Foundation and carry this on, on enough of a paying basis. And later, after we were married in 1939, and after Jake Zeitlin, Incorporated, was liquidated, we merged our two businesses. But we

maintained a separate location for the journals and the periodicals. And the journals and periodicals were for quite a while a substantial part of the business; they provided a very large business because we had very little competition. Walter Johnson had not come into the scene, H.P. Kraus had not gone into the periodical business, and it was possible then, with hard work and with the luck of getting this stock, to start a business. On top of that, the Chemurgic Corporation stock contained a number of rather complete files of practically every important technical journal that could be had, and a great many of the reprints that were done by Edwards Brothers under the license of the alien property custodian. We built up a technical-book business, mostly out-of-print technical books and out-ofprint technical journals, which really provided more of the basic capital which we developed for the rare-book business.

GARDNER:

How long did you maintain the periodicals?

ZEITLIN:

We maintained the periodical business until approximately, I think it must have been, twelve years ago, and then we sold it to our nephew. We enabled him to buy it; we sold it to him on very liberal terms so that he could pay it off out of the earnings from the business. But it became a management problem. We couldn't find capable, trustworthy employees, people that we could really with confidence put to work running a periodical business. And we had a choice either of closing it or closing the rarebook business, and we decided to close the periodical business.

GARDNER:

Was that on La Brea then?

ZEITLIN:

No, we were on West Adams at the time--that is the periodical business was on West Adams at the time. We transferred it to Stanley, and he ultimately moved it.

GARDNER:

Well, since we've gotten you through Carondelet. . . . See how quickly we're moving? We're up to 1948 already.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, not quite '48. We're up through 1939, 1942.

GARDNER:

And then through past the war, when you're buying . . .

ZEITLIN:

Through '45, when I was buying the Chemurgic Corporation library. I must say that without the help of John Valentine, the wonderful friendship and confidence that he had in me, I would never have been able to take advantage of these opportunities and to build up the stocks that were necessary in order for us to develop a real business. It was John Valentine who provided the funds not only for the Chemurgic library but for the [Charles] Kofoed collection, a collection of duplicates of books that had been left to the University of California—28,000 books on the natural sciences and some on the physical sciences--and later, the collection of books on economics and political science. Otto Jeidel's library, which I bought in Santa Barbara. All three of these, which were very crucial. and a fourth one which really launched me into the rare-science-book business, were all due to the very wonderful friendship of John Valentine.

GARDNER:

What was the fourth one?

ZEITLIN:

That was the Herbert Evans library (that was Herbert Evans number two) . The Herbert Evans library is a story in itself, and I think that's about all I can do tonight.

OCTOBER 4, 1977

GARDNER:

Now, as I mentioned, I thought we'd begin today, since we covered the Carondelet shop last time, with your move to La Cienega Boulevard. How did that come about? What made you choose to move?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I didn't choose to move. We remained at 624 South Carondelet from 1938 to 1948, which is a good, round ten years. I actually opened my downtown shop in 1928 and moved to Carondelet in 1938, so that at the end of another decade, it seemed to be the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. What actually happened was that the property we were occupying was part of the property belonging to the Otis Art Institute and that, of course, in turn meant that it was owned and operated by the county. The E.T. Earl residence was at the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet, about halfway along the block on the east side of the street. It was a brick driveway that curved gracefully up to the front of an old ivy-covered brick carriage house with high gables. We had maintained our business there for these ten years. I think there must have been a number of elements which contributed to our having to move, but it seemed that the precipitating element was that I had erected a sign at the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet, a swinging sign pointing towards our driveway. The chairman of the board of Otis Art Institute (a man who managed to be chairman of a great many things) was Edward Dickson, a man who later became chairman of the Regents of the University of California. Edward Dickson was a rather narrow-minded man and also had a tremendous sense of power. He was sort of a little tyrant. He had somehow or another managed to become the spokesman, as it were, willing to serve on boards and to participate in all kinds of cultural community activities on behalf of the "forty thieves" --people in downtown Los Angeles, mostly, who have always controlled the destinies of all of the institutions like the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Music Center, university, and, among other things, the Otis Art Institute. He had been referred to by one of the great senators from California, Hiram Johnson, in a public address as "Little Eddie Dickson." Among other things, he had been the editor of the *Los Angeles Express*, so he must have had some talents. At the time when I knew him he was in a stock brokerage investment business downtown, so he must have, in one way or another, been entrusted with a considerable financial clout as well as political power. During the period when I was at Carondelet Street, I had been very

active in the organization of a Democratic Club. I had been chairman of the campaign committee of Helen Gahagan Douglas. I had become involved with the Political Action Committee of the CIO through an organization which was affiliated with them, a group called Architects and Engineers. (I've forgotten the rest of the group; they were architectural draftsmen, people that worked in relation to planning.) And I had written an article for one of the local magazines which specialized in architectural and design matters . . .

GARDNER:

Arts and Architecture ?

ZEITLIN:

Arts and Architecture, called "What Is Planning?" I was adopted by this group, who then made me a member in full standing of the union, and out of that I was appointed to be the chairman of the Political Action Committee, and as chairman of the Political Action Committee, I sat at the downtown meetings of the Political Action Committee of the CIO. And very soon [I] was heavily involved in local politics. The CIO carried a substantial political sock and had a lot to do with the selection of candidates for Congress. We had a war chest with which we could distribute funds for the support of people running for the assembly, for the state senate, for the United States Congress and for the United States Senate. It was an important element in California politics at the time, and, I suppose, indirectly, national politics. Well, it was pretty heavily dominated by a left-wing group--Slim [Philip] Connelly, among others--and in the course of that time. I had helped gain the support of the CIO and helped elect a city councilman by the name of Ed Davenport. Ed Davenport turned out to be the worst lemon I ever picked. He was reactionary, he was crooked, and he was a lush. What other vices he had I don't know, but he quickly aligned himself with Forest Lawn Cemetery groups and all the other groups through whom money was dispersed, and very quickly he started in on a witch hunt. So that the next time he ran for city council, I picked a candidate to run against him, and he resorted to smearing the candidate, who was a very good man and had "Q" clearance with the armed forces intelligence. He was a top man, a major in the United States Army. Ed Davenport was a master of demagoguery. He was a master of the hanky panky that went with getting elected to office and to staying in office. So he defeated the candidate that I

helped select, Douglas Behrend, and caused Behrend a great deal of trouble and embarrassment. In the city council, he announced one day that the Communists were meeting regularly in my bookshop for the purpose of defeating him. He tried to get the [Jack B.] Tenney committee on my neck, and, of course, news of this filtered into the press, and, I'm sure, got to Eddie Dickson. So one day, Eddie Dickson came and ordered me to remove my sign from the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet Street, which I did very reluctantly. And then he announced that I had to move, that the county did not wish to extend my stay there. Well, it was really a very favorable situation that I had been enjoying. I had the use of the entire building for something like sixty-five dollars a month for ten years. Mr. Dickson, I don't think, consulted anybody else; he just notified me, and then he went to whoever was in charge of leases and rentals and told them that I had to go.

GARDNER:

Had you had any dealings with him prior to this?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, he would come in once in a while to see me, and he always behaved most amiably, except on the occasion when he told me I would have to remove my sign.

GARDNER:

Did he ever buy any books or art?

ZEITLIN:

He had bought some books from me when I was downtown, and it was during that time that Larry Powell, when he was working for me, had met Edward Dickson. But he never bought anything substantial either in books or art. I had no choice; I had to find a place. I think I was notified in something like June; I had July, August, September, and October in which to move, and I immediately went searching for a place. We were driving along La Cienega Boulevard one Sunday, and I saw this red barn which was occupied by Pascal's Antiques. I had always said that that was the place I would like to have a bookshop in. Well, the idea of moving a book business as far out west as La Cienega Boulevard seemed just like disappearing into the woods. But I had

concluded by that time that my business did not depend so much on the drop-in trade; it depended upon the letters we wrote and the announcements and catalogs we got out, and the exhibitions we held, which would bring people to our place. We had accumulated a mailing list, and that was our chief asset, as it should be in every good book business.

GARDNER:

Were there bookstores out this way?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, there were no bookstores on La Cienega. The only things there were at all were some antique stores. And then a fellow by the name of Stoeffen had a framing shop. His wife, Esther, had some cabinets with decorative prints which she sold to interior decorators and people who wanted prints to be framed by her husband, and that was the nearest thing to a bookshop. There wasn't anything between downtown and Beverly Hills that I can remember. The red barn was up for sale because the man who owned the property and who had financed the business, Ernest Pascal, had somehow fallen out with his brother, who was managing the business. They had originally started in to sell American antiques and had built up a very fine business. Ernest Pascal himself had great taste and knowledge in American antiques. And then, for some reason, they switched over to English antiques. English antiques didn't fit in an old red barn, and there were other complications of which I know nothing; but in any event, the brothers fell out and never spoke again, I understand, and the building was put up for sale by Ernest Pascal. I got in touch with Pascal, and he wanted \$33,000 for the property. I said to him, "You know, I don't have enough money to pay a down payment." And he said, "Well, I'd like to see you there. You've got a good reputation, and I think you would do well there, and I think it would improve the neighborhood. So write your own ticket. Tell me what you can do." I actually didn't have any money, but I went to Susannah Dakin and told her my situation. Susannah Dakin lived over in Pasadena at the time. She was one of the loveliest people I ever knew, and she had been a friend of mine for a long time. She was a niece of Sarah Bixby Smith, whose book called *Adobe Days* I published, and who was a very dear friend. (Sarah Bixby Smith was the wife of Paul Jordan-Smith.) Susannah was interested in art. She was interested in California history; she wrote a couple of good books

on the subject. And she had a great deal of money. Her mother was Susannah Bixby Bryant, which meant that she was one of the Bixbys and had inherited a great deal of Signal Hill and some of the other oil properties in Long Beach. She had married a very fine man by the name of Dr. Ernest Bryant, who had been associated with Dr. John R. Haines. John R. Haines was the father of the Metropolitan Water District and the municipal Department of Water and Power, he was one of the progressives of the era of Spreckels and some of the other reformers (they were called "millionaire socialists").

GARDNER:

That's the Haines Foundation.

ZEITLIN:

He was the founder of the Haines Foundation. Dr. Bryant was in the office of John R. Haines and partook of the philosophy of John R. Haines, which was that of responsible, forward-looking capital. Bryant partook of the general idea of social responsibility but was not a progressive or pro-labor in politics, whereas John R. Haines had been very pro-labor in politics and had been responsible for the enactment in California of the initiative and referendum and had participated in a great many progressive political movements. He had been among those who fought the Southern Pacific, backed up the streetcar men when they organized their strike against the streetcar company. So Dr. Bryant was indeed a very fine man socially, and as a person as well, and Susannah partook, to a great degree, of his philosophy and of his character. Susannah had come in to my shop when she was quite a young woman, before she had her first child. I remember she and Arthur Millier and Dr. Remsen Bird and some other people used to meet and have lunch, and we were always engaged in little conspiracies. I went to her, and I told her I had to move; I told her that I had this opportunity to buy the building on La Cienega Boulevard and that I didn't have any money. And she asked me how much I thought it would take to make a down payment. I said I thought I could make the down payment for \$9,000; that they would accept that and let me meet the other in a series of payments in addition to the regular installments, She said, "You go down to our bank, to the bank where we do business--the Security bank--and see Mr. So-and-so, and I will tell him about you." I went down, and he lent me the money on my note, which was, of course,

countersigned by her. So I was then able to go back to Mr. Pascal and make him a proposal of paying \$9,000 the first year, so much a month for a year, and then meeting another substantial payment, and so on for three successive years. Afterwards, I would pay so much a month. And he was satisfied to let me come in and do that. My next job was to bring the building up to standard, because as long as Pascal occupied it, and he didn't need to get a permit to remodel, everything was all right; but as soon as I wanted to move in and occupy it, I had to get a permit.

1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side One (October 4, 1977)

GARDNER:

We'll continue now with a description of the barn.

ZEITLIN:

The floor was three-quarter-inch tongue-and-groove yellow pine (the kind of wood you can't get now), but it had to be all taken up. The entire foundation had to be reconstructed. I got ahold of a contractor who had been recommended to me by Mr. Pascal, who had done work for Pascal. His name was Paul Lamport, and he later became a city councilman. Well, Mr. Lamport agreed to take out the floor and put in the new foundation and do the necessary reconstruction work. He pulled out all of the flooring, threw it down on the ground, and he and his workmen walked away and left the thing for about two months without doing a thing. In the meantime, the deadline was approaching when I was having to move. I went to my attorney, and I said, "What can I do?" And he said, "What kind of a contract did you write? Did you get a completion clause into it?" And I said no. And he said, "Contractors have so much work these days that they don't have to please anybody." (It was right after the end of the war.) He said, "All you can do is speak nicely to him and see if you can't get him to come back to work on the job and get his work completed." Well, I went back to Mr. Pascal, told him about the situation, got hold of Lamport, and Pascal, who had given Lamport other work and had other jobs at his disposal; finally got Mr. Lamport to finish the place, but only about September 1, so that I had a month in which to move everything. I rented a big five-ton truck and hired a couple of men from the slave market,

which used to be down at the corner of Third and La Brea, where men would stand out on the sidewalk and wait to be picked up for odd jobs. And I also got ahold of my old faithful, Bill Ulevick, who really should deserve some notice. Bill was a Czech who never had any education, grew up somewhere in South Dakota, never had a good job, never made any money, but somehow or another managed his life in such a way that he now, as an old man, is able to live on his social security and the odd jobs he gets. He knows how to take advantage of every benefit that he can properly and legally enjoy. He's part of the oldsters groups, and so he is enjoying a great life. He also knew where things were happening, and he had curiosity enough so that he would take his bicycle and go on a day's ride just to discover where a new freeway was going, or to see try-outs of new automobile equipment, things like that. I've always admired him for somehow or another, with all the handicaps and the limitations he had, having worked out his life as well as he has. But he was always available to me to do lifting and carrying, packing, hauling, shipping. And on many occasions, when I got hold of a big library, it was Bill Ulevick who saved my neck and made it possible for me to pack and load it and bring it down. So Bill Ulevick and one crew stayed at the shop and packed boxes. When I arrived with the truck, they would load them, and I would drive across town to La Cienega and unload them, and the men there would then stack them up. So that between the two groups, I managed to move the entire shop by going back and forth, day after day, for what I think must have been an entire month, and finally got everything moved. We had the building repainted. We bought apple boxes and lined the sides, put strips on the front, stained them, made them look like shelving. We built two bedrooms upstairs and our living room, and we enclosed the back section, and that is where we moved in and lived for quite a few years. In I believe it was October of 1948, we opened our shop on La Cienega Boulevard. I must add that it was not only because of Susannah Dakin that I was able to move and open up, but a great deal of the credit for providing me with the day-by-day funds that I needed, for giving me the moral support as well, goes to a man by the name of John Valentine. John Valentine was a man who had gone to Williams College. He'd grown up in Chicago, had gone out to Decatur, Illinois, and he had made what must have been a substantial amount of money as an oil distributor. He was an enterpriser in many ways, and he acquired master leases to some important property. His heart was in books, however. He'd been in World War

I, and following the war, he had remained in Italy as consul in one of the Italian towns for some time. He was a man with a great deal of feeling, outwardly not very impressive--he was quite conventional in his appearance--very frugal, very much aware of the value of money and very well able to manage money. He had financed the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago—his partner was Ralph Newman--and he had kept it going during the period when Ralph Newman was in the services. When Newman returned and was able to take over management again, John Valentine made an arrangement which allowed Newman to buy the business. Valentine had a great deal of knowledge of Lincoln, middle western history, and middle western literature. He was very knowledgeable not only about the early history of the Middle West and the Civil War and the literary men of the early days of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and so on, but he also had known personally and had formed an outstanding collection of the books of people like Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, Sherwood Anderson. He knew their works, and he loved them, and he read them and collected them. He was also a very ardent Democrat and a great collector of anything that had to do with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He started the Franklin Delano Roosevelt collectors' *Newsletter*, and he built up quite a large group of collectors of FDR material. He encouraged the publication of bibliographies by men like [Ernest J.] Halter and books about Roosevelt. He became the outstanding dealer in the country in that material after he moved out here. He was a very warm, outgoing, sprightly man, and to me he was really the difference between failure and success. John, for some reason, took a liking to me; he spent a great deal of time--and for a short while he actually worked for me—in the bookshop. But, of course, I had no business (and he knew it) employing a man that was so much my superior as a businessman, and financially much above me. But I think he did all this out of sheer devotion, and it was John Valentine who came forward with loans from time to time when I had opportunities to buy collections, provided the money and was patient about getting it paid back, and was very generous about the terms on which he lent it. No one person has ever contributed so much toward helping me recover from the failure of 1942 and getting back on my feet as John Valentine. He was good company, too, and we made a great many very enjoyable trips together. Among other things, we drove all night up to Berkeley once to bid for the duplicates from the library of Dr. Charles Kofoed, who had given a large

collection of books--hundreds of thousands of books—to the University of California biological sciences. He'd had an arrangement with the university: they provided him with the space and the clerical help for forming a great library on the biological sciences. He was an outstanding protozoologist, but in addition to his accomplishments in this field, he was an absolute madman about books, and he accumulated them by the thousands . He bought whole bookstores at the time of the inflation in Germany and Holland, and he had them shipped to the University of California; the life sciences building gave him a whole section of one floor into which he crammed these books, and [he] had help with the cataloging. The understanding was that he was to leave the books to the university upon his death. So he very happily pursued the dream of every bibliophile buying and buying and buying--and the university enjoyed the benefits of all this by accumulating this library. The duplicates from the library amounted to 28,000 books at a minimum, and these 28,000 books were put up at auction. He had provided that all duplicates were to be sold for the benefit of a fund to be used to help the university professors who married young and who wanted to have children: because he and his wife, when he had started in his academic career, had been too poor to have children when they were young, and later they couldn't have them. It was his idea that the money coming from this fund could be used as loans to young professors and their wives who wanted children. He had made money, among other ways, by buying some real estate along Wilshire Boulevard way out beyond where the pavement ended, along between La Brea and Fairfax, which later became known as the Miracle Mile. But when he bought it, there weren't many people who wanted it. It became very valuable later on, and this provided a great deal of money with which to buy the books that he had accumulated, and for other endowments which he left. John Valentine drove up to San Francisco, a strenuous drive, all night long; he wouldn't stop to rest. He finally died when he was only sixty years old because he was a man who drove himself too hard. He had this middle western Calvinistic spirit, this form of self-denial, this feeling about frugality which was in some ways really unnecessary. If we went into a restaurant to have lunch or dinner, his check always came out fifty cents to a dollar less than mine, and he seemed to eat just as well as I did. So it was John Valentine, to a great extent, along with the loan that Susannah Dakin made me, that made it possible for us to move from Carondelet Street to La Cienega. At the end of a year, Susannah Dakin sent me a check for \$9,000. She

said, "I want you to take this down to the bank and pay off the loan which they made you and which I guaranteed." She said, "I have invested a great deal of money in many cultural activities in this community. Yours seems to be the best investment I've made, or at least one of the most promising in terms of the value it has to the community and the promise of continuity. So it's quite consistent with my idea of what I should do with my money in supporting cultural activities for me to do this, and you would be pleasing me if you would accept this." I remonstrated, but she insisted, and I can't say that I remonstrated to the point of returning the check. I did go down and pay off the note to the bank, and was therefore free of a substantial encumbrance which might have hampered me later. This was a fine and wonderful gesture, and she came with her husband and a couple of friends the night we held our opening of our new shop on La Cienega Boulevard.

GARDNER:

Well, last time you described with a little bit of epicurean detail, what the opening was like on Carondelet. Did you have a similar sort of thing?

ZEITLIN:

We did have an opening on La Cienega Boulevard. I can't remember the printed notice of the opening, but hordes of people came, and it was a very enjoyable event, and there was lots of enthusiasm. But my memory is very vague about the precise details, except that I again asked Helen Evans Brown to cater, and by then she was a very well established caterer and an authority on cookery, and had published several books.

GARDNER:

So she catered them both then?

ZEITLIN:

She catered both.

GARDNER:

That's wonderful.

ZEITLIN:

I don't know whether we repeated the shrimp American which had been the great dish of our first opening, but we may well have. Can I stop a minute?
[tape recorder turned off] You asked me about book clubs.

GARDNER:

Let me ask you formally (as long as we turned it off and on) . You had membership in many of them, and I guess we'll touch on them all, but I think we probably should start with Zamorano since it's the one of most local interest.

ZEITLIN:

I was not a member of Zamorano until very recently. The fact is, Zamorano had a policy from its beginning that booksellers were not to be admitted. That was a peculiar policy, considering the fact that the man who was their first secretary--and really, I think, the reason for forming the club was Irving Way. Irving Way had been a member of the firm of Way and Williams Publishers in Chicago, which had produced some very fine books. He was also a bookseller, and it was he that introduced Thomas Wise to one of the customers that was most important in Thomas Wise's career. It was a Major [Wrenn] , whose collection that he bought from Thomas Wise, was the core of what later became the great University of Texas collection. (I will remember his name shortly.) In any event, Irving Way had come to Los Angeles--I don't know just when; he must have come in the twenties, late twenties, I think—and he had made his living by going around selling books to people who were interested in building libraries, mostly Spring Street lawyers and businessmen who sent him from one to the other. He was a bookish man, he was knowledgeable, and he wrote extremely well. He wrote a pamphlet for Ernest Dawson which John Henry Nash printed, and which is still one of the most charming things ever written about book collecting and certainly one of the best printed items ever done on bibliophily and bibliomania. Well, a group of men, including Arthur Ellis, who was an outstanding attorney in those days here; John Treanor, who was head of the Riverside Portland Cement Company; Will Clary, who was one of the senior members of O'Melveny and Myers; and A.G. Beaman, who was an insurance man that I mentioned before, decided that Los Angeles should have a club that would correspond with the Roxburghe Club of London, the Grolier Club of New York, the Rowfant Club of Cleveland, and the Club of Odd

Volumes in Boston. So they resolved to organize this club. Part of its purpose was to provide an occupation for Irving Way, who was growing older and in failing health, and so they set up at the University Club a clubroom which was to be a library. They provided a small salary for Irving Way, who was to serve as secretary, and they started in with a group of bookish people, then, from various professions. They also included Robert Cowan, who was then the librarian of the Clark Library; and Henry R. Wagner, who had moved down to Southern California, was living in San Marino, and who was certainly one of the outstanding collectors as well as sellers of collections. Both of them had done what are still the outstanding bibliographies on California and the Spanish Southwest. *The Overland Route, Plains and the Rockies* of Henry Wagner and the *Spanish Southwest*, Henry Wagner, are certainly classics which have not been superseded. And then they did include C.C. Parker, who had Parker's bookstore on West Sixth Street. He was an old gentleman; he was what they call "clubbable," and for some reason, they didn't regard him as a bookseller, even though he was a bookseller.

GARDNER:

There's obviously something else beneath the surface here--do you want to elaborate?

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes, they didn't want what they felt might be an element of commercialism in there. They looked upon Ernest Dawson as not being a "clubbable" gentleman.

GARDNER:

Why?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Ernest Dawson, for one thing, had declared himself to be a communist. He was a very idealistic man. And for another thing, Ernest Dawson didn't drink, Ernest Dawson didn't smoke, and Ernest Dawson was really an outdoorsman: he was a Sierra Clubber rather than a Zamorano Clubber. And they also just looked upon him really as too much in trade. They did include Bruce McCallister as a printer, and they included Leslie Bliss of the Huntington

Library as a member. I don't remember who else among librarians was included. From time to time, they would allow booksellers like me to come if some guest insisted upon their being brought along. They didn't have any Jewish members for many years; and the first member that I can remember who was Jewish was Saul Marks, who was brought in because he was obviously an outstanding printer and a man that was very much respected, and it would have been a reflection upon the Zamorano Club if they hadn't brought him in. The only time I came was when people like Dr. Rosenbach were invited and insisted that they wanted to bring me, or Frank Hogan was invited and said, "I'd like to bring Jake Zeitlin." So for a period of many years, there were no booksellers of the tradesman variety in the Zamorano Club. In fact, until about five years ago, when I was asked to join, the official policy remained intact, in spite of the fact that some of the leading bookmen from around the world that would come to Los Angeles would come to see me, would be my guests, would spend their time with me while they were here, and none of the Zamoranners would see them. So I think that ultimately it got to be a sort of a shame.

GARDNER:

The impression I get is that, except for a few of the members, it was more of a club than a book club.

ZEITLIN:

No, it was founded directly for the purpose of being a book club. It was to encourage the collecting of books, the exchanging of knowledge about books, to encourage the publication of bookish works, the bibliographical works such as the *Zamorano Eighty*, and to sponsor fine printing—the same ideals as similar book clubs.

GARDNER:

Have other book clubs had similar restrictions?

ZEITLIN:

I don't know. Certainly the great Roxburghe Club in London had among its earliest members Bernard Quaritch, and the Grolier Club had had among its members publishers like Charles Scribner and booksellers like Dr. Rosenbach.

But it was really not until fairly recently, sometime in the thirties, that David Randall was made a member of the club, and it became sort of an overt policy to have booksellers as members of the Grolier Club in New York. That came about because Charles Scribner, who was one of the leading members of the Grolier Club and had been a president, simply put it on the line and said, "Unless you admit David Randall into the club, I shall resign and I shall also spread the word among others." So David Randall was admitted, and from then on, other tradesmen were admitted. The Zamorano Club had, I suppose, the notion that if they favored one bookseller and admitted him, other booksellers would feel they'd been excluded and would be resentful. But then they admitted some printers and didn't admit others. Bruce McCallister, Saul Marks, Ward Ritchie were members, but a great many other printers in this area were not invited or admitted to the club, and certainly some librarians were not invited or admitted. But that was a kind of a traditional rule in the Zamorano Club up to the time I was asked if I would accept membership. I was called by Ray Billington, who is a very fine man—a very warm, outgoing, warmhearted personality. He asked me if I would accept membership in the Zamorano Club if I were put up for membership. Well, there evidently had been some scuffling among the members about this whole matter, and I think that what happened is that some of them decided that the time had come to make an issue of it and put it up to the board and make me the test case. I was invited to attend as a guest, as I had been in the past, but this time I was invited to attend as a guest in order that I might be scrutinized. And I evidently passed. In fact, there was hardly anyone at any of the meetings that weren't people that I knew personally and weren't personal friends, so that the whole question of admission to membership was kind of secondary. And, frankly, I told Ray Billington at the time he asked me that it would have meant a lot to me twenty-five years ago to be made a member of the Zamorano Club and have the opportunity to mingle with collectors and with the visitors, to bring my guests to the club, and to feel that I was part of the community of bookmen other than booksellers. But that time had now passed, and I really didn't have that much urge to go out at night to sit and listen to a variety of speakers, some of whom might be interesting, and a great many of whom by now would be dull to me. But on the other hand, I didn't feel that I should refuse because of the precedent it set. And so I was elected membership, and at the same time Glen and Muir Dawson were elected, which I was very glad

for. In fact, I've said often before that the Dawsons were more entitled to membership than I was, and that the first members among the bookselling community here in Los Angeles should be the Dawsons. And they were proposed and elected to membership at the same time that I was.

GARDNER:

Now, you mentioned that Saul Marks was the first Jewish member of the Zamorano.

ZEITLIN:

As far as I know, he was the first Jewish member. Bob Weinstein, I think, had been a member before, but I can't remember any others, except an architect by the name of Gordon Kauffman who had removed himself from all things Jewish and identification as a Jew a long time ago.

GARDNER:

Were there any notable collectors who might have been in Zamorano but weren't?

ZEITLIN:

Well, no, frankly I can't remember any that might have been invited and weren't invited; of course, I don't know all of them. Certainly, men like Elmer Belt were members. I don't think that Bob Honeyman ever would have accepted an invitation to membership, because he is not what they call "clubbable": he doesn't care for that sort of thing, although he is by far the greatest collector this part of the world has ever known, if you except Williams Andrews Clark. And I would include Mrs. Doheny among those that he surpasses, or Mrs. Getz —not, of course, Henry Huntington—but certainly among the men who didn't have vast fortunes to spend, he's by far the most distinguished collector this area has ever known.

GARDNER:

It's an easy move from there to the Book Club of California. Now, you were a member of that for a long time.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, well, the Book Club of California never had any restrictions, except at one time they restricted the number of members; that was more or less a come-on. In other words, when they couldn't get more than 150 they set the limitation at 200. But the Book Club of California was started in San Francisco by Albert Bender, Jim Blake, and one other person whom I can't identify at this moment. But in any event, it was these three men who were the organizing committee. (It might have been John Howell, and it might have been Oscar Lewis, but in any event, these were the men who started the Book Club of California.) Their first publication was Robert E. Cowan's *Bibliography of [The History of] California , [and the Pacific West]* , which was printed by John Henry Nash.

GARDNER:

Was it a similar organization?

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes, the general idea, though, was not so much having regular meetings and dinners as sponsoring publications for distribution among the membership. Later on the Roxburghe Club was formed, which was more of a social club, like the Zamorano Club. But the Book Club of California was always open to women. There was no reason why it shouldn't be; their money was as good as anybody else's. And it opened up offices on Sutter Street where they held regular exhibitions. Later it started publishing a quarterly newsletter. It would get out these annual (I don't know what they call them) broadsides or leaflets, which have continued. They get one out every year on some subject, and it's certainly been a great supporting force for the publication of finely printed books, and for publication of books about books. It's encouraged a great many printers, encouraged scholars, and it's encouraged collecting. It's been a very fine organization, and it's continued to have a good tradition all along. It's remarkable how it's gone on now for, I suppose, well, certainly over sixty years. The Roxburghe Club was formed much later, something like 1937.

GARDNER:

Did you ever have any connection with that?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes. I've been a member for many years and have spoken for them on two occasions—no, I think three occasions. I spoke once on Galileo, the "Bibliographical Misadventures of Galileo." The other time, I can't remember the subject. I can remember being there and speaking, but I'm very vague about the subject. Oh, yes, it was on Aldous Huxley and Huxley as a critic of the arts, especially of Brueghel and [Jacques] Callot. And the third time, it was an autobiographical talk, "Rambling Recollections of a Rambling Bookseller." All of which they were very nice about, seemed to not sleep through.

GARDNER:

It follows that they didn't have the same policy as the Zamorano.

ZEITLIN:

No, they apparently never did. And in San Francisco, that could hardly have been possible because among the great leaders and patrons in all the arts were the Jews. They've always had a patrician group up there; people like Albert Bender, Morgan Gunst, Ted Lilienthal, Albert Sperisen, and Jim Hart have been leaders, have been outstanding men in the world of book collecting, and in support of all cultural activities. In fact, I can remember that Mayor Robinson of San Francisco said that without the philanthropy of the Jews there would be no opera, no philharmonic orchestra, no museum, and practically no arts in San Francisco. But, of course, I think that's true of a great many communities; the Jews seem to support these things disproportionately to their numbers, partly because they represent a cultural tradition and partly because it is a means for achieving distinction while bypassing the usual channels of social advancement.

GARDNER:

There were no restrictions, then, on booksellers either?

ZEITLIN:

No, in San Francisco, so far as I know, there were never any restrictions, because men like David Magee and John Newbegin and John Howell were always leaders in the development of these clubs. Jim Blake was a bookseller. One of the three or four founders of the Book Club of California had worked as a clerk at Newbegin's, to begin with, and later became the western American

representative for Harper and Brothers and was always looked upon as the dean of the book travelers on the Pacific Coast during his lifetime, greatly respected.

GARDNER:

And what about your association with the Grolier Club?

ZEITLIN:

Well, my association with the Grolier Club doesn't go back very far. I can't remember now how long I've been a member, but I suppose it would be twelve or fifteen years. I was put up for membership by Bob Honeyman and Bern Dibner, as well as I can remember, and have enjoyed it very much: primarily because the clubhouse provides a meeting place for bookish people and it also provides a place where I can meet people from out of town in New York sometimes. The dinners have always been outstanding, and the trips have been one of the great pleasures of Josephine and me. They have always been real red-carpet, red-letter experiences, and the members who have had the privilege of participating, I'm sure, remember these trips as great events in their lives.

GARDNER:

What sort of trips?

ZEITLIN:

Well, these are trips which are undertaken once every three years or so to various parts of the world.

**1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side Two
(October 4, 1977 and November 30, 1977)**

GARDNER:

We were talking about the membership trips of the Grolier Club.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the trips of the Grolier Club are usually arranged to cover one or maybe two or three countries. They are about three years apart, usually. Arrangements are made in advance by a tour party which makes a dry run by

visiting the countries that we proposed to go to and setting up programs and itineraries with the local book clubs and other organizations. Very often the visits of the Grolier Club enjoy the benefits of being sponsored by governmental agencies. The two which we have gone on were, number one, the trip to Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and Belgium; that was the first one. On those trips we stayed at the best hotels. All we did was pack our baggage and leave it at our door, and when we arrived at the next hotel, we were given our key, and we went direct to the hotel room. Passports were all taken care of en bloc; transportation was by the most comfortable buses or trains or planes, sometimes special trains. We were received at palaces and castles and the leading libraries and museums of the country, with special showings usually with banquets and entertainment, and fed to the point where we were bulging. Each morning you would start off in a bus and travel a considerable distance to your first location, where you would be met with champagne. Then at noon, you would arrive at another museum or library or palace or private collector's home and sit down to a magnificent, lavish dinner. Some of the dinners were given by the Bank of Paris; in the Low Country, in Antwerp, the bank occupied what had once been the palace of one of the Hanseatic merchants. There was a waiter in back of every other seated banqueter, seven wines and liquors, the most unbelievably lavish food, and all of the things that went with it. But the main thing is that we were given opportunities to go into the stacks of libraries; the cases were opened up, and we were allowed to handle magnificent manuscripts and original documents and great books. And also, everywhere we went, they had prepared specially printed gift books which represented the best quality of printing of the country and, very often, some of the best facsimiles of some of the best examples of the rarities of the various libraries we visited. It was more like a royal procession than an excursion, and you always came back exhausted, surfeited with good books, wonderful experiences, and an abundance of food and drink and good company. Nothing that I can imagine could compare with these trips. We did not go on the Italian one, which was evidently the greatest that was ever put on. The high spot was the banquet in Rome at the Castel Sant'Angelo with a torch procession.

GARDNER:

Oh, my Lord!

ZEITLIN:

But I did go on one tour to Vienna with the Bibliophiles, where we were banqueted at the Schwarzenberg Palace, ballroom music by the best Viennese musicians, and then finally the ballet of the opera danced for us on the lawn, accompanied by the Viennese Philharmonic Orchestra, and a grand finale of fireworks. It would be impossible for a lone individual [not] to enjoy this kind of a trip, and it was only because of the imaginativeness and knowledge of the people who arranged the trips--people like Mary Hyde and Gordon Ray and a number of the others—that we were able to have access to so many great collections and be entertained as we were.

GARDNER:

Are there many local members of Grolier?

ZEITLIN:

No, not many local members. I think Elmer Belt, Marcus Crahan . . . Larry Powell was a member, I think. Homer Grotty has always been a member, and Bob Vosper is a member, but he has never gone on one of these tours. Neither has Larry Powell. Elmer and Ruth Belt have gone on several of them; we've always enjoyed their company. Warren Howell [of] San Francisco has gone, and I can't remember who else from California.

GARDNER:

Well, that's okay. I just wanted to get an idea of what sort of people. Generally you seem to be the only Southern California bookseller.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I have for a long time been the only Southern California bookseller.

GARDNER:

What qualified one for membership?

ZEITLIN:

Well, you're supposed to be an outstanding bookman; you're supposed to have made some contribution to the world of books, either in terms of

publishing or writing or somehow advancing bookish activities and bookish interests.

GARDNER:

So it's really the most difficult of the clubs.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it has been, although there's some peculiar people who've gotten in from time to time. I've never heard of a member being dropped, but I suspect that on some occasions, not all members receive the programs of forthcoming events.

GARDNER:

Well put. [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

I think this is enough for this evening, and I hope it's been satisfactory.

GARDNER:

It has.

NOVEMBER 30, 1977

GARDNER:

Well, as we've just discussed briefly today, I guess we'll talk about some of the many, many collectors who've availed themselves of your services over the years. And since you mentioned him first, and he would be one of the ones that I would think of first, Frank Hogan might be a good person to start with. He was sort of tangential to your circle, wasn't he?

ZEITLIN:

No, not really. Frank Hogan was the greatest trial lawyer of his day. He had his offices in Washington and was a little Irishman, not much over five feet tall, immaculately dressed always, great style about him. Like a number of other men who had risen to great success, he started as a male secretary. There are a number of cases I know of men who started as male typists and secretaries and developed great careers, and I think part of that was due to the training of

keeping good notes and precision which being a secretary required, and also the intimate association that they had with some very capable executives and men of consequence. Frank Hogan's first job as a secretary was to the president of some railroad. There have always been a few men in executive positions who have preferred to have male secretaries; Kenneth Hill, for instance, is one of those men, but there have been a number of others. However, Frank Hogan was a very poor 272 Irish boy who put himself first through secretarial school and then through law school, became a law clerk in a good office, and ultimately rose to be the most in demand of all trial lawyers. He used to say that the best client is a scared millionaire, [laughter] and he loved to say that he'd earned as much as a million dollars in handling a single case. He came into public attention as a result of being the lawyer defending E.L. Doheny in the case connected with Teapot Dome. This was a case in which Secretary of the Interior [Albert B.] Fall was convicted for taking a bribe from E.L. Doheny, and Frank Hogan was so clever a lawyer that he got E.L. Doheny off with an acquittal.

GARDNER:

How did you meet Hogan?

ZEITLIN:

Mrs. Doheny had become interested in collecting first editions—I don't know how or why—but the first thing she started collecting was the Merle Johnson list of American high spots. I had sold her a few things along that line, but not very much. I think it must have been in 1937 that Frank Hogan first came in to call on me, and he was such a genial man and he had such a genuine enthusiasm for literature that I was charmed by him. And he must have liked me and thought well of me; he invited me to come up and have lunch with him at the California Club, and it became a regular custom, whenever he was here in California on business having to do with Doheny and other matters, while he was staying at the California Club, that we would have lunch every Saturday. He liked that not only because I came to lunch but I also brought Karl Zamboni, who was working for me then, and Karl Zamboni's very pretty wife, [laughter] which was a very important factor in itself. Cathy Zamboni was one of the most beautiful young women that ever lived. She looked like a Tahitian and was very charming and ingratiating. And he would also have

Lucille Miller, who was Mrs. Doheny's librarian, and a woman whose first name was Jean, who worked in the office of the law firm that represented the Dohenys here in Los Angeles. By a curious coincidence, this Jean had also been a member of the jury that had acquitted E.L. Doheny; I just can't say what the connection was, [laughter] but she had a job for the rest of her life. We would start off with silver fizzes for lunch, and after having imbibed a couple of those, we would proceed to have a very luxurious lunch, well laced with wine, in a private dining room. At the end of the lunch, Mr. Hogan would say, "What did you bring in your bag this week, Jake?" Well, I had done, I think, a good job of convincing Mr. Hogan that he could become a distinguished collector — as he did—if he insisted on two things: one, that the books he bought be important books; and the second, that they be in the finest possible condition—original boards, uncut if possible. I got for him the Grolier Club list of [*One*] *Hundred Books Famous in English Literature*, which became a sort of a guide to him. He also had A. Edward Newton's list, and he had already bought a few books: they were all cripples--the kind of books that a man commencing to collect would buy, like an imperfect fourth folio of Shakespeare. He was enchanted by the idea that you could own a Shakespeare at all, and the first time he saw a fourth folio of Shakespeare, he thought this was like realizing an impossible dream, so he impetuously bought it. I got for him a number of books in fine condition. Naturally, I didn't have a very good stock of my own, and I depended on books coming from other people. One of my best sources was Byrne Hackett of the Brick Row Book Shop, who, I think, thought that he was really getting away with murder because he sold me a copy of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*--the original boards, uncut—for something like \$1,500, and I turned around and sold it to Mr. Hogan for \$1,800. I wonder what a copy of that, as fine as that, would bring today. Hogan set out to buy the hundred books famous in English literature, and he was, as I say, a very impetuous man. He was an enthusiastic man, and he went direct to whoever was the best in the field he was interested in. He became a personal friend of A. Edward Newton. They exchanged visits, and he became a regular visitor at Newton's house; I think it was along the railroad outside of Philadelphia. I sold him a substantial number of books, and it was a great pleasure because he would open them up and he would read passages that appealed to him. He had a fantastic memory; he could remember, verbatim, almost everything he'd ever read. On one occasion I brought him a copy of Logan Pearsall Smith's

book on William Shakespeare. He read it through and, ever afterward, was able to quote that book in full length if necessary. He was the kind of collector that you enjoyed because you not only got well paid and promptly, but you also had the pleasure of sharing the enjoyment of the books with the customer. I remember I introduced him to the poetry of Charlotte Mew, a rather obscure English woman poet who wrote some very poignant, very touching lyrics--not a major poet by any means but, on the other hand, a poet of real quality. She published only two books and one pamphlet, as well as I remember, and I got both of those for him, and then he said, "Well, we're going to have to find some manuscripts." And through the Poetry Bookshop in London, I was able to get some manuscripts of Charlotte Mew, and I remember how we would sip our silver fizzes and read aloud from Charlotte Mew's manuscripts and weep as we read these lines. [laughter] Every Saturday that he was in town was the occasion for one of these meetings, and considering that I was a little bookseller who could hardly pay his rent, he was really God's gift. Sometimes I would come away with a check for \$2,000 and sometimes a check for \$3,500, and on one occasion, I think he paid me as much as \$7,200 for one Saturday afternoon's sales to him. I remember being with him on one occasion just after I had read that Dr. Rosenbach had bought the Lord Roseberry First Folio of Shakespeare in London at Sotheby's for \$85,000. I asked if that had been bought for him, and he said, "Yes, and I'm just about to consult the best bankruptcy lawyers." He had gone to see Dr. Rosenbach, and Dr. Rosenbach maintained an apartment and a chef in connection with the house in which he kept his books in Philadelphia and the beautiful apartment which he had in New York. So if you were a really important customer, you were housed in his apartment. You were dined and wined by his private chef, and by the time dinner was over, and he was ready to show you his books, you were totally without any capacity for resistance. The doctor was a charming man and knew how to say the right things about the books he had; and he did have, undoubtedly, the greatest collection of important rarities in English literature of anybody in the world in his day.

GARDNER:

I'd better break in here to say that your wife is just signaling that our own dinner is ready.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, right. [tape recorder turned off] Frank Hogan had already started to buy the books on the Grolier Club list of a hundred great books of English literature. There were two volumes issued. One contained bibliographic description; the other were issues, essays, and I think George Edward Woodberry was the author of the essays. I had introduced him to this idea and brought him the Grolier Club books, and I supplied him with a few things-- I think, [Thomas] Gray's "Ode," and perhaps [Oliver Goldsmith's] *Vicar of Wakefield*, and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which he considered her best novel. The copy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* which I supplied him with was three volumes in the original boards, uncut, some repairs to the binding, and restoration of the labels, and yet it seemed to be about the best copy you could possibly hope to find of a book so fragile in its original format. Several years afterward, Lionel or Phillip Robinson of the Robinson Brothers in London came around and said to Mr. Hogan, "You know, that copy of *Pride and Prejudice* was made up, and it was made up in Newcastle-on-Tyne by a man named Arthur Rogers, who took three different copies and put them together and then had them bound by a very skillful binder in such a way as to look like the original boards uncut. Well, Frank Hogan didn't say anything. They knew that he'd bought them from me; and the Robinson brothers, I'm sorry to say, liked to discover good collectors and then spoil their association with whoever was their bookseller, and then they would move in. They liked nothing but big collectors whom they could take over, and they were very good at it, I must say. They once did it to the bookseller who used to come to them and buy books to sell to Dr. [Martin] Bodmer in Switzerland. He was an old gentleman who'd been a bookseller in Germany and had settled in London. And when they discovered what fine books this man was buying from them and taking to Bodmer, they wheedled out of him who was buying these books. And they went direct to Bodmer and said, "Why do you buy these books from this old man when we're the ones that have these books, and he gets them all from us?" However, they later came out here and told me, "You know, that *Pride and Prejudice* you sold Hogan was a made-up copy." I was very much embarrassed and very distressed; he'd paid me something like \$2,500 for it, which was a lot of money, even then, for a Jane Austen. So I called up Hogan and said, "Mr. Hogan, I wouldn't want you to keep that book. I can't afford to give you back the money--I haven't got it--but I will give you credit on anything else you want to buy. You can turn in the book, and when

there are other books you want, you can just take the other books in exchange." "No," he said, "I'm not going to do that. I'm going to keep that book because I don't like tattletales." He didn't really care for the fact that the Robinsons had come to him with this story, because he understood what their motive was. Frank Hogan, as I say, was invited to visit Dr. Rosenbach. He called Rosenbach from Washington, and by that time, Rosenbach knew more or less who Frank Hogan was, and [Rosenbach] said, "Well, come stay at our house." So Dr. Rosenbach put him up in grand style, wined and dined him, offered him his best cigars afterwards. And after regaling him with stories of the great collections he'd formed, the great rare books he'd bought, and the high prices he'd paid, he proceeded to show Mr. Hogan very fine copies of most of the other books in the [Grolier Club] list of one hundred great books in literature--the ones that were hardest to get, such as the [William] Caxton Chaucer. Hogan was so enchanted that that night he proceeded to indebt himself to Rosenbach for about a million dollars.

GARDNER:

That's enchantment! [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Here he saw, all in one place, all these great books in English literature, famous copies with wonderful provenance, and he had the feeling that he must get them all now. So the next time Mr. Hogan came out to California and I brought him a satchel of books, we had lunch, and then I started to unpack the satchel, and he said, "Jake, it's no use. I owe Dr. Rosenbach more money than I'll be able to pay him in my lifetime. I'm indebted for the next ten years, and I just can't buy anything else." Well, I must say that I wasn't very happy that Dr. Rosenbach had capitalized on my having educated a collector. Later on Dr. Rosenbach came out to California; I think it was '38. He came to my shop, was very friendly, not condescending, made me feel that he was honored to be able to call on me, invited me to dinner. He was staying at the Town House. Frank Hogan was also in town, and we arranged a dinner for Rosenbach to which Frank Capra, Frank Hogan, Lucille Miller, Frank Capra's wife, and Jo Swerling were invited, along with Jules Furthman, who was in those days a considerable collector of rare books. The Wine and Food Society had a grand banquet one night later. I took Dr. Rosenbach as my guest; they

made a great fuss over him, and I was given the privilege of introducing him at the dinner. Mrs. Doheny gave a tea for him to which I was invited (it was about ten or twelve years after I'd worked for Mrs. Doheny as a gardener) . I must say he was very gracious about asking people to invite me. Jean Hersholt gave a grand evening lawn party for Dr. Rosenbach. (Dr. Rosenbach, I'm sorry to say, was disgracefully inebriated before the evening was over.) At the end of his visit here, he went back to Philadelphia, and he hadn't sold one dollar's worth of books. With all the grand books he brought out--which included the original manuscript of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the original manuscript of *The Red Badge of Courage*, the original manuscript of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* , a choice selection of important English books, like [Robert] Herrick's poems (first edition) , and the first, second, third, and fourth folios of Shakespeare, and a number of other very outstanding items—he hadn't sold anything. There just were no buyers; even Mrs. Doheny didn't buy anything from him. And to add insult to injury, his brother Philip—who was always sort of downgrading Abe, his brother, because he didn't think Abe was a good businessman or knew how to make money (Philip was a man who dealt in antiques and old silver, and so on, the same business) --came out here. He was a rather vulgar man; he knew how to live in style, but he certainly was not an aesthete or a cultivated man. He always brought out some blond cutie with him. He came out and called on Mrs. Doheny and sold her a tapestry--the kind that most people wouldn't give house room to and which were being sold at auction houses at knocked-down prices. He sold her the tapestry for, I was told, \$100,000. Then he went back and gloated over poor Dr. Rosenbach and said, "You're no good as a salesman."

GARDNER:

Why was the market so difficult?

ZEITLIN:

Well, a lot of people's stocks had sold so low; either they lost all their investments by buying on margin, or what they had left couldn't be sold for enough to buy a piece of cheese with. And the doctor was having a very hard time. He told me that he had to sell something; he owed the banks \$300,000. And I said, "Don't worry, if you owe them that much money, they'll never close you down." And that was true. Well, he lived it out, although he himself

never really hit his stride again as a great bookseller. People would come because going to Rosenbach 's was like going to Tiffany's.

GARDNER:

What happened to Hogan?

ZEITLIN:

Hogan formed a beautiful collection. He came out here once and was given a special dinner by the Zamorano Club. He invited me to be his guest at that dinner. He brought along some of his choicest books to display. I know he had a copy of "Endymion"; he had a book which contained Milton's "Lycidas"; he had Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* and Keats 's poems (I've forgotten which one just now) --all special copies, either presentation or association or annotated. He brought along a little satchel of his choicest books to show the Zamorano Club and asked me to be the one to show them to the members of the club—and that was about twenty years before they decided to admit booksellers like me to the membership. I must say that when they invited Dr. Rosenbach to the Zamorano Club, he also was kind enough to ask me to come along as his guest. Frank Hogan defended Andrew Mellon, who had been accused of some kind of improper action at the time that he was secretary of the treasury under Herbert Hoover, I suppose, or maybe under Coolidge or Harding. In any event, he made a deal directly with Franklin Roosevelt that if the government would not prosecute, Andrew Mellon would give the nation the National Gallery of Art and his entire personal collection of art. I think, a very good trade-off. [laughter] It saved Andy Mellon from disgrace and saved the government from very expensive and difficult legal proceedings, and got us the National Gallery of Art, of which Paul Mellon has remained a member of the board of trustees, and to which the Mellon family has made a great many very generous contributions. Frank Hogan finally fell ill. I don't know exactly what it was; it was something that was a degenerative condition having to do with the circulation, I think — probably arteriosclerosis. He settled in Palm Springs for the last year or so of his life, and he died out there. He died at a rather early age--I don't think he could have been more than sixty when he died--and he certainly left a reputation among book collectors and booksellers like no one else in my time. He was very enthusiastic about the books he bought. He gave dealers pleasure when he bought books. He also was very generous: he

underwrote people like Jake Blanck. He enabled Jake Blanck to begin the *Bibliography of American Literature*. He liked booksellers, and he was willing to see that they made a good profit and to make them his friends. When selections from his library were sold at, I think it must have been, the American Art Galleries (before Sotheby Parke Bernet took over the American Art Galleries) , it was a very bad time and a lot of his books didn't bring as much as they should have, but some of them brought very good prices. Today the same sort of a collection would make a sensation on the market. I suppose in all he didn't have a great many books in quantity, but he had a remarkable number of choice books. There isn't anyone I know who was more loved by the bookselling world, more respected by the legal world. He was the president of the American Bar Association for a term and, incidentally, was influential in the passing of the child labor laws. In other ways, he couldn't have really been called a friend of the laboring man and the poor, but he did exert himself in certain areas. He was a man of great tolerance, a wonderful storyteller, and a man everyone loved. I can't remember anybody except Walter Barrett who, as an individual, made himself as much a part of the bookselling world and the collecting world as Frank Hogan, considering the few years in which he was active as a book collector. And I remember getting a letter once from A. Edward Newton saying, "If you haven't met Frank Hogan, you should do so. He is a delightful storyteller, a very generous man, and he has a memory like Macaulay. " [laughter] Later Frank Hogan wanted that letter, and I couldn't find it. I searched and searched, and I would have given anything to find it and give it to him. Because in the last days, when he was quite ill, he sent someone to me and said, "Couldn't you possibly find that letter of A. Edward Newton's?"

1.15. TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side One
(November 30, 1977)

GARDNER:

I suggested that next you talk about Elmer Belt.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think that would be a good subject. I'm not sure that I haven't talked about him before; but even if I have, whatever I may have said is worth

repeating. Elmer Belt, like a number of the other great collectors, is remembered first of all for being a fine human being. He was, I think, one of the most truly endowed physicians that I ever knew. He is the kind of man who makes people feel better just by coming into the room. He creates an air of assurance when he talks to them and when he listens to them. He has the faculty for making each person he talks to feel like he is totally concentrated on what they have to say and totally interested in what their particular problem is. And I think that many patients feel better after their first meeting with him, simply because they feel that here is somebody who understands, them; and that in itself, of course, can be a tonic.

GARDNER:

How did you first meet him?

ZEITLIN:

He came into my shop with his nurse, Miss Katherine Theil. Wherever Elmer Belt was in those early years (my acquaintance begins in 1928) , Miss Theil was there, too. She managed his office; she managed his appointments; she managed every activity that took place in connection with his practice and, I think, took care of most of his social engagements as well. She knew as much about him and his life as he did himself (and perhaps even more) , and she was the perfect secretary-assistant. She was totally dedicated to him. Her day began much before he arose, even though he arose very early, and ended long after he left the office. He and Miss Theil came into my shop, and he immediately cast that peculiar Elmer spell on me, which has lasted until now. He asked if I had any old medical books, and it happened that I had just one medical book. It was a very thick, small folio having to do with pathology. The vellum binding was very wrinkled; and it was a book, I would say, about ten inches high by about eight inches wide, figuring from the back to the fore edge. I remember the title. The title was Bonetus's *Sepulcretum*, and it consisted of an immense number of post mortems. So in 1928, I think it must have been September or October of that year, I sold my first medical book and the first book that I sold Elmer Belt—Bonetus's *Sepulcretum*. The book wasn't mine; it had been turned over to me to sell by a Dr. Charles Lincoln Edwards, a wonderful old gentleman who at that time was connected with the public school system. He had maintained a sort of a museum of natural history to

which classes in the public schools came. He gave lectures on birds and natural history of all sorts. He and his wife were quite elderly even at that time. He'd had a considerable career. His first position that I know of was at the University of Texas, where he was in the zoology department. Either while there or shortly before, he compiled what I think is the first book on folk songs that is separately and strictly devoted to folk songs. It was published by the American Folklore Society in 1895, and it is called *Bahama Songs and Stories*. I am very proud to possess a copy which he inscribed to me. Dr. Edwards came under fire while he was at the University of Texas because he was an advocate of the theory of evolution according to Darwinian terms; and of course in those days, to be a Darwinian and an evolutionist in Texas was to be a candidate for burning at the stake. He was dismissed from the University of Texas just about the time David Starr Jordan was forming a faculty for what was to be Leland Stanford, Jr. , University, and he recruited Dr. Edwards, who went to Stanford and remained there for a great many years, until, I think, his retirement. Then he came down to Southern California and, after his retirement, commenced his new career of teaching children in the public schools about natural history. He had a number of assistants who later became outstanding: one of them, whose name I can't remember right now, became one of America's foremost herpetologists. He had over the years acquired a number of books; some of them, I think, just because he knew they were good books and he saw them going for very little. This Bonetus's *Sepulcretum* he must have acquired for that reason, because I don't think he or many other people-- outside of the men who were interested in discovering the causes of death by dissecting the cadavers of the deceased— would have been interested in this book. He brought me a number of other great books— [John] Gould's *One Hundred Birds of the Himalayas*; a number of other of Gould's important books, which I sold for very, very little money. Now, some of those books are bringing \$25,000; we probably sold them for \$700 or \$800 or \$1,000. I'm very sad because Dr. Edwards and his wife could well have used the money. Dr. Belt told me something about his interests, and he said, "In particular, if you get anything of Leonardo da Vinci, I would like to have it." So I've forgotten, but something came along that was related to Leonardo, and I called his office. Miss Theil said, "He's very busy, but why don't you come up here and wait until he's through with his patients, and then he can see you and see the book." So I came up, and I brought along a satchel

full of other books, and I discovered that Elmer Belt not only was a very kind and considerate man but that he had very little resistance to books. And he bought several books from me--which fortunately enabled me to pay the rent that month, as well as the payroll —and also that one book having to do with Leonardo. He said, "There's a book I want you to get for me, and I want you to get two copies. Send off to Italy and get me two copies of [Ettore] Verga's *Bibliographia Vinciana*, " which is the bibliography of all books by or about Leonardo da Vinci, up to somewhere like 1912, I guess. I sent off to Italy and got the two copies of the book, and when they came, I brought them to him. And he said, "All right, I will keep one and you keep one, and I want you to get me every book listed in here. I can't afford very much money--I can probably afford \$200 a month--but buy them as you find them. If you see something very important that's more money, speak to me about it, and maybe I can find a way to buy it. Now," he said, "I'm going to leave the price up to you, so go easy on me. Don't overcharge me. If you do, I won't buy anything else from you." Well, that was good enough incentive, and a caution to me. I wanted very much to keep Elmer Belt happy, so I added a very minimal profit to most of the books I sold to him. But having a customer who'd buy as much as \$200 a month steadily was a very valuable thing to me. And also having this opportunity to do what I think every good bookseller would like to do--that is, build a collection from its very foundation —was a great inspiration to me and a great satisfaction. So from that time on, through the years, I've continued to send Elmer Belt books, sometimes no more than one a month and sometimes two or three a week. If it was in the Verga bibliography and he didn't have it, he wanted it. And with that as an incentive, of course, I was able to buy a lot of books which I wouldn't have bought otherwise and sell them to him at a short profit, because I was sure of a sale when I bought them. And having a sure sale made it easy for me to put on a small profit, whereas if I had to buy them for stock and keep them at the risk of waiting a long time before selling them, I would have had to put a larger profit on them. So it worked out very well for me. And as time went on, the collection grew. Then along came a little woman by the name of Kate Steinitz. I think she arrived here about 1942. Kate was a rather overwhelming little German woman who had a way of commanding attention. At first when I met her, he [Dr. Belt] invited me to come over to his office, and he said, "I want you to meet someone." Here was this little woman who had come into his

office to have an examination because she had kidney stones. Her husband had been a doctor in Germany; they'd come to New York as refugees. Her husband couldn't get a license to practice. He committed suicide, and Kate was left with three daughters to support and very little money. She managed somehow—I don't know how, but she managed to carry on. She came out here, and somebody told her to go see Dr. Elmer Belt about her kidney stones, and she went to see him. And Elmer Belt said, "Well, we'd better make an appointment for you to go to the hospital tomorrow." And she said, "Oh, no, I'm not going to go to the hospital. My husband always told me that doctors want to cut easy and that people die more from being cut than from anything else, and I'm not going to go." "Well," he said, "it's your choice." But then she saw all these books in his office, and she started to talk to him, and it turned out that she was very knowledgeable in the history of art. She had this quick intelligence and quick perception of people and what they were interested in. So Elmer Belt thought, "Well, this is an interesting person," and he invited me to meet her, and we got acquainted. And I must say, I was put off at first. I really thought, "My God, she's just too much." I don't know how to cope with a woman who overwhelms you with conversation, and in sort of a compelling way. But she didn't let him operate. She stayed around a while, and then she went back to New York. And she wrote me a letter, and she said, "I understand you're supplying Dr. Elmer Belt with books connected with Leonardo." She said, "I have to stay here in order to get my citizenship papers before I come back to the Coast—I'm going to go back out there—and I'd like to scout for you and pick up books for you." Within a very short time, she reported some outstanding things, including one of the best books that's in Elmer's collection, a copy of [Luca] Pacioli's *Divina Proportione*. It was published, I think, in 1508 or 1509, and it is the only book of his time for which Leonardo actually supplied the drawings. It is a very rare book indeed and today up in around the \$10,000 class. I think she got it for him for something like \$450 from an old sea captain. It was a curious story which I won't go into. And then she haunted Weyhe's and the other art-book stores and found other Leonardo books, quite obscure ones which I certainly would have missed and Elmer wouldn't have had the time to hunt up. She would send them out, and I would tell Elmer where I got them; that she had found them for me. She would write him also [in that] peculiar scratchy hand of hers with corrections every other word. When she came back, the story I have is that

she went to see Dr. Belt; and Belt said, "See here, Mrs. Steinitz, I think you should have those kidney stones removed, and I'll tell you what I'll do: if you will let me remove your kidney stones, I will let you come to work for me as my librarian." Well, that was a temptation beyond Kate's power to resist, and very shortly thereafter, she was operated on, her kidney stones removed, and she started in to be Elmer Belt's librarian. She was a most peculiar librarian: she didn't know anything about librarianship in the ordinary sense, so she had to learn all about the systems of classification and descriptive bibliography. But she learned very rapidly, and she knew how to consult the right people, how to consult the right reference books, and nothing ever put her down. She had this belief, which I think is very important, that if somebody else could learn it, she could too. She learned Italian, started to translate from the Italian, took lessons in conversational Italian. She, of course, knew German and French already. And she had this very quick perception. She had this curiosity about everything on earth and, I must add, the most broadly tolerant understanding of anybody I ever knew. There were many things in art and human behavior which I found rather hard to tolerate, but I never found her unable to or unwilling to tolerate. She always knew there was something justifiable, something worth learning about every form of expression in art and every form of human behavior.

GARDNER:

How did Elmer Belt get interested in Vinciana?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Elmer Belt, when he was a medical student, of course, had to learn to do anatomical drawings, and in the course of learning to do anatomical drawings, he was shown some models in Folio A or Folio B of Leonardo, the edition published in Paris. And I think it was George Corner--there were two men who both, I think, were very influential in introducing Elmer to Leonardo. One was Dr. George Corner, who's still alive. He came to Berkeley as a professor as a very young man, and the students couldn't believe that this man who looked younger than most of the students could be a professor of physiology or anatomy. His senior there, the man under whose sponsorship he came, was Dr. Herbert Evans, who was a very colorful man himself, about whom I shall talk later. Herbert Evans not only was a great lecturer and a great physiologist,

but he also had great facility at teaching anatomy by drawing on the blackboard as he lectured. He also had the trick of drawing with both hands. I think he and George Corner together could have shown some of the anatomical drawings of Leonardo to Elmer; and Elmer, of course, quickly recognized the quality of these drawings, in terms of their anatomical correctness and the extent that Leonardo was able to describe what he knew. The thing about anatomy through the ages is that anatomists never drew more than they were capable of seeing through their knowledge of anatomy. And as their knowledge increased, their capacity for drawing increased--unlike the artists, who could draw the human figure with a great deal more accuracy and putting in more of the details of what was there than the anatomists. The anatomists drew diagrammatically, I think one should say, and they drew from the standpoint of knowledge of the function of what they were drawing, the same way that primitive man never knew what he was looking at and could never draw the human body as he saw it, even though he'd cut it to pieces many times. So Elmer started off, when he was able to (I think, at that time, he was a very poor medical student, and he couldn't afford it) by getting himself the Folio A and B of Leonardo, which had to do with anatomical drawings. It became his ambition to form a library of everything by and about Leonardo, so that anyone else coming after him could go to one place and find everything that he might want to refer to if he wanted to learn more about Leonardo. In later years, when he put his collection at UCLA, his dream was realized, most significantly when Ladislao Reti, who was chosen to edit the newly discovered *Codex Madrid*, decided to come to UCLA and stay close to the campus and use the Elmer Belt Library [of Vinciana] , because he felt that no place else in the world was there everything that he would need in order to translate and comment on the Madrid Codices. Not only did Reti use the library in that way, but so did a great many other scholars. Kate Steinitz played a very important role in making the library known. She would issue catalogs of acquisitions; she wrote essays; she communicated with scholars; she answered queries. Elmer did his share by studying the things which came. He had a quick eye: as the books arrived, he would look into them. Kate would point out some things; a great many things he was quick to see, so that he did some very good lectures on Leonardo the anatomist. And between Kate and Elmer, they made what could have been just an accumulation of books into a great tool for scholarship and an inspiration. It was Kate who perceived the

capabilities of Carlo Pedretti when he was a young man in Bologna and had practically no recognition. When he wrote her and she saw what great capacities he had, she encouraged him to go on. She arranged for Dr. Belt and Bern Dibner to put up the bond to sponsor him for his immigration to the United States. She attracted a great many other scholars to the Belt Library. When she traveled in Europe, she called on the libraries and museums--the curators and directors--and the bookshops; she had every bookseller in Europe and the United States writing to her whenever they got anything of a Leonardesque nature, and she got her pick of a lot of very good books that way. She went to the town of Vinci. It was partly through her contacts—more because of Elmer's own visit there—that the town of Vinci, which was Leonardo's birthplace, acquired a library of Leonardo books which Elmer gave them. They had nothing in the way of books or any collection at all of Leonardo material in Vinci until Elmer Belt started sending them material and gave them the nucleus for a library. Following that, the city of Vinci founded an annual Leonardo lectureship, and both Elmer Belt and Kate Steinitz, as well as Ladislao Reti and Carlo Pedretti, were in various years the Vinci lecturer. And when Kate Steinitz came there to lecture, the Italian Air Force staged a fly-by over Vinci. Elmer Belt is an unusual individual. He's touched a great many people. He has encouraged a great many people; he's been part of the lives of a great many people; and I don't know anyone, no matter how famous they are, towards whom so many people have a great feeling of love and devotion. When the national library at Madrid agreed to lend a group of the drawings of the *Codex Madrid* to the Smithsonian Institute for an exhibit, Elmer Belt and I were invited to come be present at the opening and to attend a dinner on the occasion. Silvio Bedini, who was in charge of this, had first invited me and then sort of tried to disinvite me, for reasons that I have to reserve until another time. When he invited Elmer Belt, Elmer said, "I'll only come on one condition, and that is that Jake come with me. Otherwise, I won't go." So I went with him, and we stayed overnight at the Cosmos Club, attended the lecture and the opening festivities. The next morning, we took the plane back to Los Angeles. On the way back, he fell asleep, and the stewardess looked at him, came over and arranged a blanket over him, and she said, "Who is that wonderful man?" He hadn't opened his mouth, he was asleep, but she said, "He must be somebody special."

GARDNER:

Wonderful. [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

And I said, "Yes, he is." And later on, when I told the story somewhere, I said, "That's our Elmer. He can charm them even when he's asleep." [laughter]

GARDNER:

What about the giving of the library to UCLA? What were the circumstances of that?

ZEITLIN:

That became rather complicated. I'm not acquainted with all the details, although I was involved. He had expressed his intention of giving it to UCLA, and at that time, Larry Powell was the librarian. Bob Vosper was the assistant librarian, and Franklin Murphy was the chancellor of the university. And Elmer Belt had told them that he wanted to give the collection. I then was engaged to make an appraisal of it, and then he didn't hear anything from them for quite a while. He rather felt that it was up to them to make the next move, but they somehow or another let it drift, until one day I heard that he was being courted by the Huntington Library. Well, it happened that the evening after I heard this, I had been invited to a little gathering at Chancellor Murphy's house, and at the dinner table I said, "Look, I have something important; I want everybody here to listen to me. UCLA's going to lose a great collection unless they do something very quickly — Elmer Belt's Leonardo collection. He thinks you don't appreciate it." (This was another case of their not moving in like they should have, except this turned out successfully.) I said, "Now, don't lose any time. Get ahold of Elmer as quickly as you can. Tell him that you will provide space for it, offer him a plan of what you will do, and don't let this library get away from you. " So they very quickly did get over to see Elmer, and Franklin Murphy deserves a great deal of the credit — also Larry Powell, but Franklin Murphy had a way of showing his interest and also making a proposal that was definite and had something distinctive about it. He proposed to Elmer Belt that they would set up the Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana in separate quarters, and that they would conserve it properly and not distribute it in the stacks in the university or let it get dispersed or lose its identity. And this, of course, is what was needed in the case of a collection like this, and I

think it was very much to the benefit of the university as well as to the satisfaction of Elmer Belt and very much to the credit of Franklin Murphy, that the library did come to UCLA. Now, at first it was housed in a separate couple of rooms, but at least it was kept segregated, and Kate was made sort of an honorary curator. Elmer paid her salary, but Kate was there in charge. I'm sure that the people at the university did not appreciate Kate. They saw her as this little, gnarled, rather demanding old woman [who was] temperamental and hard to understand [and] a little bit absentminded: she wouldn't always lock the room when she left it, and so on, which was terrible for them. And I think they far underestimated what a great person they had there and what an important asset to the university she was, in terms of bringing a great many important scholars there to visit, see the place, and meet the other faculty members. They failed to accommodate her as much as they should have. Even if she was troublesome, I don't think she was that troublesome. I know some other people who made that mistake, too. One art dealer here in town who I tried to get interested in selling something for Kate sneered at it and said, "That gabby little old woman. I don't want to be bothered with her." It turned out that this was one of the very important works of Kurt Schwitters, who was the hottest thing in the European market. And she had more of them, which this man might have gotten hold of if he'd just had the perception to see what kind of a person Kate was. Well, Elmer is thoughtful in so many ways, it's hard to conceive of how he has time to be as considerate of everyone as he is. You never fail to get a note of appreciation from him, usually written in his own hand, for the slightest thing that you might remember to do for him. And it's been my pleasure to be with him on two journeys to Europe. It has been my pleasure to be present at a number of his birthday parties, to enjoy his confidence, and to share lots of things with him. I can't think of a more wonderful man. Ruth Belt and he both came to my seventy-fifth birthday party, which was a great compliment. Elmer is now about eighty-six or eighty-seven years old and isn't too spry, at least certainly not in the evenings. And Ruth Belt doesn't go out at all--she is totally housebound-- but she made the effort and came to my birthday party and sat next to me, and I couldn't have had a greater compliment.

GARDNER:

Would he be about your longest-running continuous collector?

ZEITLIN:

I suppose so, now. I can't remember anyone else who is still alive that bought books from me earlier. I have had people turn up lately whom I knew as early as 1925, when I first went to work at Bullock's, but I can't remember that any one of them--well, yes, there are two people whom I remember who came first as customers. One of them was a lovely woman who was a very young, wonderful creature. Mina Cooper she was then; she's married to Herb [H. Arthur] Klein now, and lives in Malibu, and she's still a very dear friend, And the other was a young woman intern by the name of Esther Somerfeld, who was interning at County Medical. She came in to buy a book for a wedding present for a couple of friends, and then she came to buy a present for another young intern there by the name of Eugene Ziskind, and later they were married. A few weeks ago, we went to their fiftieth wedding anniversary party, and she introduced me to the woman who bought a copy of Shelley's poems from me, which was given to the husband on the occasion of their wedding.

GARDNER:

That's marvelous. [laughter] You have a group of golden-anniversary people all over the city.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, right now I've been attending more than one fiftieth wedding anniversary, and so I'm glad of that.

GARDNER:

To move to your list--I guess, after Frank Hogan, among the older collectors or the longer-ago collectors, you have Albert Bender.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I want to say one more thing about Elmer Belt. Elmer Belt's not just a collector in one field. Some people may think that Leonardo da Vinci has been Elmer Belt's exclusive collection. Of course, he's formed a very great collection of rarities in medicine. He has some important books in the history of science, such as a fine copy in the original presentation binding of [William] Gilbert on the magnet [*De Magnete*], a very fine copy of Tagliacozzi on plastic surgery, of

course the first and second edition of Vesalius's *Anatomy* [*De Humani Corporis Fabrica*] , and a good many of the important classics in medicine. But in addition to that, he had a collection of Upton Sinclair which was quite extensive, not only in English but in translations into many languages, and that collection he gave to Occidental College. He formed a collection of the works of S. Weir Mitchell; a collection of the works on nursing, including letters and books of Florence Nightingale; a collection of D.H. Lawrence; and a very exhaustive collection of books on whaling—he had become interested in the anatomy of the whale because of a peculiar anomaly having to do with the kidneys of whales. (I suppose peculiar anomaly is a redundancy—an anomaly is a peculiarity.) He has collected a lot of fine-press books and books on art outside of Leonardo da Vinci. He is an omnivorous reader in a great many areas. Elmer Belt's collecting is a reflection of the breadth of his mind and also his infinite capacity for fine detail as it expresses itself in surgery and in his knowledge of medicine. In some ways, you could take his library, and it would be a portrait of the man.

GARDNER:

Have you ever dealt with him on a professional basis?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. He's operated on me.

GARDNER:

That seems to be the thread that runs through many of our oral histories.

ZEITLIN:

Is that so? Elmer Belt? Well, he had, at one time, the largest surgical practice of any single man in the United States.

GARDNER:

Is that so?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. It's not very much now, simply because he isn't able to keep up with it. His staff has diminished. His son has left his office; his nephew has left his office for various reasons, and I don't think that it was incompatibility. They

had ambitions of their own. And so, while he has a continuing practice, it's not what it was.

GARDNER:

Is he still able to. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

Well, that's the point. I don't feel that Elmer should continue to do anything but consult. He's certainly a very competent diagnostician and consultant.

**1.16. TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side Two
(December 13, 1977)**

GARDNER:

You mentioned that you wanted to finish up with Elmer Belt.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I think it ought to be pointed up that Elmer Belt demonstrated something very special about himself when he saw the possibilities of Kate Steinitz, [when] most of us (and I'll include myself) had no idea what her possibilities were--what capacities she had and what potential she had when we first met her. And it's because he had this confidence in her, because he was willing to give her his support and to underwrite her that she developed in her own knowledge and that she became such an important person in the world of students of Leonardo da Vinci, and that she contributed to the literature, and that she corresponded with all of the Leonardistas in the various parts of the world. She became in her time, among the scholars who were interested in Leonardo, something like [Father] Mersenne was in his time among the men interested in science in all the various parts of the world. Through corresponding with him, they created a sort of a crossroads for the exchange of information, and this really sparked everyone involved. And it was because of Kate Steinitz and the central position she held through being Elmer Belt's librarian that a great many things happened in the world of Leonardo research. It was Kate Steinitz who picked Carlo Pedretti, a young boy in Bologna; realized that he had the possibilities of being a great Leonardo scholar, and arranged for him to come over here. She got Elmer Belt, Bern Dibner, and Ladislao Reti all to put up money for a fund with which to support

Pedretti and enable him to come over, and to stay here and get the degrees that were necessary for his progress, and do the work that he did and is still doing. So that he has now become one of the three or four outstanding scholars among the Leonardistas . This, again, was a case of Elmer perceiving that Pedretti had these possibilities and being willing to help him. I think that it was true also in my case. Certainly, without Elmer Belt and his continued support, I might very well have not been able to stay in business. And the fact that I had one customer whose business might amount to, say, no more than \$400 a month, but it was a regular \$400 a month, really made all the difference between success and failure. And so I think that it has to be said above everything else that Elmer Belt deserves very high credit for his ability to appreciate people of talent, sometimes even people with whom he didn't agree-- like Kurt Schwitters, whom he met in Sweden when he went over there--but whose qualities he appreciated and whom he was willing to recognize and give support to. This, I think, entitles him to very high marks as a sponsor of culture and as a human being. It was out of my association with Elmer Belt and Kate Steinitz that I met Bern Dibner. As well as I can remember, this must have been about 1946, right after World War II, that Kate Steinitz brought Bern Dibner over to my shop on Carondelet Street. He was a very unimpressive looking little man with a small moustache, very brusque, and very much alert and quick to observe and remember everything you said and any new information that came his way. He was a Russian Jewish immigrant who came to the United States and got a degree in electrical engineering in Brooklyn. I think he got most of his schooling at night. I think he had an uncle who had a radio business, which gave him an opportunity to earn his first living in electrical engineering. And I think later he and a brother-- I'm not exactly sure what the relationship was, but there was one other person, also, with Dibner who was involved in Bern Dibner 's beginning in electrical manufacture. They started a very small business. Bern Dibner decided quite early that the field which had the greatest possibilities for advancement, the greatest possibility for widespread utilization in all fields of electricity, was electrical connectors. So he proceeded to study all the types of electrical connectors that were known, and he specialized in them. It would seem strange that anything so insignificant as what connected two electrical wires could become that important, but every time you look up at an overhead power line, you see that the wires are at some point connected to each other

and that these connectors are very important, that the connectors which are part of switches are essential and must be able to bear the surges of the current, must be able to maintain a constant flow between the two bodies that they're connecting. And so he studied this and acquired patents and developed patents and built up what became Burndy Engineering. Now, Elmer Belt first heard that there was a man in New York who was competing with him in buying books on Leonardo sometime about 1942 or '43, and so he wrote to this man and said he would like to meet him. And the man said, well, he was very busy, and it would be rather difficult, but if he would come out to see him at his factory, he could spare some time to him. So Elmer went out, and he found that this man that he met had a security guard with him at all times. He was admitted to this place with great care being taken to check him in and out, to make sure that there were no questions asked or no discussion of what this man was doing. When Elmer Belt asked to see the books, the man took him out to a warehouse and showed him a pile of boxes and said, "This is my library. And until the war's over, I'm not able to look at them, and I can't show them to you or even see them myself." It was only afterward that Elmer learned that Bern Dibner was involved in a very essential part of the war, top secret development of proximity fuses and other ordnance. Bern Dibner, at the end of the war, went over as part of an inspection team to assess the effectiveness of various war measures, such things as saturation bombing and things like that, to try to determine whether they really were worth the money and effort that were put behind them, or whether they were superfluous and overkill. After the war, Bern Dibner did unpack his library, and when he set up his plant in Norwalk, Connecticut, he incorporated his library as a separate entity and set it up as sort of a nonprofit institution into which he poured a certain amount of the money which he was earning from his business. But his library was distributed throughout his research plant at Norwalk, Connecticut, the first time I met him. Over in one section, he had all his books about Volta; in another consultation room, he had all of the books about Einstein; and in another room, he had all his Curie books and materials. This, he felt, would serve as an inspiration to the engineers working in the place. [laughter] He and his wife had decided very early that the first time they were \$1,000 ahead, they were not going to devote every day of every year pursuing the dollar and tending to business. As soon as they had \$1,000, they decided they were going to go to Europe and travel; learn about the cities of

Europe. In the course of traveling and very seriously studying the places they went and the languages of the countries which they visited, they went to the bookshops, and Bern Dibner developed a network of friendships with booksellers in all parts of Europe. So there is no bookshop that you could go to that might in any way have any book dealing with the history of science, or any of the sciences, that he is not known in. He had a capacity for making friends with booksellers, and he was not a hard bargainer. He encouraged booksellers. He expected them to make a living, and he paid fairly for what he bought. And as time went on, his visits were looked forward to. The booksellers would accumulate the best things and hold them until he came, and as a result of that, he got a great many good books which he might not otherwise have gotten. Many people, such as one man, A. Bader in Geneva, sold him things which he had inherited, collections of letters from Volta and Galvani and Deluc, who was an early forebear of Bader's. He sold Dibner electrical machines which were heirlooms and really extraordinarily fine examples of the early electrical generators which were used for conducting electrical experiments and teaching the electrical sciences. And it was the same with me: Bern Dibner came to see me, and he was warm, he was friendly, he would never go away without buying something. And he encouraged me to write him and offer him things. When he started to develop his list, which he called "Heralds of Science," which was a list of the outstanding books in all the sciences, he solicited the opinion of the notable scientists in the various fields, he solicited the opinions of the collectors in these fields, and he solicited the opinions of booksellers. And when he got together his material and published his work, he dedicated it to the booksellers of the world who'd helped him form his collection. His list, the "Heralds of Science," has become a standard guide to the outstanding books in the sciences, much more so than the [Harrison D.] Horblit list, which was much more handsomely published and which contained a great deal many more mistakes and contradictions, but which has, for some people, become a great list because it was called the Grolier Club *List of a Hundred Books on the History of Sciences*. Bern Dibner, as an example, heard that Herbert Evans was likely to sell one of his collections. It was the second collection that Herbert had formed; the first collection had gone to Mrs. Evans when they were divorced because it very rightly belonged to her. Most of the money which had been spent on buying it had come from Mrs. Evans, but it remained in

Herbert Evans's custody until it was sold, and I purchased that collection for Lessing Rosenwald. That first collection, I must say, had some unique books, some very fine copies of things which never occur again in any of the Evans collections. This collection was purchased by me for Lessing Rosenwald, who gave it to the Institute for Advanced Study, and it is the collection which forms the foundation of their History of Science Library at Princeton.

GARDNER:

This brings up an interesting question for me, before you continue, and then I'll try to get you back to your train of thought. With the number of customers that you had who were interested in similar items and subjects, how did you select those customers which would receive which item? Do you see what I mean? There must have been great competition.

ZEITLIN:

Well, that was a valuable privilege. It gave me a great advantage.

GARDNER:

But there must have been great competition also among your buyers.

ZEITLIN:

Well, there was some competition. Naturally, the ones that treated me the most kindly got the preference. If they bargained too hard or kept the books too long before giving me a decision, or tried to force me to take back books of which they had purchased better copies later on, I sort of put them last on the list. It was a privilege which I had earned. Naturally, Bern Dibner won a very high place on my list very early, because when he heard about the second Evans collection, he encouraged me to buy it. He said, "I'll tell you what I will do. I will give you a list of approximately 100 books I want out of that collection and I will advance you \$10,000 towards your cost of purchasing. And when you have bought it, take the books that are on my list, check them over, price them, and send them to me. And whatever you say is the right price, you can charge against the \$10,000 which I've advanced. When we've passed the \$10,000, keep on sending the books that I want, and we'll go on from there—I'll pay you for them." This enabled me to buy a collection which I could have never bought with my own money. I was able to buy this collection

also with the help of John Valentine and Justin Turner, who advanced the rest of the money. The total cost was \$27,000. I had only enough money to pay my fare to San Francisco and Berkeley, where Herbert Evans lived. I'd heard that Herbert Evans was of a mind to sell his collection, so I called him up one Saturday and said, "I would like to come up tomorrow morning and talk to you about your collection." So I went up. I had already discussed this list of what was in Herbert's library with Irwin Rosenthal and his son Barney, and they were of a mind to participate with me in buying it. We had concluded that we could afford to pay about \$27,000 for the collection. I went to Herbert Evans, and I said, "I will give you \$27,000 for the collection. I will write you a check for \$5,000 now, and I will give you the balance when the books have all been checked out against your list and are packed and have left your house for the library in the Life Sciences Building at Berkeley." And Herbert said, "Well, I must think it over. I must talk to my wife, but I will let you know tomorrow morning." The next morning he said, "We'll take you up." The collectors and dealers in the East heard about it. People like Dave Randall of Scribner's said, "How did you get Herbert Evans to sell you his collection?" And I said, "Well, you know you've mentioned a number of times to him that you would like to buy it, and a number of other people have, but I did one thing more: I offered him money." [laughter] This was the clincher: the fact that I had found Dr. Evans at one of the points, which he had reached a number of times during his life, where he had bought more books than he could pay for. He had developed this fine collection, but he owed the banks money, and he owed the booksellers all over the world money. Dunning letters were coming in and threats of suits, and people were writing [Robert Gordon] Sproul, the president of the University of California, and Evans had to do something. The thing that he needed was someone who would come forward and say, "I will give you so much money down, and I will pay you the rest at such and such a time ." With the \$10,000 that Bern Dibner had advanced and the additional money which John Valentine and Justin Turner lent me, I was able to buy the collection, and that gave me my start as a dealer with a significant stock of books in the history of science. I was able to get out two very fine catalogs, catalogs which were landmarks in that they contained a great many important books in the history of science, all of them fine copies or association copies. And there was no one else, certainly, in the United States, and only one or two people in Europe, who'd ever gotten out catalogs to compare with these. This

gave me an immediate reputation. Of course, all of this was premised by the fact that Bern Dibner had advanced \$10,000 with which I could buy the collection.

GARDNER:

So what you did basically was: he advanced the \$10,000 for certain of the titles, and the rest of the titles you maintained for yourself.

ZEITLIN:

So I proceeded to price them, and he never questioned any price I put on anything. I tried to be very fair and price them below the market in his case, because I wanted him to be happy. I felt I owed it. The benefits of having advanced the money considered that he was a partner in the enterprise, so he gained a lot of very fine books at what now are very low prices.

GARDNER:

What year was that, about?

ZEITLIN:

That was 1955.

GARDNER:

In 1955, that late!

ZEITLIN:

Yes, and I had this opportunity to sell all these books and to produce a catalog that gave me a reputation, that gave me entree to a great many other collectors and made my credit good with a lot of important dealers in Europe. So that when I walked into a bookstore and presented my card, I was immediately recognized as the man who got out those catalogs. And I must say that they were very well annotated. I had a good man working with me, John B. Lee, and he and I worked very hard to produce good catalogs. I think I can honestly claim that the annotations were not just superficial, that they were based upon a considerable amount of study of the books themselves and the books about the books.

GARDNER:

Had Evans done any cataloging of his own?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Evans was a discriminating accumulator. He loved the chase. He appreciated what the books meant, and he also canvassed a great many of the authoritative men. He wrote to some of the outstanding geologists around the world and asked them what, in their opinions, were the significant works in, say, geology. He did the same thing with the physicists and the chemists and the botanists and so on. Out of that he compiled a search list and went to work, after he'd compiled this list, to find the best possible copies of the books. In 1937 he held an exhibition of outstanding books in the history of science, for which he published a little catalog that was printed by the University of California Press, and that catalog is still the best guide to the significant books in the history of sciences. It sold for something like thirty-five cents, and Ernst Weil in later years, when he reviewed the Horblit book which was selling for \$100, implied that the Evans publication was a better book.

GARDNER:

I'm intrigued by one other thing, before we get back to Bern Dibner. We've talked about four collectors, basically, in the last couple of sessions--Frank Hogan and Herbert Evans, Elmer Belt and Dibner. Two of them, Dibner and Belt, apparently maintained their wealth through the years; yet both Evans and Hogan found themselves strapped by their book purchases. Is that common?

ZEITLIN:

Hogan was not strapped by his purchases.

GARDNER:

He overbought, though.

ZEITLIN:

Well, he overbought in terms of his capacity to pay immediately; but he didn't overbuy in the long run, because Hogan's fees were immense. He had very high retainers. I think that he got a million dollars for defending Andy Mellon.

GARDNER:

Oh. Well, so there was no problem.

ZEITLIN:

No, he did not die a poor man.

GARDNER:

But is it common for book collectors? As you mentioned, it's common for bookdealers to do that.

ZEITLIN:

Herbert Evans did not die a poor man either.

GARDNER:

No, no, no, that's not what I mean. But is it common for book collectors to overextend themselves in the course of buying?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it is. A book collector will temporarily overextend himself. He will buy more than he can pay for, and booksellers have to be careful to curb some of these men, because what is a pleasure can become a burden and can be spoiled. A man who is an enthusiastic collector can be turned into a disappointed, unhappy man if he finds himself being driven by too much buying and being unable to pay. And if his creditors get on his back and press him, he is in trouble. It has happened that some collectors have had to sell their books at auction. Herbert Evans was chronically in debt—he overbought—but in the long run, he did not lose money by his collecting. His passion for collecting books outran his practicality. He could have done a lot better with selling the books that he bought; his collections were all sold too far below what they could have brought him. Warren Howell and I together sold several of his collections, and in no case did we get as much as might have been gotten for them if he hadn't been in urgent need of money.

GARDNER:

Well, shall we return to Bern Dibner, then, and hear the rest of his story?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Bern Dibner 's backing of me in the purchase of the Evans collection was certainly very important in my development as a bookseller and my becoming established as a dealer in books in the history of science. We have maintained a constant correspondence, and over the years, I visit him and he visits me. I remember his coming out here once when the Red Cars were still running. He called me up--it was on a Sunday--and he said he would like to come and see me if I wasn't busy and had time to take him over to my shop. This must have been about 1950. So he took the Red Car from downtown—from the Biltmore Hotel, I guess it was then —and he rode it out to Santa Monica and La Cienega Boulevard, where I met him. We went down to my shop, and we spent a very pleasant half-day there, looking at books and talking. I said, "Why don't you take a taxi? You can get back to your hotel so much faster. It took you at least an hour to get here." And he said, "You know, if I spent that money on taxis I wouldn't have as much to buy books. Besides, I wouldn't have as much time to read as I have when I'm riding on streetcars." He was always a man without ostentation, and no matter how powerful he has become, he has never lost his modesty nor his ability to live in terms of very modest personal needs. We traveled together with the Grolier Club on a couple of occasions and spent a great deal of time with each other, and he and his wife were very considerate, never complained, never grumbled. If the regular meals which were promised couldn't be delivered to us, and we were given a box lunch with an apple and a sandwich, he could sit down and enjoy it with just as much relish as he could the best dinner in the finest restaurants of Europe. I don't think anyone who's been associated with Bern Dibner ever was made to feel that this was a man with the kind of wealth and power which enabled him to travel by his own private jet around the country if he wanted to. He has always driven his own car. He never has had anybody waiting on him. He has built a library in Norwalk to house his collection, a very attractive building; and lectures, seminars, and meetings of various societies are held there. He has very attractive exhibits of electrical instruments, in addition to portraits and prints having to do with the history of electricity. In addition to the various fields of the history of science, he has emphasized particularly, of course, the history of electricity. And he bought a great many books of the fifteenth century; he has formed a very substantial collection--I think approximately 400--of books printed before 1501. As a private collection in our time it is certainly outstanding. It has been his idea to make this an endowed library to be

continued in perpetuity. I must stop here to say something about the collection of instruments which is in his library. It's to be seen in alcoves and on shelves and in niches all over the library, and this is a collection of electrical instruments of all types, dating from the beginning of the Voltaic battery and the electrical friction generator, I had been told by a customer of mine that an antique dealer in New Orleans had bought an electrical museum which had gone bankrupt in Holland. For some reason the Dutch hadn't wanted to spend the money to support this museum, and it finally went broke, and the thing was auctioned off. The majority of the stuff was all bought by an antique dealer in New Orleans who had it in his place and whose idea was that people would buy it for bases for lamps (the great vogue of sewing machines that looked like lampstands and lampstands that looked like sewing machines was going strong). But he decided that before he broke up the collection, he'd see if he couldn't find a buyer for it all in one lot. He had written to a customer of mine (whose name I've forgotten right now), a man who lived in Santa Barbara, and the man in turn had mentioned this offer to me and said he wasn't interested, and he gave me the name of that man in New Orleans. So I called up the man in New Orleans and said, "I'd like to know about your collection. How much do you want for it, and what does it contain?" And the man said, "Well, I'll tell you, I can't offer it to you now because I have promised to give somebody in New England (a man by the name of Lincoln who was trying to start an electrical museum up in New England) first refusal, and he's trying to get the money together right now. But if he doesn't buy it, I'll let you know. The price of it is \$5,000." And I said, "Fine, I'd be interested." So about three weeks later, I got a call from this man, and he said, "Well, the collection is yours if you want it." And I said, "May I have a few days? Since you've taken this long, may I have a few days? I've got to get together my nickels." And he said, "Yes, you've got an option on this for ten days." And I said, "All right." The next day I had a phone call from Bern Dibner, and he said, "What are you doing, trying to buy that electrical collection?" I said, "I don't see any reason why I can't buy it just as well as anyone else." He said, "I understand you have an option on it." I said, "Yes." "Well," he said, "I thought that this man Lincoln was going to buy it, and that's why I didn't get into the act. And between the time that he found he couldn't buy it, and the time I got back to this man, and the time he told me so, I found that you have an option!" He said, "I know how much you've been asked to pay. How much will

you take to get out?" And I said, "I think \$7,500—I'll take a \$2,500 profit." He said, "All right, I'll mail you a check and all you have to do is tell those people in New Orleans that you've turned over your option to me." So he bought the collection, and I never saw it until about three or four years later, when I went to his place in Connecticut. Here were all these beautiful instruments, an enormous collection of them, all varieties of early electrical generators and storage batteries, and so on. And I said, "You know, it's a good thing I didn't see this collection before I took your proposition, or it would have cost you a hell of a lot more. You got a great bargain!" [laughter] He said, "Yes, I know I did. It is a great bargain, and I'm very grateful to you for letting me have it." That is the kind of man Dibner is. Now, you might say with the kind of money he's got, it was easy for him to be generous, but that's not usually true. Generally, the men who come up the hard way like he did, and who are used to moving around the world and making deals, are not very generous; they are the hardest bargainers of all. But he is truly an exception. In the course of the years, we've met at meetings of the History of Science Society. Our first meeting was 1956, in Florence, where we traveled together on the train to Milan and had a wonderful time. And from then on, over the years, we have met many times--Josephine and I and he and his beautiful wife, Billie. I have enjoyed trips together with them and Ladislao Reti and his wife, Chiquita, and Elmer and Ruth Belt. It has been a wonderful association and friendship.

GARDNER:

He is still alive, I take it.

ZEITLIN:

He is still alive, yes. He is over eighty, and he has been honored in many different ways. The most important thing, I think, that's happened to his collection I was also involved with, and that is the presentation of it to the Smithsonian [Institution].

GARDNER:

There's about two more minutes on the tape.

ZEITLIN:

Two more minutes. Well, I think that this will have to wait till next time. I think one of the most important gifts the Smithsonian ever received was the Burndy Library, and it was I who went to him on behalf of the Smithsonian and asked him to consider their proposal to take it over, subject to certain conditions which I helped draw up.

GARDNER:

Okay, you'd like to wait till next time to finish.

ZEITLIN:

I think it would be best to wait until next time.

**1.17. TAPE NUMBER: X, Side One
(January 17, 1978)**

GARDNER:

You have before you some items pertaining to Thomas Wise that are going to be our topic, at least at the beginning, for today.

ZEITLIN:

I think it's appropriate to discuss these publications in the context of my own history as a bookseller. The basic volume relating to the Wise forgeries, which is entitled *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth-Century Pamphlets*, was written by John Carter and Graham Pollard, and published in 1934. It was a joint publication of Constable & Company in London and Charles Scribner's Sons in New York. Among my customers who were interested was a Mrs. LeRoy Crummer, usually known to her friends as Myrtle. Myrtle Crummer was married to Dr. LeRoy Crummer, who was one of the outstanding collectors of rare books in the history of medicine during the golden period of the twenties and thirties. Crummer, along with Dr. [George] Streeter, and [Harvey] Cushing, and Camac, Sir William Osier, and Dr. George Dock had all contributed towards the publication of a very fine journal—beautifully printed design by Frederick Goudy and published by Paul Hoeber—called *[Annals of] Medical History*. It was a small folio printed on fine handmade paper (or good mold-made paper, I should say), printed in Goudy types and with plentiful illustrations, both block cuts and halftones. It ran for a period of approximately, I would say, twenty-five years. Every prominent

American collector and historian of medicine of that time contributed to it, and it is still one of the fine sources, one of the most useful sources, on a great many subjects in the history of medicine. It was published during the great period of the amateur in medical history. A medical man who loved to collect books and who was interested in the history of medicine would have the courage to write an article on his favorite topic and publish it there without having to prove that he had a PhD in history. In our own day, the academicians have taken over the history of medicine, and it has largely become a field in which they write for each other rather than for the devoted amateur and the public and the rest of the medical profession, which might be inspired by what they have written. The enthusiasm for the history of medicine has been overwhelmed by the discipline of the scholars, in my opinion. It used to be you would go to meetings of the Society for the History of Medicine and you would find a great many devoted amateurs, who might not really have a profound knowledge of the history of medicine, might not be adept in Greek and Latin, but still had a great devotion to what they could learn from reading the books in the languages with which they were familiar, and very often made some very exciting and original contributions. Gushing himself was an amateur, and John Fulton, who was a highly competent bibliographer and historian of medicine, could certainly not be credited with being a certified historian. LeRoy Crummer had traveled to a great many of the cities of Europe, [and] with Dr. Dock, Dr. Streeter and [Dr. William] Osier, had ransacked the shelves of the bookshops of Vienna and Munich and Paris and London, and had brought together a most unusual collection of rare books on the history of medicine. His wife, Myrtle, had on these journeys devoted herself to collecting the literature of the nineteenth-century poets. She had a remarkably comprehensive collection of Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and the later poets such as Matthew Arnold and Swinburne, and was regarded as quite an authority. Well, I called her up and said, "I have a book here I think you'll be interested in reading," and I sent her a copy of the Carter and Pollard *Enquiry*. I didn't hear from her for several weeks, and finally I called her and said, "What did you think of the book?" She said, "I've been too upset to talk to anyone. In fact, the book upset me so much that I had to go and see a psychiatrist and pay him to listen to me." She said, "I can't believe it. Why, Thomas Wise had asked us to tea a number of times when we were in London. He couldn't possibly have done such a thing." And she said, "I shall never buy another

book in the nineteenth century, and I'm going to get rid of my collection as soon as I can." The *Enquiry* made tremendous waves throughout the world of book collecting and literary criticism; it represented the application of critical bibliography to literature in a way that it had never been applied before. It introduced scientific methods. The paper was analyzed under the microscope, and its evidence was assessed in the light of research into the history of paper manufacturing. The peculiarities of the type had been traced to the printer, and a careful study was made of the typefaces and their introduction into English printing. The book amounted to a highly specialized piece of detective work, which totally destroyed the reputation of a man who was regarded up to that time as the greatest living bibliographer and authority on literature of the nineteenth century. His bibliographies of Landor, of Byron, and a great many others of the outstanding men of letters of the nineteenth century were looked upon as the last word. His catalog of the Ashley Library, which is the library that he assembled, was regarded as a sort of a scriptural edifice. Here he was at the age of eighty, a man who had been given a doctorate at Oxford University and honored with every possible honor within the power of the English bibliographical scholarly world, suddenly exposed by implication, although never by direct statement, as having through the years produced--and then produced the literature which justified them and gave them validity—a number of so-called first editions. Among other things, he had published an edition of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* of Elizabeth Barrett Browning with the date of 1848. Until he had produced this, there had never been any mention in any of the bibliographical or biographical literature of Robert Browning or Elizabeth Barrett Browning of the existence of such an edition. Mind you, all of the forgeries which he published were genuinely the work of the authors to whom they were attributed. What he did was produce editions dated anywhere from two to twenty years earlier than any previously known date of publication, thus creating and validating, through his own bibliographical writings, a number of works of which he had created the entire stock and which he was marketing, some of them directly and some of them through a poor dupe of a bookseller by the name of [Herbert Edwin] Gorfin. Mr. Wise made a very poor attempt to defend himself, refused to justify himself before his friends or any of his own partisans. He remained silent on the whole matter until his death.

GARDNER:

Now for the interesting part, the extraordinarily interesting part.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Now, at the time that the *Enquiry* was published, A.W. Pollard, who was keeper of printed books at the British Museum (as it was called then) , had declared that these could not have been produced by Thomas Wise alone. He said quite bluntly he didn't have the brains for it (or to use his own terms, "He hadn't got the brains for it"--that's what he was reported to have said). The only person who came forward with the suggestion that others might be involved in the fabrication of these publications, their systematic validation/ and then their release upon the public, was a spinster lady by the name of Miss Fannie Ratchford, who was in charge of the Wrenn Library and the Letcher Stark Library at the University of Texas in Austin. I had the good fortune to call upon Miss Ratchford somewhere about 1945, and at that time she had published a little pamphlet called *Between the Lines*, in which she implied, or which she stated with considerable certitude, that H. Buxton Forman and Sir Edmund Gosse were also involved in the publication of these forgeries. Even Graham Pollard and John Carter at that time pooh-poohed her and put her down. They felt that it was impossible that a man as eminent as H. Buxton Forman, one of the high priests of English literary criticism of the time, could have been involved in such nefarious activities. H. Buxton Forman had edited the definitive editions of Keats and Shelley. He was a highly respected man. He had a great library of his own which later was sold at auction and created quite a stir. But evidence to support the allegations of Miss Fannie Ratchford was not available. The chief reason it was not available is that the Buxton Forman family had kept under cover all of the correspondence of Buxton Forman with Wise and all of the papers which had to do with the various publishing activities of Buxton Forman, and would not permit access to them. I must say that when I called on Miss Ratchford in 1945, she said that she had been allowed to look through the letters, and she knew that the evidence was there, but she was not allowed to copy anything. The only other basis she had (one of the other bases, I must say, not the only other basis she had) for her charges with regard to Harry Buxton Forman was the letters of Thomas Wise to Colonel [John Henry] Wrenn. Colonel Wrenn was a Chicago book collector who had formed a substantial collection of seventeenth-century English drama and other English literary works, and who also had

been a very substantial purchaser of Mr. Thomas Wise's forgeries. Thomas Wise had systematically sold Colonel Wrenn a great many works in English literature; sometimes he would sell him two copies of the same work by changing the title, and Wrenn was so gullible and had so much faith in Wise that whatever Wise offered him, he took. Wise systematically gulled him, and the evidence of it was to be found in these letters. It was my privilege to supply Fannie Ratchford with the first letter having to do with the relationship of Thomas Wise to Colonel Wrenn. It was a letter written by Thomas Wise to Irving Way. I haven't got the letter here in front of me. It appears in the volume which was published by Alfred Knopf called the Wise-Wrenn correspondence, or Wise-Wrenn letters, edited by Fannie Ratchford. [*Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn; A Further Enquiry into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers*] Well, finally, in 1972 there appeared a catalog of Sotheby and Company containing the printed books comprising the property of Mrs. Madeleine Buxton Holmes, daughter of the late Maurice Buxton Forman. This collection contained a remarkable group of letters between Buxton Forman and Thomas Wise, and a number of other works, including some of the fabrications, proof copies, layouts, prospectuses and so on, and these were bought in block by Bernard Quaritch. The firm of Quaritch bought them because they were aware of the significance of this material, and they successfully bid on every piece of consequence, so far as I know, relating to the Buxton Forman-Thomas Wise conspiracy. They published a catalog devoted exclusively to the things which they had purchased from the library of M. Buxton Forman, and the introduction to it was written by Graham Pollard. This introduction proceeded to review the history of the exposure of Thomas Wise and the history of the participation of Buxton Forman in the production, validation, and circulation of the various forgeries. Among other things. Pollard showed that there was firm documentary evidence that Wise and Forman were working together as early as February or March of 1890, when they forged William Morris's *The Two Sides of the River* , giving it a date of 1876. And then in 1896, they printed Tennyson's *The Last Tournament* , giving it a date of 1871. In fact. Pollard was able to conclude that there can be little doubt that most of the more important forgeries were joint work and that they were done during the period 1887, 1888, and 1899. Now, of course, Wise went off on his own and continued to produce some of these without consulting with Buxton Forman, but Forman provided the bibliographical

information and the scholarship which could enable Wise to bibliographically validate these publications.

GARDNER:

Before we were talking, you mentioned Edmund Gosse, too.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Edmund Gosse had been mentioned, but the extent of his participation has never been proved, so far as I know. Now, there seems to have also been another conspirator, and that was Buxton Forman's younger brother Alfred, who was a paper manufacturer's agent. He was secretary of the Villon Society, and he supplied the paper for H. Buxton Forman's editions of Shelley and Keats. It seems that he also did the layout for some of these forgeries, and it hardly seems possible that he could have been ignorant of what was going on. About the role of Edmund Gosse I can't produce any further information right now.

GARDNER:

Was the motivation for this entirely financial?

ZEITLIN:

No, and that is an interesting thing. When Graham Pollard was here in 1973 at the Huntington for a short period, he said he wanted to come over to Los Angeles, and they asked him who he wanted to see, and he said, "I want to see Jake Zeitlin." So they delivered him to Dawson's Book Shop, and I went over and got him and took him to my shop, where we sat and talked for several hours. And then I delivered him back to Dawson's Book Shop, so that he could be taken to Pasadena by one of the Dawsons. But Graham Pollard did not tell me this story which I'm about to relate. The story was related to me first by David Randall. The work of producing the *Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth-Century Pamphlets* took a great many years and a great deal of tedious work, some of which must have been extremely boring. The question that occurs to one is. What, besides the motivation for doing something sensational in the way of exposing a noted figure in the world of letters, could have driven Pollard and Carter on? And the story I heard seems to be the sort of thing that would account for it, because there are human

motivations in a great many cases which are not apparent on the surface. Graham Pollard had been a student at Oxford. He had a small collection of books; his interest in book collecting had surfaced very early. He was in one of the colleges at Oxford, and he had been given quarters there. He had a small shelf of the books he'd been able to collect with the little money he'd been able to scrape together. Thomas Wise had been brought to Oxford by a certain Colonel Hutchinson to receive an honorary degree, and the colonel and some of the masters brought Wise up to Pollard's rooms because they wanted to show that they had a young book collector in residence. Wise looked at the books very, well, very disdainfully. Among these was a copy of [George] Crabbe's book called *Inebriety*, of which only two copies were known to exist. One was a complete copy, and the other lacked the title page, and the copy without the title page was the copy that Pollard had been able to acquire. Crabbe had taken great pains to destroy every copy that could be found. Wise looked at this copy with a great show of disgust and said, "Young man, never collect imperfect books." Also, I am told (but I was not told this by Graham Pollard) , he turned to the faculty members that were present, Graham Pollard's own tutors, and said, "It's all rubbish and should be thrown in the dustbin." Now, you can imagine what this young man thought at that moment. It was probably something like, "Someday I will get that so-and-so." And while Graham Pollard never directly admitted this, he did admit to me the facts of Wise having come there, and that he was brought by Hutchinson, and that he did look at this book which had no title page, and said, "Young man, never collect imperfect books." Beyond that he wouldn't go.

GARDNER:

What about Buxton Forman? Why would someone like that get involved in a scheme like this?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it appears that they made a great deal of money out of it.

GARDNER:

So it was that.

ZEITLIN:

There was money involved in the production of these things--I mean a considerable monetary return. According to the records of Gorfin, who had a careful record of the number of copies he was given of Wise's pamphlets to sell, and according to other records which have been consulted. Wise, over the years, made a great deal out of these. There was a time when a copy of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* would sell anywhere from about \$750 or \$1,000 or \$1,500, and Wise very shrewdly fed these into the market slowly, always taking great care to give them bibliographical justification and authentication. He introduced these bibliographical supports into his own bibliographies and into the literature of the times. It was curious, though, that when it came to [John] Ruskin, somebody smelled a rat a long time ago. The first reference to the possibility that some of the Ruskin pamphlets might be fakes was by [Edward Tyas] Cook and [Alexander] Wedderburn, the editors of the standard edition of Ruskin, and they found four pamphlets which they denounced roughly as fakes at the time. [pauses to research date] I'm trying to look up the date of the Cook and Wedderburn bibliography—that was the definitive edition of Ruskin which they edited, and a real great landmark. They denounced these things a long time ago, and then nobody did anything about them, [tape recorder turned off] Cook and Wedderburn published their bibliography of Ruskin in about 1912. They collated the text of all the important editions of Ruskin books and first detected two of these forgeries, as well as providing negative evidence against two more. But this announcement was made in small type in a work of thirty-nine volumes.

GARDNER:

Why is that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, they were too busy. They were concerned with the works of Ruskin in general. They incidentally mentioned that these were spurious. Thomas Wise had himself published a bibliography in prose and verse of John Ruskin in nineteen parts in 1889 to 1893, and then there was an edition first in 1878, a bibliography on Ruskin—although Cook and Wedderburn, as early as 1903, had detected these things as forgeries, and no notice was taken of this exposure. And thus it was [that] there were other whispers. A few other people had their suspicions, but no one had gathered together all of the

evidence until John Carter and Graham Pollard set to work and exposed Mr. Wise.

GARDNER:

How common are copies of the Wise books these days?

ZEITLIN:

Well, they're all rather scarce, and they're commencing to bring substantial prices on their own.

GARDNER:

As curiosities?

ZEITLIN:

No. Some people collect forgeries, and everybody would like to have something of the Wise forgeries just to show. This man Wise was very prolific; he published a tremendous amount of stuff, and, of course, there's been a substantial amount of literature published about the forgeries since then. There was another thing that Wise was guilty of which I think is even more dastardly than his production of these forgeries and validation of them in these bibliographies. He went to the British Museum from time to time, and being the great Thomas Wise, no one ever bothered to look in his briefcase. He would call out books, seventeenth-century quartos, and take out of them pages of books of which he had copies that lacked these pages. He mutilated the British Museum copies in order to perfect his own. After the exposure of Wise in 1934, and after Wise died and the British Museum acquired the Ashley Library, which was indeed a great collection of books, they started to look through their own copies of certain books which were in their library. Then they looked at the books in the Ashley Library, and they found that in a number of cases, the pages were missing, and leaves from their own copies could be found in the copies that were in the Ashley Library. They fitted in such a way that there could be no doubt. It was also discovered that the University of Texas, through the Wrenn purchases, had a number of books which had been perfected by Mr. Thomas Wise by mutilating British Museum copies, and no one will ever know the amount of damage that he did to books in the British Museum by stealing pages from them. But certainly it's known

that he did a lot of it. So it's obvious that he was a fabulous rascal. I was fortunate in knowing John Carter over many years. He and I were known as "the other Jakes": whenever one meant to speak of John, they would say "Jake," and then they would say "the other Jake." And we always addressed each other as Jake and signed the letters Jake, so we had fun. He was a very elegant man and a man of great taste and a great ornament to the book world. He had grown up working in bookshops; he'd gone to Eton College and then gone to Cambridge. Among other things, he had formed a great friendship with A.E. Housman and collected Housman's books and did the bibliography of Housman. He came over to the United States when he was quite young, and first he worked for Elkin Mathews, which was a remarkable shop, a school for great bookmen. Among others, there was Percy Muir. But John Carter was the other man besides Percy Muir who was really in the first rank of bookmen of his times. He went to work for Scribner's rare-book department; he remained there for a while, then went back to England and became Scribner's English representative. He and Percy Muir would buy on the English market and on the Continent a great many of the important books which were sent over to Scribner's and sold by David Randall. And that included the Schukberg Gutenberg Bible. John Carter came here to Southern California; he visited me here in this house, and we became friends and over the years exchanged a considerable amount of correspondence. I would see him when I went to London, and I'm glad to say that I called on him at his home when he was in his last illness, and had a very good, heartwarming conversation with him. The people who came with me were Warren Howell and Kenneth Nebenzahl, both really fine bookmen. It was interesting to notice that these young men were so busy telling John Carter about their exploits that they didn't have time to ask him about himself, or how he felt, or to give him an opportunity to express his own thoughts. I sat there very silent most of the time, thinking how much more worthwhile it would have been if we had all listened to him.

GARDNER:

Well, we're just about at the end of this - shall we stop?

**1.18. TAPE NUMBER: X, Side Two
(January 17, 1978 and February 14, 1978)**

GARDNER:

Continue with your thoughts.

ZEITLIN:

I will begin all over again by saying that I was fortunate to live in the period of a whole school of bookmen who added great luster to bookselling; they included men like David Randall, who came up in the New York bookselling school, having worked for G.A. Baker & Company under a man by the name of Harzof, who seems to have been a great legend among bookmen and who educated many of the young men of the twenties. There was Jake Blanck, who went to work for Merle Johnson and helped produce the Merle Johnson First Editions of American literature, and later became the editor and chief producer of the bibliography of American literature, which is continuing now; and Edward Lazare, later editor of *American Book-Prices Current*; and there were John Van Kohn and Mike Papantonio, who founded the Seven Gables Bookshop. Some of these men were products of Byrne Hackett of the Brick Row Book Shop. There was in England the greatest of them all—Percy Muir, who, I'm very grateful to say, is still living and flourishing. And there was John Carter. All these were men who had the ability to write and speak. They were concerned about bibliographical matters. They were, I think, the first generation of American and English bookmen who added the touch of professionalism which bookselling needed in order to take us all out of the class of back-door tradesmen. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Well, it already had that in Europe.

ZEITLIN:

It already had that in Europe; but these were the men, primarily, who, I think, provided the talent, the brilliance, the literacy, and the innate dignity which elevated bookselling in America and left a great tradition. There were, of course, men like David Magee in San Francisco, who did the same thing for the West Coast. Now we have a new generation of young bookmen who, I think, will also make important contributions, but none, I think, for me at least, that have the flavor of dash and enthusiasm and adventurousness (and inventiveness in creating new fields of collecting) that some of these men had.

GARDNER:

When did you make your first contacts with some of them? I don't mean simply in the sense of letters back and forth . . .

ZEITLIN:

You mean actually meeting? Well, I think it must have been in 1936 or 1937 that Dave Randall and Eddie Lazare, the man who for many years edited and published *American Book-Prices Current*, came out here and came to see me. I think it must have been somewhere in the forties that I first met John Carter, and it must have been somewhere in the early forties that I met John Van Kohn. It was not until the late forties that I went to New York and met Jake Blanck and Mike Papantonio and some of the other bookmen who were prominent in the East. I also had the opportunity to meet some of the librarians who really adorned the world of book collecting and bibliography, and foremost among those were certainly Freddy Adams of the Morgan Library and Ed Wolf of the Library Company of Philadelphia. All of these people have been my teachers and my friends, and I owe very much to them.

GARDNER:

Shall we stop here?

FEBRUARY 14, 1978

GARDNER:

You have in your hand a file from your archive of the Southern California Antiquarian Booksellers. Were you ever a member of the Southern California Booksellers, not the Antiquarians?

ZEITLIN:

Well, as well as I can remember, the Southern California Booksellers Association was formed somewhere around 1927, early in the year. And the first activity that the Southern California Booksellers Association entered into was a bookfair at the Los Angeles Public Library. Somewhere in my files, I have a letterhead of that bookfair, and the board of that bookfair really constituted the founding board of the Southern California chapter, or affiliate association, of the American Booksellers Association. The president was Leslie Hood, and

the vice-president was, I believe, Odo Staade. Let me go back and say that Leslie Hood was the manager of Vroman's in Pasadena. He was a very energetic man, and he was tremendously interested in the affairs of the booksellers as a whole, and was a natural leader. Odo Staade was the manager and later owner of the Hollywood Bookshop on Hollywood Boulevard near Highland, right across from the old Hollywood Hotel. I first met him when I came here in 1925. And the secretary-treasurer was June Cleveland, who was manager of Bullock's book department. She may have been treasurer, and I was secretary, as well as I remember. My name appears on the letterhead, so I think that the offices were divided up something like that. Although I never was active in the Southern California Booksellers Association as such, I was involved in the founding of the original affiliate group.

GARDNER:

It sort of kept reconstituting itself, didn't it? Disappearing and coming back in?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it did. It went through various formats. but I never identified too much with the new-book sellers, and they, in turn, I don't think were very much interested in encouraging me as a member. I was critical of the American Booksellers Association because I felt they did not exert enough pressure on the publishers in several areas. The American Booksellers Association was actually a child of the publishers association and therefore was of course dictated to in its policy by the publishers association. My criticisms were very vocal. They were, number one, that the publishers hadn't done enough to protect the local booksellers or cooperate with them. They used to send their sales representatives out to sell direct to the local libraries, and I felt that this was cutting off one of the chief means of support of the local booksellers. And in the second place, they, the publishers, had a murderous remainder policy and still continue to have. A bookseller who stocks up on any good publisher's book may find himself, in a very short time, even as little as six months from the time of publication, holding a book which has been remaindered by the publishers. Smaller booksellers, especially, suffered greatly from this policy. The larger booksellers were always warned in advance and given an opportunity to return books which were being remaindered. But the small booksellers, so far as I know, were never given any opportunity to return the

books, so they found themselves holding books in the twenty-five dollar to fifty dollar class which had been remaindered at five dollars to ten dollars. So far as I could tell, the American Booksellers Association never took a strong stand with regard to these two things, as well as the cooperation of the publishers with the book clubs. Several of the publishers, such as Doubleday, and Dodd Mead, and Macmillan, appeared to me to have a strong financial interest in the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild, so that a great many of our regular local customers were drained off from us by the book clubs. The book club editions, which were contracted with the publishers, came out simultaneously with the regular publication and very often cut off our sales. Well, I realize that you cannot stand in the way of some of these economic injustices, but these were some of my reasons for never taking an active part as a member of the American Booksellers Association.

GARDNER:

In fact, one of the times that the Booksellers Association really did get organized and going here was the fight for a returns policy for the new booksellers. The booksellers finally did band together, because they acknowledged that there was an injustice being done.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it was a quick way to bankruptcy--handling new books --and the publishers themselves, I think, had to realize sooner or later that if they wanted retail outlets, they had to help them stay in business. They couldn't sabotage them by supporting book clubs, by selling direct to libraries, and by their destructive remaindering methods.

GARDNER:

Now, it's interesting that, though obviously the local antiquarian booksellers were great friends for a long time and all knew one another, nonetheless, it wasn't until 1949, according to the records that we have, that there was any formal organization.

ZEITLIN:

Well, remember there was no formal national antiquarian bookseller's association until very nearly that time. If I can look at this file there, I think we

can tell just about when the national association was formed, and it was after that was formed. There are the by-laws. It has the date of incorporation there.

GARDNER:

February 1950 is what it says.

ZEITLIN:

In that case, it seems that the Southern California Antiquarian Booksellers Association was actually formed in 1949, which preceded the formation of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America.

GARDNER:

Yes, they say the planning stages must have been virtually simultaneous.

ZEITLIN:

As in all things, Ernest Dawson was a great leader, and I think we owe it to him more than to anyone else that we formed an antiquarian booksellers association here early in 1949.

GARDNER:

What was his inspiration for it?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it was just the idea that we got together, and we thought that it would be valuable for all of us to have an organization where we could exchange ideas, where we could sponsor various activities such as lectures and courses in antiquarian books and book collecting, and we could exchange credit information and deal with complaints against the members of the trade and so on. So that we actually, as far as I can remember, met first on May 11, 1949. The members present consisted of both members of the firm of Bennett and Marshall, the Pickwick Book Shop, Charles Yale, Kurt Schwarz, myself, and Josephine. There were eight representatives of Dawson's Book Shop. Kurt Merlander was present, Harry Levinson, John Valentine, M.J. Royer, Ben Epstein of the Argonaut Book Shop, two people representing Arthur H. Clark Company, Mr. [Mac] Gordon of the Satyr Book Shop, Claremont Book and Art Shop. Tecolote Bookshop of Santa Barbara apparently was not present; the Cambridge Bookshop, Charles Salzman was present. Our guests included

Lawrence Powell, Robert Vosper, Winifred Myers of London, Willis Kerr of Claremont, Bob Schad of Huntington Library, Dr. Lewis [Francis] Stieg of use.

GARDNER:

The name I have down for the Claremont Book and Art Shop, by the way, is Samuel Brier.

ZEITLIN:

Samuel Brier is correct, and a very nice man. And then, also present was Bob Campbell of Campbell's Book Store . . .

GARDNER:

. . . who at the time would have just been through being president of ABA, I would guess. Wasn't that right after the war?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I don't know. This was 1949. There was also Bob Ritter (I don't remember what bookshop he represented) , Philip Brown of Yale and Brown, Justin Turner, I. [Isaac] E. Chadwick (who was a very effective organizing force), Mr. Nicholas Kovach, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gottlieb, and a Mr. Kenke (whom I do not recognize). In all, there were forty-three members or prospective members of the association, and nine guests. Assumedly the purpose was to welcome Miss Winifred Myers of London, who was the vice-president of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of England. I drew up the agenda for the meeting, but it was actually called to order by Glen Dawson. A report was delivered on a temporary organizing committee, and a motion was made to form a permanent organization. The officers to form the permanent organization were nominated immediately, and, following that, the guests were introduced by myself--no, no, excuse me, the first introduction of Winifred Myers was made by Kurt Schwarz, followed by her speech. Then I introduced Larry Powell, and that was followed by his speech. At that meeting, a cable of greetings from the International Antiquarian Booksellers Association of London, signed by Dudley Massey, was read.

GARDNER:

Now, this is a strange and off-the-wall question, Do you recall any of this without looking at the papers and the archive?

ZEITLIN:

I recall these details very vaguely. We drew up a list of prospective members, we invited a number of guests, and we just went to work. I think the moving committee was Glen Dawson and I.E. Chadwick, John Valentine, and myself. We then met on July 18th at the home of Robert Bennett and Richard Marshall. The minutes have these things reversed. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Who wrote the minutes?

ZEITLIN:

I was the secretary, and I wrote the minutes, [laughter] And it appears that by that time Charles Yale had become regional vice-president of the national Antiquarian Booksellers Association, and in his absence the meeting was opened and presided over by Glen Dawson. Muir Dawson reported that he'd been to New York and that our chapter was regarded as a sort of a pilot group. It was the first regional group to be formed, and its example was used to set the pattern for other chapters.

GARDNER:

It was really a pioneering group.

ZEITLIN:

Yes it was.

GARDNER:

Were there any issues—this of course is a test of your memory as much as of the archive--were there any issues that were really being dealt with at that time, or was it. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

Well, we felt that we had the need for an auction house, so we attempted to set up an auction . . .

GARDNER:

I have that, by the way.

ZEITLIN:

. . . and set up rules for them. It was decided that we hold a series of three auctions at the Ames Gallery.

GARDNER:

I have one of them that I forgot to put in. This is the September 1949 auction.

ZEITLIN:

And an auction was actually held in September, 1949; a catalog was issued. It was held in the Ames Gallery and in conjunction with it. It seemed to have done pretty well, considering the times, although we'd all love to buy the books at the prices which they brought then. [laughter] It seemed like the highest price realized was something like \$175 and \$180.

GARDNER:

For what sort of things?

ZEITLIN:

Well, \$175 for the Boswell papers published at Yale and \$180 for the first edition of [Alain Rene] Lesage's [*L'Histoire de*] *Gil Blas* [*de Santillane*]. The Boswell papers--I don't know who the buyer of those was, but the *Gil Blas* was purchased by me, it seems here, for \$180. There were, in all, 295 items in the sale. I have no total of what was realized; however, this sale was one of the outcomes of the meeting. I think, in addition, this was the main action taken at the July 18, 1949 meeting, which was one of the earliest to be held. The association also early in 1950 participated in a centennial exhibition. They formed an exhibition of material illustrating 100 years of California statehood, and this was exhibited in connection with the meeting of the California Library Association in Los Angeles. All of the members of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association contributed various things to be exhibited, which were either the property of some of the members or were published by some of the members. I notice that, among other things, there was a copy of *A Flower from the Golden Land* by Ludwig Louis Salvator.

GARDNER:

Why don't you take out the catalog, because the rest of it's in order, or should be.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it seems to me that there is a duplication of one page.

GARDNER:

Oh, there are going to be lots of duplications. There are many copies.

ZEITLIN:

Beginning, then, in 1949, we very soon affiliated with the national association. The Southern California group at that time consisted of Regional Vice-President Charles Yale; a secretary (which was myself); and a treasurer, Harry Levinson. A list of the membership of the association at that time is among the archives. The next meeting was August 5, 1948. We met a lot more frequently then than we do now. We were less busy then--anyway, less busy than we are now. And in August 5, 1949, we seemed to have formulated a policy with regard to auctions; what amount we were going to allow for the gallery. That included 15 percent for the auction gallery and two dollars per item for cataloging.

GARDNER:

Do you find anywhere on there, or do you recall what the money was being raised for?

ZEITLIN:

Well, we had a balance of forty-three dollars on hand, which didn't make it possible to raise the money for very much. However, we did raise the money for participating as much as possible in the various fairs and public activities. We, of course, had to underwrite some of the auctions and pay for the advertising, and we also attempted to deal with the problems of brokerage and customs. There was a certain amount of money allocated for stationery. The dues were three dollars a year and didn't produce very much.

GARDNER:

One thing I'd like to do is take that early roster and go through some of the people.

ZEITLIN:

Well, here are the people present August 5th. There was Maxwell Hunley, who still is in business in Pasadena, an outstanding dealer in American first editions and children's books. He had worked for a stockbroker. On Saturday afternoons in 1926 and 1927, Max Hunley and I used to go around and scout various bookshops to see what sleepers we could pick up. Kurt Schwarz-- whose father and mother had run an outstanding bookshop in Vienna and who had to leave after the Anschluss; moved to Shanghai. He was interned there, and following his internment, came to California and began his business jointly with Ernest Gottlieb. But they later separated.

GARDNER:

What sort of specialization?

ZEITLIN:

Well, in books having to do with the Orient and Oriental art--of which Kurt Schwarz knew a great deal--and of course, in German-language books. Now, there was N.A. Kovach, who has remained in Southern California and is still operating, who very soon started specializing in periodicals. Mr. Kovach was one of our earliest members to resign. He was a member of our first grievance committee, and when the grievance committee met for the first time to consider grievances of collectors and librarians, all of the complaints were against Mr. Kovach. Kovach didn't wait to hear the complaints, and he offered his resignation. There was Charles Philip Yale, the son of Charles Yale. Charles Philip Yale continued the business founded by his father, and later joined with Philip Brown. They ran a very good rare-book business in Pasadena for a number of years. Roman Novins--I cannot remember who he was. It just doesn't come back to me. M.J. Royer, of course, all of us know--Mel Royer, who was a man of very fine taste, one of the most dedicated members the association had, and who specialized in art books. He also handled prints and small paintings and a few antiquities and artifacts. He's still alive, I'm glad to say. Walter Neuman, who was a German refugee, specialized in maps and prints and later went back to Europe. Richard Marshall of the firm of Bennett and Marshall, who had started up in the Bay Area and came down here, worked for Holmes Book Company, as well as I remember, and for Ernest Dawson, and later joined forces with Bob Bennett to form Bennett and

Marshall. They opened on Pearl Harbor Day, [laughter] which was not the best time to start, but they developed into a very important business. Eugene Bechtold, who specialized in books having to do with the history of the labor movement and radical literature--he never had a bookshop [but] did business from his home, [and] he really built an outstanding reputation in this field, both locally and nationally. He is still living but has retired from the book business for some time. Philip S. Brown, who came out to California from Minnesota in the thirties together with Karl Zamboni; he worked for a while for Bunster Creeley of the Abbey Book Shop on West Sixth Street and then went over to Pasadena and joined up with Philip Yale in operating Yale and Brown. His wife, Helen Brown, was a very fine cook and caterer, and through her Philip Brown became very much interested in cookery, and is now editor of Jurgensen's bulletin and teaches a number of courses in gourmet cooking and gastronomy. And Robert Bennett, who was the partner of Richard Marshall, had worked in Berkeley in a department store there (I've forgotten the name; it had an outstanding book department in its day), later came down here, worked for Dawson and joined forces with Richard Marshall and died about two years ago. Ernest Gottlieb, who was a German refugee and formed a book business in Beverly Hills together with Kurt Schwarz; he specialized in music, published several reprints of music [and] was also, at one time, a very fine portrait photographer. He died some fifteen years ago. And Harry Levinson, who had his beginning in the book business in New York about fifty years ago, had, I think it was, the Caxton Bookshop there for a number of years, came out to California in something like 1942 and has had a distinguished career in bookselling since then. He closed his bookshop in Beverly Hills some three or four years ago and now conducts business from his home. Muir Dawson, the younger son of Ernest Dawson, who specializes in fine printing and calligraphy and is a very fine inheritor of the tradition of his father. And his partner. Glen Dawson, who is the manager of Dawson's Book Shop and specialized in Californiana, as well as publishing books--many reprints and many original publications having to do with California history. And myself. In any event, we succeeded in forming an organization, we succeeded in holding at least one successful auction, and we continued to meet, from that time on, quite regularly. On October 5, 1949, we met at the home of Charles Yale in Altadena, and there was a very substantial attendance—about twenty-one members present. At that time we received the first

application for membership outside the area, and that was from H.H. Evans of San Francisco. And we at that time expressed the hope that a Northern California chapter would be formed. The treasurer's report on that occasion was to the effect that the gross sales at the auction were \$7,038.50. The returns to consignor members after deducting commissions and expenses was \$5,886.66. In all, after deduction of all expenses, the balance in our treasury consisted of \$21.91 and refunds of \$6 from New York, so that our total funds were \$27.

GARDNER:

This was a real shoestring organization.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it was indeed a shoestring organization, but that seemed to be adequate for the purpose. In fact, successful organizations should not have any money left over; they should always be in the red a little bit. It was then decided that management of future sales of the book auctions be turned over to Harry Levinson, and sometime thereafter Harry Levinson did start a series of book auctions. We also set up an exhibition committee for the purpose of sending out traveling exhibitions of rare books and a lecture series. Glen Dawson and I were instructed to constitute a committee to prepare a plan for the Southern California series of lectures on book collecting, and were instructed to make arrangements with Miss Ellen Shaffer for these to be carried out under the auspices of University of California Extension Division. Ellen Shaffer took over this project and carried it through very successfully, and that was the beginning of a series of book lectures which have continued until this day. The series of lectures was announced on November 11th, and they were planned as a series of eight lectures to continue through until May 2nd. Among the speakers who participated were Robert Schad of the Huntington Library, Lawrence Clark Powell of UCLA, J. Gregg Layne, a notable California collector of his day, and Ward Ritchie. We applied to Charles Boyer, who at that time operated what he called the French Institute on La Cienega Boulevard, for permission to hold the lectures at his institute. It was a very attractive place that he occupied, and he had a very fine library of French books. And we were allowed to meet there. We paid for the services of an assistant who opened it up, and that was the beginning of this series.

GARDNER:

Ernest Dawson was very active at this beginning.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, Ernest Dawson was always very active.

GARDNER:

Wasn't he very old by this time?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think we're really talking about Glen Dawson.

GARDNER:

Oh, really?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, Ernest Dawson I don't think . . .

GARDNER:

Because he was down as one of the founders when you read about it.

ZEITLIN:

Well, he was one of the founders, but I don't think he survived very long after that. In any event, we met again in November at the Savoy Hotel and conducted business. It was at that time that we undertook the "One Hundred Years of California Statehood" exhibition, and at that time, we were invited to participate by the California Library Association in the centennial meeting of the California Library Association in Sacramento.

**1.19. TAPE NUMBER: XI, Side One
(February 14, 1978)**

ZEITLIN:

I was discussing the meeting of November 17, 1949, held at the Savoy Hotel, which was on West Sixth Street in Los Angeles. At that time the most important matters of business were the report of the exhibition committee, at

which time it was decided to prepare this exhibition called "One Hundred Years of California Statehood," and this was to be circulated among smaller California libraries. The centennial meeting was announced of the California Library Association under the presidency of Lawrence Clark Powell. That was to be held in June of 1950, and the theme of the meeting would be "One Hundred Years of Librarianship, Publishing, and Bookselling in California." We were invited to participate; take exhibition space; furnish keepsakes, catalogs, and literature; and provide a speaker for the program. I was designated to be the speaker for that program and did participate in it. Ellen Shaffer also reported that the University of California had agreed to the course of lectures and that eight lectures were scheduled. The speakers were to be Lawrence Clark Powell, Robert Schad, Harry Levinson, J. Gregg Layne, Ward Ritchie, and Jake Zeitlin. Then Harry Levinson reported that he was negotiating for a place of business in Beverly Hills. Shortly thereafter, he did open up a bookshop there. It was his intention to combine a bookshop and auction gallery, and he hoped to hold the next auction the third week in January.

GARDNER:

Where had he been before Beverly Hills?

ZEITLIN:

He had done business from his home since coming out from New York. It was also decided that a cooperative advertisement was to be placed in the [*Los Angeles*] *Daily News* Christmas issue, and Harry Levinson announced that we had taken space for an advertisement in the *United States Cumulative Book Auction Records* and in the *Antiquarian Bookman* permanent want list. And what is, I think, of special note is that on this occasion we received word that an organizing meeting for the Northern California chapter would be held at Dave Magee 's bookshop on December 8th, thus marking the beginning of the Northern California chapter. On December 24, 1949, it was decided to put out a directory of the antiquarian booksellers in this region, and that was the beginning of the Antiquarian Booksellers Directory , which has continued to be produced at regular intervals until this time. The questionnaires were sent out by Ellen Shaffer, and a directory was prepared by her and Glen Dawson. Our next meeting was as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Larson and Nick Kovach at the

Gung Ho Chinese Restaurant, [laughter] 5530 Hollywood Boulevard. There is a photograph in existence of the people present at that meeting.

GARDNER:

Do you have one?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I have a photograph, and I think it's reproduced in the slide show which Muir Dawson showed. There were, I'd say, something like about thirty-five members and guests present at that meeting, and Glen Dawson presided. At that meeting Harry Levinson reported that he was going to hold a book auction on February 26 of 1950, and a later one in March of the same year. Ellen Shaffer reported that the lecture series was now an established reality and that the French Foundation at 411 North La Cienega Boulevard had agreed to make their hall available for us at a very reasonable charge. The funds for paying for the rental, which was thirty-five dollars a meeting, were in part contributed by the organization, and in part contributed by the University of California Extension, and part contributed by myself in the form of a return of the fee that I was to receive. [laughter] The minutes of that meeting concluded with a very elaborate menu of Chinese food served on this occasion—in all, about eleven items.

GARDNER:

A memorable evening was had by all. [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

Yes, a memorable evening indeed. It seemed that the next meeting of the antiquarian booksellers involved a banquet, and the cost of the banquet was \$193, of which cash received was \$178.50, leaving us in the red for \$16.50. I'm sure that deficit was made up in one way or another. [tape recorder turned off] On January 2, 1950, the booksellers met again at Harry Levinson's bookshop with a considerable number of members present, and the guest member of the national association, Mr. Philip Rosenbach, brother of Dr. Rosenbach of Philadelphia. Charles Yale presided. Harry Levinson, as treasurer, reported that there was a current balance of \$232.71 in the treasury.

GARDNER:

Wonderful. He was a good treasurer.

ZEITLIN:

A lot of progress was made. The cost of the rental of the hall for the French Institute for the fine-printing and rare-books lectures was discussed. There was a deficiency of fifty dollars; and various members, including Dawson's Book Shop, Pickwick Book Shop, Max Hunley, Harry Levinson, Charles Yale, Philip Rosenbach, and myself made up a total of eighty dollars in all, being the sum necessary to take care of all the additional expenses. On that occasion, Louis Epstein made the first report of the grievance committee. The exhibition, under our auspices, had now advanced to the point that an eight-page catalog had been prepared and printed, and that the first of the exhibitions was to be held at Pasadena Junior College. Glen Dawson, who by then was a member of the National Board of Governors of the association, reported that finally a constitution for the national association was confirmed and that the association voted to become a part of the International League of Booksellers. This, of course, made us participants in the activities not only of the local association but in the national association and of the international association. The meeting then was introduced to Philip Rosenbach, and he was made an honorary member of the local group. This sort of shows the step-by-step development of the association. The first general bulletin of the Southern California chapter was published, including a directory of the members and their real names and addresses. Our farthest northern directory at that time appears to have been John and Jane Wilgress of Monterey, California. We did have one San Diego member-- the Book Center--and the farthest east member was the Claremont Book and Art Shop in Claremont and Musicana Unlimited of Pomona.

GARDNER:

Who was that? That doesn't sound familiar.

ZEITLIN:

I don't know who they were.

GARDNER:

Could I see that roster?

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

Can I go back and ask you about some of these people while you're thumbing through?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, certainly.

GARDNER:

Some of them I know the answers, some of them I don't. Abbey Book Shop at that time--that was no longer Bunster Greeley, was it?

ZEITLIN:

I don't know who succeeded Bunster Greeley, but, as I remember, I thought he was still a member.

GARDNER:

Was he, at that point?

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

The Argonaut was Ben Epstein.

ZEITLIN:

The Argonaut was Ben Epstein, and he was on Sixth Street. That was really a subsidiary of the . . .

GARDNER:

. . . Pickwick.

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

Clare R. Bill—that's a name I don't remember at all.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Clare Bill began her bookselling career at Bullock's in 1926 or '27—no, in 1925 or 1926, about the same time that I was working there in the book department. She later became a specialist in bookplates, wrote several books about bookplates, ran a succession of small book and antique shops down here, cataloged the Morgan Collection in Santa Barbara (which I think was given to Harvard) , and later moved up to Northern California, where she still remains and is publishing books about bookplates and dealing in books and bookplates.

GARDNER:

Did we talk about John Q. Burch? I don't think so.

ZEITLIN:

John Q. Burch and his wife were a very fine old couple who turned their hobby, which was shells, into a very successful business in their later years; and along with shells, they dealt in books about shells. They retired from the book business, oh, some fifteen years ago, I think; and I don't know whether they're still living or not. But they were a very amiable pair of people who had this business dealing mainly in books about shells (although they did include other natural history) and in rare shells. They were a wonderful example of people who made their hobby and their business one and the same.

GARDNER:

I don't think we've talked about Arthur H. Clark.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Arthur H. Clark Company, in terms of the beginnings--the people of Southern California with the earliest history in the book business—certainly comes first because he began as an apprentice in England before the turn of the century. He came to New York (I think he worked for American Art Galleries for some time), then he moved to Cleveland, and he started a business specializing in American historical literature. Western Americana and

other Americana, and publishing. He built up a very substantial business; in fact, it was the outstanding specialty-book publishing business in the field. He got out regular catalogs, a great many of them over the years, of books on American historical subjects. And sometime around 1940, I think, he moved his entire stock to Glendale, California, and started a new business there. The business continued under the management of Mr. Gallagher and his son Arthur H. Clark, Jr. Now the son of Arthur H. Clark is involved. They've done a lot of excellent western-book publishing.

GARDNER:

Dale's Bookazine?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Harry Dale came from Indianapolis, Indiana. He was sort of a diamond in the rough. He had a great talent for merchandising, and his shop was filled with signs. There was always a spirit of activity in his bookshop. However, the book business was too slow for him after a while, and he went into the record business. What finally happened to him I don't know, because I think his spirit of enterprise outran his accounting, [laughter] and I'm afraid he got into some financial trouble and closed his business and moved away from here. But I don't know. ... I'm sure he's not alive still.

GARDNER:

Lee Freeson?

ZEITLIN:

Lee Freeson was interested in the ballet and was associated with the New York theater for many years. He was married to a very fine dancer [Carmelita Maracci] . She was outstanding in her day. And Lee became interested in books having to do primarily with the dance. From that he developed a substantial business in books on the ballet and the theater, and has remained in business, without a bookshop—selling entirely from his home.

GARDNER:

International Bookfinders is Dick Mohr, isn't it?

ZEITLIN:

International Bookfinders is Dick Mohr, which is an out-of-print search business, doing business from his home in Pacific Palisades--entirely a mail-order business.

GARDNER:

You mentioned Kurt Merlander before as one of the founders, but I don't think you've talked about him.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Kurt Merlander worked for Stanley Rose Bookshop at one time. He also worked for me. He was a refugee from Germany. He was a specialist in Spanish, knew a great deal about Spanish literature and ultimately went into business for himself, dealing in books mainly about Hispanica, and has continued to conduct a mail-order business. I don't know how much he's doing now—he's probably retired--but he was quite successful dealing only in Hispanica.

GARDNER:

I think that about covers my list. I think you've talked about the rest. Let me put this back in the file and go on.

ZEITLIN:

Now, I find here the announcement of the University Extension of a series of eight lectures which was conducted. Curiously enough, it doesn't give a year; it says Tuesday evening from eight o'clock to ten o'clock, beginning March 7th—I think that must have been 1950—at the French Research Foundation on 499 North La Cienega Boulevard. The fee was ten dollars for the entire course, and the speakers included Lawrence Clark Powell on some great California book collectors, J. Gregg Layne on Californiana, Ward Ritchie on fine printing, Margaret Lecky on bindings, Kenneth Foster of Pomona College on Oriental books, myself on early scientific books, Paul Jordan-Smith on collecting odd books, and Robert Schad on Henry E. Huntington—the collector and his library. In addition to that, in the same location in the folder is a very amusing little folded brochure (quite obviously the work of William Cheney, the founder and genius of the Auk Press), which was issued by the downtown members of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America-- Abbey Book

Shop, Argonaut Book Shop, Bennett and Marshall, and Dawson's Book Shop—inviting their guests to a dinner meeting of the ABAA on June 16, 1950. I think I have referred to the minutes of that meeting--no, we haven't gotten to that point yet. But here is the May 17, 1950 [meeting], and that was held at Max Hunley's bookshop with a very substantial membership present, including Mrs. Sara Kamen of the Kamen Bookshop, New York, and Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Burch. At that meeting Lee Freeson (who styled himself "Trader at Large in Fine Books--by Appointment Only") was elected to membership, and a slate of officers was nominated and so on, the usual' thing. Both the nominations and the elections were held on the same evening, and Mr. Glen Dawson reported that the lecture series had been a great success. And on the sixteenth of June, the meeting to which the members had been invited on the previous pamphlet was held at the Savoy Hotel with large attendance. Practically every member of the association was present with a lot of members of their staff and also Mr. and Mrs. Powell; H. Richard and Margot Archer; Dr. Lewis Stieg; Robert Schad; Miss Lucille Miller, who was the librarian for Mrs. E.L. Doheny. The election of members was finally completed at that meeting, and arrangements were made for a booth of the California Library Association at the Sacramento convention. August of 1950: the bylaws were finally discussed and approved. Group insurance, which was a matter of continuous discussion for the members over a period of a number of years, was discussed; and nobody has, even to this date, been able to work out a satisfactory plan.

GARDNER:

Is that so? I notice later on you were very active in trying to set something up.

ZEITLIN:

Well, we attempted a number of times, but nothing was actually effected. The bylaws were at that time presented for discussion, and a draft of them accompanied the minutes. Later in that month, on August 29, 1950, a dinner was held honoring Carl Kup-- curator of the Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library—a very distinguished, elegant gentleman, who is indeed one of the great men in the world of rare books. He was then just on the way up in what was to be one of the outstanding careers among bookmen. The notice of the meeting was signed by M.J. Royer as secretary and Louis Epstein as president.

GARDNER:

Maybe this would be a good moment to recapitulate something about Louis, because it's been a long time since the early days in the 1920s when the two of you were down on Sixth Street.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Louis and I were friends from the very beginning, when I walked into his shop--I think it was in 1926—and he had opened the . . .

GARDNER:

The Acadia, wasn't it?

ZEITLIN:

. . . Acadia Book Shop on West Sixth Street. Later on Louis himself said that he had taken the name from Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, [laughter] which, of course, was not the poem.

GARDNER:

Right author, wrong poem.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, right author, wrong poem. It's strange that the man who chose the name of his bookshop didn't remember the source of the name. I was much amused, but I didn't correct him in print; I merely took a jab at him in private. It seemed that he had bought a bookshop in Long Beach first, and as is the case with lots of people who've later been successful in the book business, he didn't know anything about bookselling. He discovered that the shelves were full of junk, and that there was no hope for what he had. He succeeded in selling it out for enough to get out from under. He came down to Los Angeles and rented a space on West Sixth Street and started over again. Louis has a very high degree of intelligence, and so it didn't take him long to learn what was desirable in the way of books and what was not desirable and salable, so that he filled his shop with a rather choice selection of books. He didn't know much about the value of these books; Max Hunley and I took a lot of good sleepers off his shelves before we finally tried to educate him a little bit. [laughter] Louis has a great talent for winning friends, and before long, a lot of people

were coming in and out of his shop. He's also a very good businessman, so that even if his books were cheap, he was making a good profit out of them, because he knew how and where to buy them. And one day two brothers . . .

GARDNER:

Howey ...

ZEITLIN:

. . . Howey brothers . . . came in and looked it over and asked him how much he wanted for his business. He took a look around and, quite off the top of his head, said, "\$1,600." They came back and looked around and said, "We'll take it." Ralph Howey was the one who chose to stay in the shop and run the business. The [other] brother Richard Howey, was interested in economics and teaching economics, and later went to the University of Kansas; became head of the department and pursued his interest in books to the point where he formed one of the outstanding collections in the history of economics at the University of Kansas. But Ralph Howey was a very quiet man--no salesmanship at all about him, but a great deal of quiet persistence and intelligence. He very soon got rid of the general run-of-the-mill secondhand books and was filling the shelves with better books, mainly in the field of English literature. He was buying out of English catalogs and buying libraries, and before long, he had really fine books there. I bought a good many important first editions of English literature from him, including a copy of the first edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the original boards. It was very much to my sorrow and his regret that we later discovered that this copy had been doctored and that it was not all that it was represented to be. It was the copy which I sold Frank Hogan that turned out to be a made-up copy. Well, I think it was agreed at the time of the sale that Louis would not enter into the book business again for something like one year. So he found himself without anything to do but still obsessed by books, and he started traveling around to places like the Goodwill and the various thriftshop organizations. He became very well acquainted with the people who managed these shops and with the days when it was best to be there, and he was soon accumulating a stock of books in his house. In 1928, when I opened my shop, he still didn't have a shop of his own, and he lent me some books to put on my shelves and fill out my empty spaces. He says that I refused to return to him when he wanted

them any of the books that were unsold, [laughter] but his memory and mine do not exactly jibe. In any event, it was very helpful to me, and it was very kind of him to lend me part of the beginnings of my stock. He and I made a trip in 1927 to Santa Barbara, and we had told ourselves that we were going to go back at least every ten years. We have not yet made another trip together to Santa Barbara, and I've warned him that this year may be our last chance. I hope that he will be inclined to go. Well, Louis is a very enterprising man, and he's a man of excellent judgment in business, very energetic, and as soon as possible, he opened up another bookshop on West Eighth Street. He knew the one great secret about bookselling, and that is that if you buy right, you cannot go wrong. If you buy right, you can price your books low enough so that people will come in and buy them, and you will still make a very substantial profit. In addition to that, he had the assistance of a man who'd been a collector around town for a number of years. Mr. Shelton was a curious, eccentric, solitary kind of a man, and the bookshop became his whole life. I think that he had the hope that in the days to come he and Louis would be equal partners in the ownership of the business. But it didn't work out that way, and he became very disillusioned and angry and broke off with Louis and left his employment. Louis, in the meantime, had met [Ed] Stackhouse, who was a very brilliant merchandiser and equally [as] energetic as Louis. Stackhouse worked shoulder to shoulder with Louis, and, in time, Louis had an opportunity to open a store in Hollywood. The remains of the Depression were still with us, and there was a great deal of property to be had at relatively low prices. This corner building--or building next to the corner--on Hollywood Boulevard was one of the properties in the hands of a bank which they did not wish to carry, and so they offered Louis very attractive terms—but terms which were still difficult for him. Nonetheless, he bought that building, and it became the center of his book business. He hadn't really intended to go into the new-book business; but as time went on, and the demand for new books increased, and as there was no other bookseller in Hollywood that carried as big a stock as Louis Epstein did, his shop quickly expanded. He bought the corner, and it became the leading bookshop in Hollywood, as well as in Southern California. Later he was induced to occupy a space in one of the shopping centers . . .

GARDNER:

. . . Topanga . . .

ZEITLIN:

. . . that was being promoted by May Company. He found, very much to his surprise, that this branch store was doing almost as well as his Hollywood bookshop. Ultimately, of course, he built up a very large business, which was purchased from him by B. Dalton. Louis is a very earnest, responsible individual. He's a good citizen with a great sense of what's right. We have not always agreed on all matters, but I admire him very much, and I have a very great affection for him. We have remained very close friends through all the years, which is a matter of great satisfaction and pride to me.

GARDNER:

After all these years, that's true.

ZEITLIN:

At times when I've faced critical conditions, when I was short of funds, Louis was very generous in helping me with loans. I always repaid him and tried to compensate for them in other ways, and I've certainly tried to give evidence of my gratitude in every other way. I must say that because of the help he extended to me over the years I've felt obliged to extend help to others, and he too has done a great deal of the same sort of thing for others.

GARDNER:

That's very interesting. That brings up an interesting point to discuss, I think, and especially from talking about the organization, and that's the sort of brotherhood that seems to exist among bookdealers.

ZEITLIN:

Well, book dealers have, up to now, in Southern California been on very friendly terms. There are a few individuals who some of us don't feel as close to and don't have the same confidence in, and there have been a few rivalries which, I think, have created a little acrimony. But on the whole, there's been a very high level of cooperation, and we've remained friends and in many ways supported each other through difficult times. My closest relationship, of course, has been with the Dawsons, for whom I have a very high respect. We've always cooperated in everything where it was possible. There has to be

a certain amount of competition in a business like this, but it should never go to the point where you have to cut each other's throat in order to survive.

GARDNER:

Well, Louis made an interesting point when, in [our] conversations, he talked about one way in which the book business differs from others, and that is that competition in the book business actually increases business for everybody, and that the more stores you have on a street, the more business you'll do.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. When I moved out on La Cienega, there was not another shop near me. I encouraged Peggy Christian to move in so that I could have someone there to send my customers to and who would in turn send customers to me. Since then, of course, a whole group of bookshops have grown up along Melrose. For instance, there are now about six bookshops—there's George Houle, there's Bennett and Marshall, there is Lenny's Bookshop, there is Salzman's Canterbury Book Shop, and there is Michael Thompson, and there is one other of which I don't remember the name right now. But generally if one man doesn't have it, he'll send people to the other bookseller. If we want something from the other bookseller, he will give us a discount so we can make a profit off it; and we feel obliged to do the same thing. There's no dog in the manger in this business so far as I know.

GARDNER:

You mentioned great rivalries, though.

ZEITLIN:

Well, there are rivalries . . .

GARDNER:

Can you tell me a couple of them?

ZEITLIN:

. . . mostly in terms of prestige. No, they're things I don't think it would be easy to discuss, and I think that these things are best left for other people to talk about.

GARDNER:

Okay, instead I'll ask you this, Another one of the good book areas now is Westwood Boulevard--now, Bob Campbell told me, and I don't think we've talked about this, that you were out in Westwood very early on in '29 or '30.

ZEITLIN:

I had a bookshop in Westwood in 1929. I had a young woman working for me. Tone Price. She had come out from my hometown in Texas, Fort Worth. Tone had a great deal of personal charm. She was a peculiar kind of a woman, I think, given to attract members of her own sex, and she dressed rather peculiarly with mannish dresses. She didn't wear slacks, of course, because, that wasn't heard of at that time. But she wore tailored coats and skirts and mannish shirts with neckties and so on. She had a great deal of personal magnetism and charm, and while she wasn't a highly literate person, she learned quick. She learned by ear, and she had good taste. She worked in my bookshop for, oh, four or five years; and, of course, at that time she had the idea that it would be a good thing if we tried to start a bookshop in Westwood. We started at a little place facing the university, on the street where Campbell's is now [Le Conte] , but nearer to Westwood Boulevard. The shop was designed by Leroy Davidson, and it was a very attractive little shop. But unfortunately we didn't have the capital, and we didn't have the stock with which to carry on. I think it lasted about six months in all. Bob Campbell was very encouraging. I know he would have liked to have us stay, but it didn't work out.

GARDNER:

It's interesting that no used-book stores —really, no rare, out-of-print anything has really made it in Westwood Village.

ZEITLIN:

Not in the Village. There was a remainder bookshop that did extremely well for a while, and then they had a fire and that all went kaput. But Jimmy Hakes has run the best general bookshop in Westwood other than Campbell's.

**1.20. TAPE NUMBER: XI, Side Two
(February 21, 1978)**

GARDNER:

We're back dealing with the files again of the early days of the local chapter of ABAA. You just noticed that you were president in 1951.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I see by the minutes here before me that in 1951 I was president and that we met on August 29th of that year for the purpose of honoring the return of UCLA Librarian Lawrence Clark Powell and his wife from their European tour. Powell invited any of the dealers who wanted more information about the English book trade to visit him by appointment. At the same time, Justin Turner, president of the National Society of Autograph Collectors, spoke of plans for the society. This was in the very earliest days of what later became the Manuscript Society, a name which I suggested when the impression was that autograph collecting was not necessarily manuscript collecting.

GARDNER:

Do you recall anything about what your duties were as president? What did the president do other than call meetings to order and so on?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the president presided. He was also ex officio member of all committees. He appointed committees to various functions, and he, depending upon the initiative which he took, could arrange the program and plan other activities of the organization during the term of his office. The organization had a series of meetings at one time. They were visited by Samuel Hume of Berkeley, a very colorful character who had been a part of the early theater movement. Most of the activities of the association, other than that of meeting, consisted of arranging book exhibitions.

GARDNER:

Well, we talked somewhat about the first auction last time, and you mentioned before we turned this on that you wanted to say something about the first bookfair, and that's not anywhere in here.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, well, I'm afraid that I can't talk about that without referring to the record, which I don't have with me. I do have in front of me what appears to be the floor plan . . . [leafs through files] oh, no, this is the California Library Association exhibition room floor plan, in which we participated. We also met in the course of the year 1951 at Claremont and held a meeting honoring Charles Yale, who had died at that time and who had worked first for the state library in Sacramento and later was manager for Ernest Dawson.

GARDNER:

Why don't we move ahead and talk about the national organizations, because I think we really have covered the origins here and gotten an idea of the sort of meetings that were held. And since the archive does contain all this material. ... I can see you're spellbound.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, by my own prose. [laughter] This is the introduction to the meeting honoring Charles Yale and the dedication of the Charles Yale Collection at Scripps College, Claremont, on Sunday, June 3, 1951.

GARDNER:

I just ran across in my notes . . . I'm going to try to stop you from reading your notes there. [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

Yes, go ahead.

GARDNER:

I just ran across some quote that I pulled out of Louis Epstein's oral history, and there are two or three quotes having to do with the local chapter that I'd be interested to hear you comment about. First one: he said, "At most of our meetings we discussed a minimum of business and a maximum of gossip."

ZEITLIN:

Well, I didn't recall that the gossip took place in the course of the meeting. It may have taken place before the meeting or afterward, but it seemed to me that we spent an awful lot of time discussing trifling things, which is the fate of

a great many organizations, especially when they get started and have to adopt bylaws and constitutions.

GARDNER:

Another thing he mentioned is about as great a controversy as there was—the nature of the membership, whether or not all booksellers should be allowed or the membership should be limited.

ZEITLIN:

Well, there was never any doubt that in order to qualify for membership you had to be in business for a fixed period of time (it was two years at one time, and I think it's been extended to three years now), and that you had to have a place of business, other than your home, where you sold books. You also had to be proposed and seconded by two other members of the association, and you had to be voted upon, both by the local association and if you were accepted by them, by the national association. There was a controversy at one time where some members of the national association did not want to have to pay dues to the local association; they wanted the benefits of membership in the national association without contributing anything towards the support of it. That was thrashed out with the national association. Now members have to belong to a local chapter, where there is one in their part of the country, in order to be eligible for membership in the national association.

GARDNER:

Why don't we go on and talk about the national now. Would that be okay? I don't think there's anything really compelling in this file.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, well, I think we. . . . Let me see here a minute.

GARDNER:

No, you won't find a book there.

ZEITLIN:

You've gone through here?

GARDNER:

Yes.

ZEITLIN:

There is one thing that I think is worth mentioning, and that is that on January 23, 1951, the association set up an intellectual freedom committee consisting of John Valentine and myself, and we prepared a resolution on intellectual freedom for submission to the local board; and, following that, submission to the national board for adoption. I'm sorry to say that the national board did not accept any resolution pertaining to intellectual freedom. They were a bunch of small-business men who didn't want to become involved in such things as questions of intellectual freedom, freedom of speech, and didn't want to even become involved in the question of freedom against censorship until they got caught in the squeeze.

GARDNER:

What sparked your forming that committee? Was there any particular situation?

ZEITLIN:

No, John Valentine and I were both Democrats, active in the Democratic party, interested in questions of intellectual freedom, and we felt that the booksellers association should follow the lead of the American Library Association and set up a working committee for the protection of their members in the matter of censorship of literary material and booksellers. The idea was that we would support any member who was being prosecuted, we'd provide him with as much financial and legal aid as we could, as well as any other support. The other thing that the association became involved in about that time was the running of the association advertisements in the yellow pages of the telephone directory. And we occasionally did buy space in the book section of the *Los Angeles Times*. I'm amused to find here a letter from Richard Wormser, the secretary, concerning the resolution which John Valentine and I prepared, in which he says that "it was presented to the quarterly meeting of the board of governors, and though everyone at the meeting agreed with the sentiments in the proposal, the consensus was that the subject is not within the province of our association. Should there be any attempt to impose restrictions on the material in which we deal, we shall take

steps to combat them." That's signed by Richard Wormser, the secretary--and I must say that it was not very long after that that I met Richard Wormser—and he'd discovered that there was really a need for taking a position on the matter of intellectual freedom. Well, it looks to me like I'm going backwards here. The association seemed to have just about the same number of people in attendance in its early years as it does now.

GARDNER:

Is that so? Membership is still limited, isn't it?

ZEITLIN:

Membership is still limited, but I'd say the present membership--where it started with about twenty, present membership has a total of forty-eight firms.

GARDNER:

Can I look through that and ask you about some of the people, maybe bring it up to date? Well, I hate to go through everyone here because there are so many.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, of course. This is the most up-to-date list, and there are of course a great many new names, a great many dealers in specialties such as we did not have when we began.

GARDNER:

Right. Well, I think that it'd be lengthy to go through the entire list.

ZEITLIN:

The association enjoyed the membership of most of the prominent antiquarian booksellers in the area, but not all of them. The Arthur H. Clark Company was a member for a short while and then decided that they did not wish to participate for various reasons. They were located in Glendale and, I think, to some degree, partook of the general political complexion of that part of the world.

GARDNER:

Do you want to take this file, then? It starts in back, in the earliest days. This is the national antiquarian group—start on the other side, I think. Is that the earliest? Yes. Now, as we talked about it last time, the organizations were pretty well simultaneous.

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes. The national association was incorporated in 1949, early in 1949, and as well as I can remember, the local association was formed . . .

GARDNER:

... it was about the same time--fall of 1949, spring of 1950 . . .

ZEITLIN:

. . . Yes, fall of 1949, so that we were the first regional chapter to be formed. The association was formed by a group of incorporators, including Robert Barry of New Haven; the firm of Charles Stonehill; Mary Benjamin, the autograph dealer; Herman Cohen, a dealer in books on fine printing; Glen Dawson of Los Angeles; Marston Drake of the very great firm of James E. Drake in New York; Emily Driscoll, a lady autograph dealer; Lawrence Gomme, who became later the first president of the association; George Goodspeed of Boston; Nathan Ladden of the firm of Inman of New York; Aaron Mendoza (the Mendoza book firm was an outstanding firm in its day but seems not to exist anymore); Ralph G. Newman-- 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago, Illinois—who, while he was an incorporator, did not remain a member for very long afterward; Bernard Otto, who I think was associated with G.A. Baker and Company; David Randall, in charge of the rare-book department at Scribner's; Walter Schatzki, who later was one of the presidents in the association, one of the very good ones; Richard Wormser, who was certainly one of the most diplomatic and witty of the members and also had international contacts in the world of books; and Mabel Zahn of Sessler's in Philadelphia. It's worth noting that nobody representing the Rosenbach firm was involved in the forming of the association, and I don't think it was until quite a long time after the association was formed that the Rosenbachs decided to involve themselves.

GARDNER:

Why is that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I don't think they thought the organization would last. And they didn't really want to do anything to strengthen what might become competition.

GARDNER:

Do you want to take a few minutes and go through that?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I think you'd better turn it off. [tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER:

You've now perused the files of the national organization.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the national organization seems to have come into being in 1949, and by 1950 it was well launched and was conducting a great many activities. They started the same way that we did, by preparing a traveling exhibition. and their first exhibition was to be of "rare and interesting books which can be bought for twenty-five dollars or less." (Interesting comment--I don't think that any rare-book dealer could afford to put on an exhibition of books for twenty-five dollars or less.) The most important event in the year following the incorporation of the association was an invitation from the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers to attend their annual conference in Paris. The French national organization was the host, and they requested the American organization to send them the names of any members who would be present in Paris at the time. This was the first year of participation of the American association, and they were then affiliated with the international league. Those who attended as delegates were Captain Louis Henry Cohn of the House of Books; Muir Dawson of Dawson's Book Shop; Mr. Jeffrey Steele of Chappaqua, New York; and Lawrence Verry of Verry Fischer and Company, New York. One of the most notable events at that international meeting was an address on the part of Percy Muir, one of the most learned and most respected of booksellers, who fortunately is still active as a country bookseller in England. I note that there was a slightly acrimonious exchange of correspondence between myself and Mr. Wormser concerning the action of

the association on the resolution concerning setting up of an intellectual freedom committee. Nothing came of it; no intellectual freedom committee was ever established. The Antiquarian Booksellers Association quickly developed problems such as I've mentioned before of the desire of some booksellers to join the national association without joining their regional organization, and as a result of that, an amendment to the bylaws was passed in 1951 which required all members of the national association to be members of some regional association.

GARDNER:

How many regional associations do you think there were about that time?

ZEITLIN:

Well, there were very few. They set up very shortly a North Atlantic chapter and the Middle Western chapter and the Western chapter.

GARDNER:

And there would be no southern members?

ZEITLIN:

Southern members could belong to the association which was nearest to them. Another thing that the association developed was the exchange of credit information and the effort to assist various members in dealing with reluctant debtors. The other thing that developed in the early years was the establishment of a fund to help booksellers or their dependents who might be in need, and that fund has grown and now has quite a substantial amount of money which it has on occasions lent to bookseller members or their families. In nearly every case the help extended and the funds have been returned. At one time the organization set up a collection agent for all the members of the association; it didn't work very well and finally was dropped. There are some things which can only be done in an informal manner if you are to avoid legal difficulties. The other activity which the national and the local association undertook was to set up hospitality rooms and offer other entertainment to librarians when they had their meetings in one of the cities where a particular chapter was based, so that in 1953 the California chapter acted as host to the

members of the American Library Association, who met for their annual conference in Los Angeles.

GARDNER:

Is this still true?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. The association, either formally or informally, usually sets up a hospitality room where they offer drinks and refreshments of other kinds to librarians. It provides an easy way for the membership to meet and mingle with the librarians and for the librarians to get acquainted with the booksellers. And the librarians seem to like it very much. The international meetings which take place every other year have become very important affairs and very popular and attract a great many members. The West Coast has served as host on one occasion; meetings generally have taken place in London, Paris, Geneva, Vienna, and in Italy at Milano-Maritima, a seacoast resort. There has always been the most splendid hospitality. In 1955 the international organization met in New York, and the meetings took place in the meeting hall of the Carnegie Foundation for Peace on the United Nations Plaza. I remember that on that occasion Mr. Luther Evans, the retired director of the Library of Congress, was invited to address the membership, and he made some remarks about the high prices and what he called the hold-up manners of Mr. Kraus. In spite of the fact that Kraus was not universally beloved, it was very much resented. That meeting was really a high-water mark for the association. They gave us a very fine reception at Yale, one of the most lavish and, I must also say, riotous evenings that I ever took part in; in fact, it was so riotous and exhausting that I spent the night at one of the houses there as the guest of Bob Metzdorf. Mike Papantonio and I stayed overnight there and the next morning started to drive back to New York. It took a very long time to get back because Mr. Papantonio had a hard time getting over the effects of the celebration the night before. This congress of 1955 included delegates from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany (I think it was the first meeting to which the German delegates were admitted), the United States, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland. I met some of my most important friends in the book world on the occasion of that meeting, and I'm sure that a great many of the other booksellers also formed friendships there which have lasted through the

years. (I forgot to mention Amsterdam also as one of the places where the Antiquarian Booksellers international meetings have taken place.) One meeting, as I said before, took place in San Francisco and later adjourned to continue informally down here, because that was our first international bookfair in California. The association also issued a form to be given to people who desired to sell or have books appraised, so as to set up a uniform procedure for those things. The last minutes which I have in the files (which now are part of the archives at UCLA) cover the ninth annual meeting of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America on February 4, 1958. By then the organization had become well formalized and had proceeded to make motions and conduct business according to the best Robert's *Rules of Order* standards.

GARDNER:

How many of your fellow local booksellers would have traveled to the national conventions? Was it a sort of common thing to do, or was it rare?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the national meetings are held once a year still, when the presidency either changes hands or the old officers are re-elected, and not a great many members from around the country attend. I was the speaker before last at the annual meeting in New York, and I would say there were probably 100 people there, but most of them were New Yorkers, and a great many of them were friends of booksellers rather than booksellers. The national meetings usually don't attract a great many members. There is a lot of competition, and the Bibliographical Society of America meets about the same time in January, the Grolier Club holds its annual meeting at that time, and the auction houses usually put on auctions especially aimed at the booksellers and collectors who will be attending the Bibliographical Society meeting, so that there's really very little time to attend. Now, the international meetings are remarkably well attended, when you consider that most booksellers are not affluent in the sense that they can travel to Europe and back just for the sake of participating in a meeting. But they have become such wonderfully well-conducted affairs that every bookseller that can do so, goes. You have to be designated a delegate; but if an organization like the United States has five delegates, and ten additional people indicate that they'd like to attend, [then] they are made

alternate delegates so they can attend anyway. The meetings are very interesting and exciting; we are usually taken on tours of the most interesting libraries and galleries. Special arrangements are made: bus tours to outlying areas, monasteries, and private libraries, and palaces, and villas. The dinners are very grand. I remember one that we had at the Savoy Hotel in London in 1956 (the first I attended) which was followed by a ballet at Covent Garden, and that was followed by a champagne supper afterwards. We also were taken out to Greenwich; they erected a pavilion, and lunch was served in the pavilion on the lawn. We were really made to feel very much like honored guests at all the affairs that I have attended.

GARDNER:

You've mentioned the word delegate ; that implies to me some sort of transaction of business.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, there are business meetings. They are taken very seriously, and they often become quite heated. On one occasion—well, the one in San Francisco—the president of the international association was an English bookseller, a very quiet, reticent man who really didn't know how to preside; and there was a rebellion led by the Germans, who were very punctilious and precise and who wanted to vote the president out of office immediately, right from the floor. It took a great deal of lobbying and closet persuasion to keep this from happening, because we Americans and the British were not going to see the president, who was an Englishman, dislodged by a bunch of those "Prussians," [laughter] as we felt about them at that time. The majority of the points of contention have to do with questions of the allowing of discounts to fellow members with the terms of credit—that is, the length of time for which credit is extended--and with customs problems. And also there is a biennial bibliographical prize given by the association, a prize for what is considered the most noteworthy contribution to the field of bibliography. An international committee is appointed to select the candidates for this award, and I think it's something like \$500 that's awarded to the winner of the prize.

GARDNER:

There's nothing like that on the national level, though, is there? Or is there?

ZEITLIN:

The national organization has not been able to effect any sponsorship of any activities outside of those having directly to do with the business of the organization and being the host nation for international meetings and such things. The national organization has also had a problem in recent years with the question of whether or not they could legally refuse membership because of the bookfairs which were sponsored by the national organization. The national organization had almost concluded that they would no longer sponsor bookfairs. In the past, only members of the association could participate in the bookfairs, and we were threatened with lawsuits by various bookdealers who felt that this was discrimination and restraint of trade. But we've now been advised by our new legal advisors that there are ways of continuing to sponsor bookfairs without being forced to admit members whom we do not feel are up to the requirements for membership in the association. This has been a serious matter, because from time to time it looked as if we weren't going to be able to maintain an organization limited to people that we felt were admissible, and there were threats of suits from several booksellers, mainly California ones. This year there will be an international bookfair conducted in New York, not directly under the sponsorship of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association but conducted by a private organization which will do it for profit. There will also be one conducted by the Antiquarian Booksellers. But the international association is committed to bookfairs because it's an old institution in Europe. One of the first international bookfairs that was held in recent years was held during the fifties in Amsterdam. They have been held annually in London; there is one in Dusseldorf now. And these, in addition to the ones in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, have become a sort of circuit for some booksellers who seem never to stay home but spend all their time going from one fair to another.

GARDNER:

Do you go to more than just the California ones?

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes. We participated in the Boston bookfair last year with some success, and we are participating in the New York bookfair this year. We have not

decided yet whether we'll participate in the Toronto bookfair, but we have in the past two occasions, including the first time they held a bookfair in Canada. We were encouraged by the Canadian association and the librarians of Canada to come up and participate; they felt that it would add to the distinction of the occasion if we went there.

GARDNER:

Did it?

ZEITLIN:

I'm not sure that I contributed anything but confusion. But, anyhow, it v/as a lot of fun.

GARDNER:

Have any of the local booksellers become officers in either the national or international organizations?

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes. There are a great many members of the local associations who have been officers: Glen Dawson was the treasurer for a number of years; Warren Howell is the current president of the association for the second term; a great many of us have been members of the board. I was a board member for one year, but I did not attend but for one meeting. I never could get involved in the business of the association enough to contribute very much. I did propose that the association undertake to sponsor, with financial help and otherwise, a history of bookselling in America. I felt that if we were to give it the primary sponsorship, we could get funding from some of the foundations--from the Guggenheim Foundation, for instance, because of the strong sympathy that Gordon Ray has for booksellers.

**1.21. TAPE NUMBER: XII, Side One
(February 21, 1978 and March 14, 1978)**

GARDNER:

You were talking about the history of the booksellers.

ZEITLIN:

. . . the history of antiquarian bookselling in America. I wrote a letter to the president, who brought it up before the board of the national association, but it got nowhere. I regret this very much, because I think that the history of the antiquarian book trade in America is very interesting. A great many colorful individuals have participated in bookselling. They have been cultural outposts in many of the growing cities of America, and their story is worth telling and worth preserving. I'm sorry that it wasn't undertaken, and I'm afraid that there isn't anybody among the younger generation willing to push it forward at this time.

GARDNER:

Have you tried contacting the foundations themselves?

ZEITLIN:

I haven't tried contacting the foundations because, without the support of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association themselves, I don't think any foundation would take much interest in such a project. I think, on the other hand, that if we could set up a board of, say, two booksellers and three historians to explore the possibilities, the history could become a reality.

GARDNER:

That's an interesting idea--somebody 's doing it on a very small level. To come back to, say, Warren Howell being president of the national organization and so on (and you served on the board but apparently not in a dedicated manner) , how much time does it take up for someone like Warren Howell?

ZEITLIN:

It takes a great deal of time.

GARDNER:

Does it interfere with his running his business?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it would if he didn't have a good functioning organization. Nobody can afford to take the job without a backup staff in his own place of business which can relieve him of a lot of his responsibilities. He has to be able and willing to travel back and forth. There are about four meetings a year, most of

them held in New York, although the national meeting was held here in Los Angeles at the same time as the Antiquarian bookfair early this month. And very often the national meetings will be held in the city where a bookfair is going on because a great many of the booksellers will be going there anyway to participate in the bookfair, and it makes it easier for them to attend. The Antiquarian Booksellers Association has now reached the point where it has to increase its membership dues substantially. It has not had a full-time functioning secretary or administrator. It is a trade organization. (Trade organizations provide services for their members, depending on how much money they have and how interested their officers are.) And this is one of the things that Warren Howell has contributed to the association: he has tightened up a lot of the activities, and he has brought about the establishment of a higher dues schedule and the creation of a post of what can be called director, or administrator, of the office of the association.

GARDNER:

I see. Who serves as that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I don't think they've selected anybody yet, but that's just been enacted. The necessary steps have taken place to make that possible.

GARDNER:

Now, since we've talked about international bookselling, this may perhaps be an interesting place for me to bring up something I've been wanting to ask you about for a while, and that's the brief but somewhat touching dispute that you had with Menno Hertzberger. Apparently you and he had become close friends; I'm interested in knowing the whole background of that as well.

ZEITLIN:

Well, he had come out here a number of times, and we'd become very close friends. Menno Hertzberger is a very charming man. He's the man who's responsible for the formation of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers. He is a very knowledgeable bookman. [phone rings; tape recorder turned off] Menno Hertzberger is a man of great charm. He is a cosmopolite. He is fluent in English, French, German, and I don't know what other

languages. He's a man who quickly ingratiates himself with people. He has had a long life in the rare-book business, and I think we met sometime in the fifties. We also have exchanged letters over many years. I really don't think one should make much of our difference, because it looked bigger at the time than it really was.

GARDNER:

Well, that's one reason I wanted to hear about it, because it does loom large in the archives.

ZEITLIN:

I suppose there was a lot of exchange of correspondence, but it all had to do with a Ratdolt book which I had bought from Menno. I sold it to a man by the name of Speck, Dr. Richard Speck, in San Francisco. Dr. Speck, after some time, returned it to me and pointed out that it was a made-up copy, and that part of the book was from an edition of one date and part of it was from an edition of another date. So I wrote to Menno asking him if he would accept the return of the book, and Menno was convinced that there was nothing wrong with the book, and he wouldn't accept its return. This became quite a concern, and I was very much angered and simply refused to do any more business or continue to associate with him. Well, it seems that Menno had a reputation for being a little bit careless, and there were other booksellers who from time to time had reported to me that they had complaints about similar things. I think that what happened in my case (which wasn't known to me at the time) was that Menno had gone into business with someone else; that he'd actually sold his own business and therefore couldn't expect the firm which now owned him to take the responsibility for books which he had sold during the time when he was operating independently. He had no other way of dealing with this thing, so he was caught between his associates and me. That's something I did not know at the time. Now, later Menno and I met in Italy at a congress there, and Menno agreed to take back the book and give me the equivalent amount in exchange of other books that I might select. However, that became difficult, because every good book I picked didn't seem to be available. [laughter] You can't stay angry with Menno, and there's really no sense in it. I think that in some ways he is as naive as a child, and so we have met since in London and dined together. I've visited him twice in the Dutch

town of Baarn, where he lives. On one occasion, on Liberation Day in Baarn, we marched together down the streets. It was a solemn occasion when the whole town walked through the main streets of the town and converged on a park there to conduct a memorial service for all those that had been murdered by the Nazis; nothing, not a word said, just the sound of people's feet walking through the streets. We have exchanged letters of congratulation on each other's birthday. He let me know not long ago that he was eighty years old, and I sent off a letter of congratulation. I think that his eyesight is very poor now, although he still continues to operate a book business from a fine old house in Baarn. He manages to get ahold of very good books—I mean from old customers who want to sell off their books, or librarians that he's known who have duplicates to dispose of, and other booksellers, so that he gets off some very respectable catalogs, as always, with a great deal of scholarship. He's probably one of the most knowledgeable men, especially in bibliographical sources, of any man in the book business, and has a great deal of knowledge in the history of printing and of incunabula. Now he is living out his declining years in Baarn in peace, and, I think, considerable comfort, and with the respect of his fellows in the book trade.

GARDNER:

Is that sort of dispute relatively common?

ZEITLIN:

Well, various kinds of disputes develop, and very often they cannot be brought up. The association discourages making big affairs out of little ones, so that they prefer to have these things settled by the dealers themselves. But they do, under extreme circumstances—where both dealers insist on it and they can't get together--set up an arbitration committee and try to arbitrate these differences. I had a dispute with a group of English booksellers several years ago, and they threatened to bring it up before the English association. I urged them to do so, whereupon they immediately withdrew their suggestion. They decided they didn't really want this business exposed to the knowledge of not only the rest of the book trade but the book world in general. There are all varieties of people engaged in bookselling. The majority of them are, I think, people of reasonable honesty and good principle, but there are others--especially the groups which make up the "ring" in England, and the groups

which form and disperse occasionally at the continental auctions--which I think are less than beneficial to the good name of bookselling.

GARDNER:

What is the "ring"?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it seems that there have been rings of booksellers, just as there are in the antique trade and in other businesses, for many years, and it consists of a small group of booksellers who dominate the auctions and agree between themselves the limits that they will pay. They agree not to bid against each other and they also pay off the small dealers who come; they give them five or ten pounds just to not bid. Then when the auction is closed and the books have been brought in at the lowest possible figures by the booksellers who are in the ring, they then hold a separate auction between themselves. It's a very complicated business. It takes the brain of a mathematical genius to follow the complications, [laughter] and if they're also conducted with French currency or with German, why, then you're even more mystified. There is a strong ring in England. It has existed for many years. There were efforts made to break it, and a law was passed in Parliament outlawing rings. Percy Muir, one of the most upright and scholarly of antiquarian booksellers, got into a great deal of trouble trying to fight the ring in the auction rooms. But it still exists, and it seems to be one of these evils that there is no way of breaking. Everyone is loath to bring these things to the attention of the Queen's Counsel in England, but once in a while, when it just gets too blatant, the word gets out, and the ring quiets down a bit. At present there is a group known as DETH in England--Dawsons, Edwards, Traylen, Hammond--which are known to constitute the ring, and they usually dominate the country auctions because there isn't very much competition from the outside world. If an important auction takes place in London, they may have to come up against people like Kraus. Sometimes Warren Howell and myself will go in together with another dealer, like Kenneth Nebenzahl, and buck the English ring, but sometimes the English ring will simply agree to not get in our way if we don't get in theirs.

GARDNER:

So, in other words, you're setting up a ring of your own.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I don't go along with it, but there are dealers who do. Ours is not a ring because we do not agree to refrain from bidding against each other, and we do not hold a "knockout" afterward.

GARDNER:

I see.

ZEITLIN:

I will go into partnership, where it's an openly announced partnership. In other words, two or three of us will agree to buy a book together, and we'll share equally in the purchase price. But then when it's knocked down, the law requires that all participants in the bid should be named.

GARDNER:

I see. In other words, what you would do is name the participants, where what they would do is not.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, they wouldn't. And you see, we don't hold any auction afterwards, and we're standing up against a great many other dealers who have just as much interest in buying the books as we do. Sometimes it just takes more capital than any one of us has got freely available.

GARDNER:

That's an interesting kind of scam. Are there any similar things that go on in America?

ZEITLIN:

No, there never has been quite the same thing as an organized ring. In the days of Mitchell Kennerly and the early days of the American Art Association, there were people, dealers, who worked with the house. In other words, they were shills who boosted the prices against other dealers. On one occasion Dr. Rosenbach found that he was being pushed up by a dealer who obviously couldn't absorb these purchases himself and must have been there buying for the house. He [Rosenbach] got up and announced that he was not bidding any

further and would never attend another auction. The gentleman who was the house shill is still doing business in New York and enjoys the patronage of some of the best collectors in that part of the world, and it's always been a mystery to me.

GARDNER:

And his name was?

ZEITLIN:

I'm not going to mention his name. I don't think there's a point to it.

GARDNER:

Okay, I just thought I'd ask you.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it's well known in the trade and among collectors, too, but I don't see any point in making it a matter of record right now.

GARDNER:

The other interesting dispute that I ran across in your archives was with Gelber and Lilienthal of San Francisco, way, way back in your early days.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, yes, that was a very interesting one. It had to do with a copy of *David Copperfield* in parts, and I had bought this without knowing anything about the special points of *David Copperfield* or any other Dickens in parts. It was in a case, it looked good, and apparently it was all right. I had it in my shop, and I had a visit from Mr. Thomas Hatton, the coauthor of the Hatton and [Arthur H.] Cleaver bibliography of Dickens in parts. Mr. Hatton had come over here to sell books to Mrs. Doheny and other collectors, and he had made his headquarters in my shop and sold a great many things through me. So, naturally, I brought out my set of *David Copperfield* and asked him what he thought of it. He looked it over, and he said, "See here, your 'Part I' is not a 'Part I.' The X has been scratched out of an XI." It was really "Part XI." The rest of the cover looked identical with the covers of all the other issues, so it was only in the numbering at the top of the cover that you could determine which issue [it was] of the twenty parts in eighteen, v/hich usually constituted a full

round of one of Dickens's novels published in serial parts. This was a most serious defect, because a fine first edition of *David Copperfield* in parts requires that all of the covers be the original covers and that it not be made up of bits and pieces or tampered with. There was a man in England, Walter Spencer, who specialized in making up Dickens in parts. There was a great vogue for Dickens at one time, much greater than there is now, so that every collector had to have his favorite Dickens novel in the original parts; and Mr. Spencer obliged by doctoring copies, putting them together skillfully, putting covers on the spine and inserting advertisements and other things called for. He made up numerous sets. There were other things that were missing from this set of Dickens, so I wrote to Mr. Lilienthal (who is a very honorable man) and said, "Look here, I find that this Dickens parts which I bought from you is not really a first edition. It's imperfect. It's lacking in these respects—it has been made up, doctored--and I'd like to return it." And Mr. Lilienthal said, "No, caveat emptor. You bought it and you keep it. We're not going to take it back. When one dealer buys from another, he's supposed to know what he's doing." Well, Mr. Will Clary of the firm of O'Melveny and Meyers came into my place just after I'd received Mr. Lilienthal's letter, so I said to him, "What do you think about this"? And he said, "I'm very much interested, because I'd really like to know what the rights of a buyer are in a case like this, and whether he has recourse. If you don't mind, I'll put somebody in my office to work, and we'll look up the law." Well, without any expense to me, a great deal of valuable, high-priced legal time and talent was expended upon preparing a brief citing the law, which was to the effect that items of rarity-- things like rare books or antiques or works of art or valuable jewelry--carry an implied warranty with them; that the seller was responsible for anything that was wrong which he had not pointed out to the buyer at the time of the sale; that, in this case, these defects had not been pointed out to me. I had discovered them afterwards and therefore was entitled to return the books. Well, I informed Mr. Lilienthal of this, told him that this brief had been prepared, whereupon he engaged a firm of prominent San Francisco lawyers. [laughter] They prepared a brief which was based upon law just as sound as the one that Mr. Clary's firm prepared, which reached the conclusion that there was no implied warranty and that the buyer, especially if he was a dealer, had equal standing as an expert with the seller and had no rights of recourse. The matter was there in kind of a deadlock, and I decided not to do anything else, because

I do not believe in suing: there's nothing to be gained except for the lawyers. I simply told Mr. Lilienthal that I was disappointed, that I'd had a very great respect for him and his partner, Leon Gelber, and I had expected a different attitude. First of all, they could afford to lose the money very easily because Lilienthal was a very wealthy man. But I think they felt that they had a principle to defend, and they weren't going to take this back. Finally, Mr. Hatton came back on a second trip with more Dickens in parts, and he said to me, "I'd like to look at your *Copperfield*." And he looked at it, and he said, "You know, your *Copperfield* has a number of important advertisements -- some printed on cork --and other inserts which would perfect a copy that I have. So if you would accept what you paid for your set, I'll take it off your hands." I was thus relieved of the book and recovered my money. Thomas Hatton was an interesting man. He had been a motorcycle-race promoter and a greyhound-race promoter in Leicester. Quite by accident, he wandered into Sotheby's one day when a copy of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was knocked down for a very substantial price. And he said, "My God, do books bring that much money?" He commenced to take an interest. Well, he talked like a Cockney, he looked like a racetrack tout, [laughter] but he had a very keen intelligence, and he had the patience and the ability to go through thousands of copies of Dickens and to prepare this very detailed bibliography which superseded [John C.] Eckel's and has, I think, remained the chief bibliographical authority on Dickens in parts. Lord knows, nobody else is ever going to undertake such a job. Mr. Hatton used to come over here and make his headquarters in my shop, as I said. I would take him out to see Mrs. Doheny, and she was quite charmed by what she thought were English manners. I remember on one occasion he sold her one of Dickens in parts for something like \$10,000; I don't remember just which one. It may have been an extraordinarily fine and complete set, untouched, with the signature of the subscriber on the cover of each of the parts. On another occasion, I took him out to see Hugh Walpole, and we spent a couple of days showing Sir Hugh a collection of English novels, three-deckers—in boards and in parts and in original cloth. Mr. Walpole ended up by buying about \$6,000 worth of these novels. He had a particular fondness for English nineteenth-century novelists, so this was a great coup for him. It's a curious thing about Hugh Walpole, who was a very gentle man and a kind man, that neither his books nor the books he collected have ever received the respect I think they were entitled to. But Mr.

Hatton, after about his third trip over-- and I must say they enlivened my shop very much; there were great parties every evening after work (the girls and the young men and the collectors would swarm in and get nice and liquored up, and everybody would have fun and tell stories) —went back to England and didn't come back anymore, and I didn't hear from him again. Mr. Hatton, like some other tradesmen, had his small faults, and on one occasion he made a very large sale through my shop and concealed it from me and didn't allow me my commission. Since I was spending a great deal of time in letting him use my premises rent-free, I really resented that. But then he was a cheerful rogue, so you couldn't really resent him for very long. I'm not sure exactly what became of Hatton. He seemed to have dropped out of sight. I did hear rumors that he had overplayed the ponies and had dropped out of business altogether, but I don't know what happened to him.

GARDNER:

And you and Lilienthal established relations with Gelber and Lilienthal again?

ZEITLIN:

Not immediately; our relationships were very cool for a long time, and I don't think either one of us really sought each other out until after Leon Gelber died (that was Lilienthal 's partner) . I remember going up and visiting Gelber 's wife, and I bought some things from her that were part of Gelber 's private collection. I think the firm had been dissolved by then. Ted Lilienthal retired to the country and bought himself a printing press--one of the Caslon presses of the sort that William Morris used—and printed a number of small broadsides and pamphlets on it, and lived out his years a very respectable amateur of books. We got on very well in later years and met on a number of occasions, but we never discussed Dickens in parts.

GARDNER:

What about the principle of it? Do you still agree with the. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

Let me say this: I recently had a man approach me with a print which was bought from our gallery eleven years ago. There isn't anything wrong with the print, and he doesn't claim that there's anything wrong with it. He claims that

he paid too much for it, and he feels that we should take it back. So I had a talk with him the other day. Before that, someone upstairs had dealt with him, one of the young women, and she brought the matter to me. So when he came in, I sat him down, and I said, "Look, I've been in business for fifty years. It doesn't matter to me; I won't go broke if I give you back the money you paid for this. I've still got customers that I had when I started in the business, and I pride myself on trying to be fair. I'd rather give ground on a matter like this than leave the doubt in anyone's mind. So what do you want me to do?" And he said, "I don't know." (I think the best thing you can do in a case like that is put the other fellow on the spot, let him declare what he wants.) He said, "I have to go into the hospital for a cataract operation, and I don't want to get into this any further now. So if you'll let me have my print, we'll talk about it after I come back from the hospital." Now, I think what I will do is explain to him why the print was priced as it was. We bought it—it was part of a great collection. It belonged to [Loys] Delteil, the man who prepared the catalog of Daumier's prints. It was an exceptionally fine one on white paper, and we paid a great deal of money for it. And we did not make an exorbitant profit. Now, I'm going to tell him that it's not customary for a firm to take back a piece of merchandise which they sold eleven years ago unless that's proven to be a fake—and he isn't claiming that. So I'm simply going to say to him, "I'll take it back and give you credit for anything else you want purchased at the same amount." And I don't see how he can object to that.

GARDNER:

Right. Now, on the other hand, if he came back to you and said that it was a fake . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, I'd have to defend it to prove that it wasn't, and he'd have to prove that it is. But then, what we might do if we couldn't agree is, each one of us select an expert and then let the experts select a third one, and let them act as jury and agree to abide by their decision.

GARDNER:

Does that happen much?

ZEITLIN:

Not very often. I've made mistakes and I've freely admitted them. I took back a drawing not long ago that had been sold by one of the people in the shop, and by God, if it had ever been taken out of the frame when we took it in, before we sold it, it would have been easily recognized; it was a photographic copy of a drawing. It was so well done, and it had been so cleverly treated that it couldn't be detected except if you removed the glass and looked at it carefully outside of the mat. Well, it had been sold for three or four years; a woman had paid \$750 for it. She sent it back, and we sent her her money. There's nothing else to do. Right now I think that one of my former employees is probably responsible for a few of these efforts to return things that have taken place lately. This employee has been going around looking at collections and denigrating some of the things which were purchased from me. But in every case where they've been brought to me, I've been able to convince the buyer that they were genuine, and I've offered to satisfy them. And I haven't had any trouble.

GARDNER:

Well, shall we stop now?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I think that's enough.

MARCH 14, 1978

GARDNER:

As you've been gathering information and you've been talking about--today we'll go through some of the publications and presses which you have been involved with, beginning (since we both sort of have it at hand) with the Mel [Jerome Melvyn] Edelstein bibliography of Primavera. The first several books don't appear to be Primavera imprints, and I think that goes for several of the works involved here. *Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies*, for example, is imprinted "Bruce McCallister, Jake Zeitlin," right?

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

So the first Primavera, then, would be this *Cavalcade*, is that accurate?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I believe so. That was the first time I used the name "Primavera Press" on any publication.

GARDNER:

The other two before that were just under "Jake Zeitlin."

ZEITLIN:

Jake Zeitlin. The first was Bruce McCallister and Jake Zeitlin, and that was the *Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies*. Then came the *Aristocracy of Art*, by Merle Armitage, which I can't remember how I was hornswoggled into publishing, [laughter] but as time has gone on, I've wondered more and more, because I don't find myself at all in sympathy with the philosophy expressed there. Merle Armitage and I were great pals in those days. He had delivered this as a lecture at the California Art Club up on Barnsdall Hill, and he got the idea of publishing it, and I went ahead and got it out. It amuses me to find it now being offered for sale for as much as twenty-five to seventy-five dollars. Somewhere in the back room or in my garage is a large bundle of them which I couldn't sell at a dollar and a half apiece in 1929, [laughter] but of course, the Depression was going on then. And besides, it was a most funereal-looking book, all in black wrappers over black boards with a white paper label printed in black. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Sounds lovely.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it would have made a good advertisement for an undertaker.

GARDNER:

What was the reason for that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it was just the idea of Armitage. Armitage has some rather strong ideas about book design which he expressed in this, the first of his books. This gave

him the notion of going in for designing books and publishing, of which he did a great deal over the years; later, mostly in association with Lynton Kistler.

GARDNER:

My next observation is that your next publication, or actually the publication which sandwiched these two, were the Carl Sandburg poems. They also precede the Primavera.

ZEITLIN:

Oh, well, those were done, as well as I remember, sometime in 1929.

GARDNER:

Right, which is the same date as the *Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies* and the *Aristocracy of Art*.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, they were hardly what you call publications; they were certainly what you call private publications. They were not intended to be sold. I got Carl Sandburg's permission to publish his poem, *M'liss and Louie*, and we got out, I think, about 100 copies. It was the result of Ward Ritchie coming to me and saying that he wanted to get out some poetry and could I get hold of something that hadn't been published. So I got Carl's permission to publish *M'liss and Louie*, and this, too, was not what you'd call a best seller at a dollar a copy. [laughter] Over the years I gave away a few, and I think there must be a little bundle of those somewhere in our back room. The last time one was sold in a catalog it was priced at \$100.

GARDNER:

Huh!

ZEITLIN:

Now, I became a little more bold after bringing this out. Carl Sandburg had left a partly-typed, partly-manuscript poem with me called *Soo Line Sonata*, and I said to Ward, "You know, we can't get this out except for very limited distribution. If you want to make an exercise in printing of it, well, go ahead, but I think it would be a very good idea for us to print only five copies." As far as I know, that's all he printed.

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GARDNER:

Carl Sandburg was saying. . . .

ZEITLIN:

Later, Carl Sandburg got wind (someone might have hinted to him) that I had published something of his, and the next time he came out he said, "Jake, if I ever hear of you publishing anything of mine without my permission, I'm going to sue the hell out of you, no matter how good a friend you are." The curious thing is that, to go back to *M'liss and Louie*, he gave me permission to print it, and Ward Ritchie printed it, and then I sent him five copies. He must have sent one to Alfred Harcourt, because shortly afterward I got a letter from the firm of Harcourt Brace saying that this had been published without their permission, that no copyright notice had been published with it, and that, therefore, I would have to pay them a fee as a precedent, in order to protect Sandburg's copyright. I wrote back and said that Mr. Sandburg had given me permission to publish it, and they said, "That makes no difference. We have to establish the property rights in this, and you're going to have to send us ten dollars." So I sent them ten dollars in order to satisfy their requirements and to protect their copyright. My friend Mel Edelstein had his own ideas of what constituted Primavera Press publications and what didn't; and, after all, I saw no reason to argue with a well-intentioned friend, so I never insisted. But actually, the Primavera Press books that are listed in the bibliography at the back of the *Garland for Jake Zeitlin*, which was published in 1967, lists a number of things that were not Primavera Press, and it fails to list a lot of things that were Primavera Press, as well. The first Primavera Press book was this *Cavalcade* of David Weisman, and my reason for doing that was that I didn't want my name to be attached to what was obviously vanity publishing; yet I didn't want to refuse my friends who wanted to have some publisher's name on their books of poetry and were willing to pay. The same thing was true of *Enoch and Other Poems* by Medora Nickell. However, the first book published under the Primavera Press as an organized press was the *Anthology of Southern California Verse*. The Primavera Press became a publishing company in 1930 when Leslie Nelson Jennings, who was a friend of Sidney

King Russell, had come to me. He needed a job. Sidney King Russell urged me to sort of find a way to occupy him, so we decided that we would start a separate publishing concern called the Primavera Press. For that, it was merely a press name.

GARDNER:

I see.

ZEITLIN:

Sidney King Russell had been associated before that with Harold Vinal, so he'd had long experience with publishing what were called "vanity books." He published a great many privately printed books, books subsidized by their authors, and he was probably the best example of the so-called vanity publisher. Now, there's really nothing against vanity publishing, so called: Amy Lowell's first book was published privately at her own expense; Robert Frost's first book was published privately at his own expense; Vachel Lindsay's first book, *Poems to be Traded for Bread*, was published privately at his own expense; Carl Sandburg's first book was published privately at the expense of a friend; H.L. Mencken's *Ventures into Verse* was published privately by probably the most successful of all vanity publishers. Badger and Company in Boston (rather aptly named) . [tape recorder turned off] Edwin Arlington Robinson's first book of poems was published privately at his own expense; and Robinson Jeffer's *Flagons and Apples* was published privately at his own expense here in Los Angeles and was for many years given away by Holmes, who bought the remainder for something like ten cents a copy and used to sell me copies first for seventy-five cents apiece, then a dollar and a half apiece. Later on I bought ten copies at a time for three dollars apiece. Ultimately he went up as high as fifteen dollars before he closed and went out of business. It is now something like a \$750 book. But we thought we would satisfy the desire of a number of people who wanted books of their poetry published. We undertook nothing except to put them into print. We sent out a circular to sell them if anybody wanted to buy them. The first book we published was the *Anthology of Southern California Verse*, which really was a nicely printed book; it was designed and printed by Young and McCallister, and it contained a considerable number of rather good poems. *Wind Upon My Face*, by Sarah Bixby Smith, was not a Primavera Press book.

GARDNER:

I was about to ask that.

ZEITLIN:

It was privately printed by Grant Dahlstrom on Arthur Ellis's Albion handpress. And while it says "250 copies printed," I doubt if there were that many. It was purely a private matter between Sarah Bixby Smith and myself. A great many copies were given away, some sold; but it's a scarce book today, and I think it had considerable merit as poetry.

GARDNER:

Next comes your first blockbuster.

ZEITLIN:

Well, *Libros Californianos*. By 1931 Primavera Press no longer had Leslie Nelson Jennings involved in it, and Ward Ritchie was working for me. Phil Townsend Hanna had come along with this idea of publishing a selection of the five feet of California books that would be basic to any library of Californiana, and we added to that the idea of having Henry R. Wagner, Robert Cowan, and Leslie Bliss make selections of what they considered the twenty-five most desirable books in any library of California or southwestern literature (by "desirable" they leaned rather towards the rare and hard to find).

GARDNER:

Did they each pick things from their own library?

ZEITLIN:

No, they picked things which they considered to be of considerable consequence and also rarities. So it came to be a sort of a guide.

GARDNER:

There's a fairly quick second edition.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Now, Ward Ritchie was working for me at the time that I started to publish this, and I said to Ward, "Ward, you don't want to be a bookseller." (He used to stand in the back of the shop and do layouts on the wrapping paper when he was supposed to be wrapping books.) So I said, "Here's a book-why don't you go and print it. It'll be the beginning of printing for you." He had some friends by the name of [Edward A.K.] Hackett and Newell who had a printing plant out in Westwood, so he joined them, and Hackett, Newell and Ritchie Company came into being. It did rather well, so we reprinted it the next year.

GARDNER:

It says "number of copies unknown" for that second edition. Do you know how many?

ZEITLIN:

I have no idea how many copies were printed, but I think there must have been about 500. It went extremely well, the first printing of 1,050 copies. Finally, in 1958, Larry Powell agreed to revise this, and he added the books that had been published since 1931 that he felt should be put on a list, with brief notes. There were 1,000 copies printed, and we thought we'd sold them all out. But a couple of years ago I found several packages in the back of my shop, so it's again in print. *Adobe Days* of Sarah Bixby Smith was not truly a Primavera Press book; it did not have the Primavera Press imprint.

GARDNER:

Again, it's Jake Zeitlin, Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, it's Jake Zeitlin. It was produced by Young and McCallister, but the unbound sheets were taken over by Ward Ritchie and [Gregg] Anderson.

GARDNER:

It mentions that it's the third edition, so it was something that was originally published somewhere else.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the first edition was published in Cedar Rapids, Iowa [Torch Press] in 1925, and then a second edition in 1926, also at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Then in 1931 Sarah Bixby decided that it was out of print, that there was a demand for it, and that she would like to have it printed again. So she helped finance it, and I published it. Fifteen hundred copies were printed. The major part of these were destroyed at Ward Ritchie's.

GARDNER:

Oh, right. I think you told that story.

ZEITLIN:

Right, I've told it elsewhere.

GARDNER:

Now, the rest of these are all Primavera.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. However, I want to make a little note about the *Reminiscences of a Ranger*. The actual sheets of the *Reminiscences of a Ranger* were printed in Chicago at the Lakeside Press. They had been intended to be published by Wallace Hebbard in 1927, but something went awry, and we took over the sheets and got out this edition with the new title page, binding, and dust jacket designed by Ward Ritchie. I think it was Phil Hanna who wrote the blurb for this edition, and the blurb evidently contained something which was very offensive to the daughters of Horace Bell. They discovered a copy in Parker's Bookstore and immediately got in touch with us and threatened to sue us, so that we destroyed all the dust jackets on all the copies except those which had already gone out. A copy with the dust jacket of that book is extremely rare. In fact, I haven't got one myself, and I haven't seen one for sale. The most beautiful book that was produced under the Primavera Press imprint—and I think still, from a typographic standpoint and all-around bookmaker's standpoint, the best book produced in Southern California—was Alexandre Dumas 's [A] *Gil Bias in California* , which was translated by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur.

GARDNER:

This was Saul Marks's first book, right?

ZEITLIN:

This was Saul Marks 's first book. The wood engravings were produced by Paul Landacre. Ward Ritchie had a considerable hand in the design of it. Actually, the Plantin Press at that time was in part financed by Grant Dahlstrom, and he also advised in the production of this book and did a great deal of teaching of Saul and Ward. But all in all, that is a very pleasing book, and I think by far the best book ever produced in Southern California.

GARDNER:

Before you skip on, I notice in 1934 there's another one—oh, no, I take that back, it says printed by the Primavera Press even though it wasn't. Okay, pardon me. Now, to move on to the next section . . .

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think we should include, in any discussion of the books which I've had anything to do with, the books that I've published which, for one reason or another, Mel Edelstein did not see fit to include. Why he included some as publications of the Primavera Press which were not and excluded others [which were] I can't explain. However, I think one of the outstanding books that was produced by Zeitlin and Ver Brugge under the Zeitlin and Ver Brugge imprint was Aldous Huxley's *Prisons*. That was produced in Paris, and it has a rather interesting history. Arnold Fawcus of Philadelphia had started producing books in London and Paris under the imprint of the Trianon Press. I had persuaded Aldous Huxley to do an essay on what was one of his and my favorite collections of prints, and that is the *Carceri*, [or] *The Prisons*, of [Giambattista] Piranesi. Piranesi's *Prisons* had been the subject of essays by [Thomas] DeQuincey and by [William] Wordsworth and a number of other writers. They have a haunting quality about them. In them Piranesi did something different from any other thing he did during his whole career as an etcher. They are sort of a dreamlike creation. They deserve to be classed with Blake's *Book of Job*, or with some of the etchings of Goya. They have a certain terrifying quality about them as well. So because of the interest in them that Huxley had, and which I shared because I had handled several sets of *The Prisons* and had looked over one set that had belonged to the museum here together, he wrote this essay. About that time, Arnold Fawcus came to town, and I told him about it, and he said, "Let's do this together. I can get John

Adhemar, who is the curator of prints at the Bibliotheque Nationale and who is a foremost authority on Piranesi, to write an essay describing the different states. We'll do something really fine and have it printed by one of the good printers in Paris." We agreed that we would each pay half, and there would be a total of 212 copies--100 for the Trianon Press and the so-called Grey Falcon Press in Philadelphia, and 100 for Zeitlin and Ver Brugge, and 12 for Aldous Huxley and ourselves. Arnold Fawcus produced this, sent me my 100 copies. We got Aldous to sign all the 212 copies and delivered his copies to him. Much to my surprise and Aldous's, we discovered later that Fawcus had also printed 1,000 unsigned copies which he had turned over to Faber and Faber for distribution without giving Aldous Huxley any royalty [or] paying him any fee for the production of these books [and] without informing me or giving me any share for having participated in the cost of production. Because actually the composition, the printing, the plates and everything, were produced out of half the cost, which I provided. It was more than twenty years afterward, when I was in Paris, Paul Mellon's librarian, Willis Van Devanter, insisted that I go with him and his wife to meet Arnold Fawcus at his printing establishment in Paris, and I went out. Arnold Fawcus by then had become the official printer and publisher of the [William] Blake trust--very beautiful books, very sumptuously produced under the editorship of Geoffrey Keynes and with the aid of Paul Mellon and Lessing Rosenwald. I doubt if books as sumptuous as these facsimile books in marvelous color have ever been produced. So when I went to see Arnold and he showed me around, I said, "Arnold, you know we have some unsettled business." [laughter] "I think we ought to sit down and talk it over." I told him about this and told him that he had never settled with Huxley, he had never settled with me, and had never even informed us of what he was doing. It was not part of his contract with Huxley and with me. He looked like a man who knew he'd done something wrong, and he said he was very contrite. He said, "You know, I was very poor in those days, and struggling, and I'm afraid that I didn't take the trouble I should have taken to get Huxley's permission and yours and to settle with you." And he said, "Now, what do you want?" He at that time had published a very handsome haggadah with illustrations by Ben Shahn, and I said, "Well, you can give me one of the haggadahs and you can consider it settled." So that's what happened.

GARDNER:

What was the year of the publication of *The Prisons*?

ZEITLIN:

In 1949. It was very nicely gotten up with a full set of the plates in every one of the states described by Adhemar. It had both Huxley's essay and Adhemar's essay. Also it had a portfolio in addition to the Dutch paper binding. It now sells for around \$250 to \$300. I think at that time we sold it for \$18, and Lessing Rosenwald very kindly bailed me out by buying about ten of them at the time they were published. I'm sure I wouldn't have been able to pay my share of the printing cost if it hadn't been for that. In 1940 I also published a little book of Aldous Huxley's called *Words and Their Meanings*, and that also has a curious history. Aldous Huxley had given me the manuscript, and I went to Ward Ritchie and said, "I'd like to have it printed, and I want to publish it." Whereupon he produced 10 copies to be signed by Aldous Huxley, but he proceeded to produce, according to what I find in the bibliography, about 1,000 copies for general distribution. And that bears no reference to me and was published entirely by the Ward Ritchie Press. What it says in the bibliography is "Los Angeles, the Ward Ritchie Press, 1940, 1,000 copies." I'm puzzled that there is no mention of the 100 copies that were printed off for me and signed by Huxley.

GARDNER:

What was the imprint that you would have had?

ZEITLIN:

I have the original edition that was printed for me, which says "Jake Zeitlin"; it bears a colophon signed by Huxley, and it is dated the same year. The fact is that Ritchie went ahead and printed 1,000 copies in all for his own distribution. One of the notable things about this book is that jacket and the title page were designed by Alvin Lustig, a very young man at the time, who had studied architecture with Frank Lloyd Wright and then had abandoned architecture and gone in for printing design. I sent him to Ritchie, and he did several notable books there at Ritchie's press and established a very highly personal style of design, using ornament in a way that was very much derived from the style of Frank Lloyd Wright. Gradually he developed a style very much his own. Later, I introduced him to the man who owned New Directions

Press, James Laughlin, and Laughlin immediately engaged him to design jackets and become the designer for New Directions Press. He did that for a while. He went East and ended up teaching typographic design at Yale. He acquired quite a reputation as a designer. Unfortunately, he developed some condition with his eyes, and he went blind and died very young--I think quite a loss in the field of typographic design. He was a really extraordinary talented, highly individual designer. Now, among the other books which I have published since, I think one of the notable ones is an edition of Thomas Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections*.

GARDNER:

Now, this is Zeitlin again, "Jake Zeitlin," or is this Zeitlin and Ver Brugge?

ZEITLIN:

No, this is Zeitlin and Ver Brugge, and Dawsons of Pall Mall, and this is a very sumptuous publication, two volumes bound in full leather by Zaehnsdorf in an edition of 200 copies. It's a reprint of a work published originally in 1664 and '65, and the reprint contains an introductory essay by Stillman Drake. I think I've told somewhere else the story of how this publication came about.

GARDNER:

Yes. What was the date on it?

ZEITLIN:

It was 1967.

GARDNER:

Oh, that's recent.

ZEITLIN:

As I've told before, Volume I is relatively common--there are something like fifty copies known-- but Volume II was known only in seven copies. The seventh known copy, which had belonged to de Andrade, came up at an auction of his scientific books in the summer of 1964. I was present, Stillman Drake was present, and our chief competitor in the bidding was the manager of Dawsons of Pall Mall, a man by the name of [Bert] Marley. The book kept rising, Mr. Marley hung on, and I kept bidding up. Finally, when it got to 2,800

pounds, I raised to 3,000 pounds, and Mr. Marley dropped out, but not without sticking his tongue out at me across the table in the august auction rooms of Sotheby's. [laughter] Well, that afternoon we had a drink together, and we decided that we would publish the two volumes in facsimile—with the permission of Joe Schaffner, for whom I'd bought it—with an introduction by Stillman Drake. So Stillman Drake provided us with an introduction. The production of it was under the supervision of Dawsons of Pall Mall. I'm sorry that I didn't keep more of a hand in on the production side; I thought they were going to give it to somebody like Curwen Press to do, but instead they farmed it out to some house who didn't use much taste in the design of the title page. The interior of the book was very well done—that is, that portion which was originally set, the introductory matter written by Drake. Because the volumes were bound in full calf by Zaehnsdorf, we had to sell the book for something like \$365 a copy. I'd forgotten how much it amounted to in pounds in those days—probably about 175 pounds. We did succeed, however, in selling enough copies to pay back our cost. The remaining copies I ultimately bought from Dawsons of Pall Mall, and from time to time I sell a copy. I think I must have about 50 out of the original 200 left. All in all, it is a very handsome book and one that I'm proud to have been involved in publishing.

GARDNER:

Can we go back? I don't know what order you have those in, but what originally inspired this session was Jim Davis's finding of the Harold Ickes book that was put out by the Breakfast Press and the discovery that there was a Jake Zeitlin press that no one knew anything about.

ZEITLIN:

Well, it wasn't really a Jake Zeitlin press; Jake Zeitlin was merely one of the participants. Sometime in the thirties, Preston Tuttle and his wife Mildred, and Josephine and I, and Paul and Margaret Landacre started meeting Sundays and having breakfast, and then after breakfast we would read a play of Shakespeare's. We decided we needed to know Shakespeare's plays. Some of us had read some of them, but none of us had read all of them, and we thought we would read through them, each of us taking parts, and we found this to be very enjoyable. Part of the time we would meet at the house of Grant Dahlstrom, where he had an Albion handpress out in the barn, and it

was suggested that we print something on the press on one of the Sundays. So, after having breakfast and after reading one of the plays, we would go out in the backyard. Grant usually had set the type in advance and had the forms locked in, and we would ink and pull the presses. The first book we did was *The Amphisbaena, the Crocodile, and Other Poems*, by A.E. Housman. It had appeared in a school paper when Housman was a boy and had never been reprinted, but it had been discovered by William White, who teaches now at Wayne University but then was a graduate student at USC here. William White has a great nose for ephemera. He publishes very few books, but he publishes lots of half-page and quarter-page bibliographical notes and brief notes. His bibliography is immense, consisting largely of bibliographical notes and short reviews, short essays of one sort or another. But he does have a nose for the things that are overlooked and forgotten, and he came to me and he said, "Look here, how would you like to publish a couple of poems of A.E. Housman that have never appeared separately?" So, without troubling to get the permission of Mr. Housman (because copyright had run out already), we proceeded to publish these with the introduction of William White. I think we must have printed 100 copies. They were printed on handmade paper, and I think we made the paper ourselves, but I can't remember. In any event, we folded them—they were printed wet and they had to be hung up to dry afterwards and pressed on an ironing board with a regular kitchen iron—and the wives sewed them. Some copies did not have the cover, so that most of the copies that exist today have only the title page. But it's a very rare Housman item, and none have turned up for sale in quite a few years; the last that turned up were bringing around twenty-five dollars apiece. Later on I ran across an article in *The New Republic* by Harold Ickes, and it was called "When Are You Going to Laugh, America?" It appealed to all of us, and so we decided to print it. We printed, I suppose, a couple of hundred copies. In both cases Paul Landacre did a wood engraving—an ornament for *The Amphisbaena*, and I think the same thing for Harold Ickes's "When Are You Going to Laugh?" So these are really very scarce ephemera; most of them were dispersed. I'm not sure that I haven't got a little bundle of *The Amphisbaena* somewhere around the bookshop still, and I wish I could find them, just like the Carl Sandburg things, because I think that it would be better than finding a cache of gold coins. [laughter]

GARDNER:

How come you stopped after two?

ZEITLIN:

Well, it got to be work. As long as it was fun and we did it more or less as a recreation, it was all right. But when it got to be something that we felt under compulsion about and didn't have the urge to get out there and pull at the handpress for several hours on a Sunday afternoon--Grant Dahlstrom didn't feel like setting up the type in advance—so, we just dropped it. It was purely for fun, and when it stopped being fun, we quit. [laughter] Which is the way it should be.

GARDNER:

Were there any other presses which were not Zeitlin or Zeitlin and Ver Brugge? Were there any other publishing ventures that you were involved in?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think that I helped George Yamada, a little Japanese fellow, get started. He had very good taste; he did some good printing. He would rent the press at Anderson and Ritchie, or he would rent the press at Dahlstrom, and got out several very nice things. They've disappeared, most of what George Yamada produced, but they were in very good taste, very charming. He became an anthropologist and went down into Mexico. He also wrote a little pamphlet about the Navajos which he's published and which is now extremely scarce. It is an important item on the Navajo land problems.

GARDNER:

What was his imprint?

ZEITLIN:

"George Yamada," as I remember it. I can't remember what his imprint was; he's very much forgotten. Of course, there was Thomas Perry Stricker, who printed several things for me. I had him write about four essays on four rare books that I'd sold to Frank Hogan, and in each case he wrote the essays, and then he printed them up into little books. They were very charming. He had a tendency toward the French cursive letters. He had rather a striking, flamboyant style. He went to New York and became the New York representative for some of the German typefounders (Bauer and Company) ,

was involved in the activities of the Typophiles [Club], and so on. He died there, and the majority of his books are now at the [William Andrews] Clark [Memorial] Library. Thomas Perry Strieker was a colorful chap. He worked for me for a while, not only doing these essays and the little booklets but also as a cataloger during the time when he was not employed full time. Then, of course, there is Bill Cheney, who is a story all to himself. The most remarkable production of Bill Cheney's is his volume called *The Type Stickers of the Southern California Region*, which is a collection of letters between Bill Cheney and H. Richard Archer. Richard Archer had a little press called the Hippogryff Press, and it was the various members of the Rounce and Coffin Club that bought the press and a font of type and enough equipment for him to get started.

1.23. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, Side One
(April 25, 1978)

ZEITLIN:

Today I had lunch with Ann Bobrow, who has been our cataloger for approximately forty years, and Grant Dahlstrom, who is my friend of over fifty years. Our purpose was to discuss the projected catalog which we are planning to bring out in the early fall of this year. It is to be entitled *Our First Half-Century*, and it will contain a selection of books and manuscripts and letters such as we would have handled over this period (but really books). Everything contained will be something for sale at present or recently sold. My purpose in dictating this is to produce, if possible, what may be used as a foreword to the catalog—sort of a historical summary of my fifty years of bookselling and their significance to me. It is as much a surprise to me as it could possibly be to anyone else that I stand here at the end of fifty years of bookselling. I really had no hopes of surviving as a businessman for this long, and in the face of several periods where the certainty of survival was much less than the certainty of failure. It occurs to me that sort of a quick sketch of these years and of those people who have been most helpful to me in furthering my career as a bookseller would be the best possible way of expressing both my satisfaction at having reached this point and of my gratitude. I can honestly say that, my temperament being what it is, bookselling is probably the only field in which I could have succeeded to the

degree that I have—for it is a field in which you can jump from one interesting topic of interest to another without having to concentrate too long. Each day brings some new surprise; each purchase contains something different from anything else that I have bought before. And in that way, I'm able to divert my attention and divert myself before any one thing becomes too tedious to pursue too long. This limited span of attention, which seems to be a characteristic of mine, has particular value in the business of selling books and of dealing with the wide variety of people that one should be able to cope with. In the course of a day, you not only have your attention shifted from one subject to another, but you also have your attention shifted from one kind of a personality to another. And while some people may stay a long time and bring you to the point of absolute desperation or boredom (the latter of which I have rarely felt in my life) , in the majority of cases each person that comes is a challenge, each is a stimulant, and each one brings out something in me which might have lain latent without the demands of adapting to that new kind of a person. So what in some fields of endeavor might be a defeating handicap has in bookselling been a great asset. In addition, I think that bookselling has been a great outlet for my desire to explore the personalities of people. I find that the more interest you take in people, the more they respond to you and the more likely they are to buy something --whether it's a book or whatever you have to offer for sale. No one fails to react favorably to the question: "Tell me about yourself. Tell me what you like. Tell me what you're interested in." And I must say that I have consciously exploited this device to very good advantage. But it has given me a great deal of pleasure, and I think it's also given the person opposite me a great deal of satisfaction to have someone who asks them those questions and then listens to them while they talk about themselves. For the privilege of talking about yourself and what you like and what you're interested in, you're willing to pay a considerable price, and if there is any one secret about salesmanship, I think it is that. To go back to my beginnings and the origins of the development of my own peculiar interests and tastes, I must say that the roots lie very deep and very early in my childhood. I was fortunate in being thrown into the company of, first, the teachers that I had in school, and then the individuals that I found in the community that I grew up in--I'm sure a very average, middlesized American town with, if anything, less of the usual cultural advantages or cultural assets- I was never able to fit myself into the ordinary social group. I

did not play games like baseball or any of the other team games, first because I was not very dextrous, not very well coordinated; and in the second place, because I disliked losing, and I did not choose to participate in any game in which I would be the loser. So I chose such things as were not competitive, where I would not have to compare with other people. I chose swimming because that was something that you could do in or out of competition. I chose bird watching, and I chose reading because reading and the effort to write—which I commenced at very early — were activities that you did not have to immediately stand [in] comparison with anyone else. I was not a good games player, as I said before, and neither was I good at the usual social activities of the younger people of my family group. I didn't participate in the usual dances or parties. I didn't have enough confidence in my personal appearance to try to dress presentably, so I dressed as unpresentably as I could; I indulged my eccentricities because they provided a shield against the necessity for comparison, rather than because they made me conspicuous. And most of my friendships were one-to-one associations; most of my social activities consisted of cultivating single friendships. I never seemed to have any sense of age differences as a barrier, so that I very early started associating with people much older than myself. I would go to them and say, "I understand that you are a botanist," or "You are a geologist," or "You know a great deal about music and architecture, and I'd like to know whatever you can take the time and trouble to tell me." So that old Albert Ruth, who was one of Texas's outstanding botanists of his time, a man who was close to eighty at the time I met him, said, "Come along with me when I go botanizing, and I'll show you the plants around here and tell you about them." And so it was with a number of other people. I used to stay after school and ask questions of my teachers, and if they proposed a project, I very eagerly went about doing it. I developed a course in ornithology at the high school. Of course, we had several trunks of bird skins. The teacher found that this was a very good way to fill in the time and keep the classes occupied between the regular lectures they had prepared, or the laboratory work; so I was allowed to take the bird skins, and I prepared an outline, which was passed on by the teacher. Here I was, a young man of sixteen, lecturing to the high school zoology classes about ornithology—about which, as I remember now, I really knew very little. But I had, as I say, no sense of any handicap about age difference between myself and older people, and I also had no sense of

inferiority in respect to other people, whatever their financial or social status might be. To me, nobody was any taller than I. I think this has been a great advantage also in my bookselling, because I've never felt any particular hesitancy or self-consciousness about approaching people of great eminence or great wealth, and they have usually responded to me with great interest and kindness. Great collectors, like Lessing Rosenwald, whom I called on the telephone and asked if I could come and see at his hotel—he said "Yes, come along." I came. I brought what I had to offer. I showed them to him. I was neither too aggressive nor too subservient. I didn't attempt to flatter, and I did not put myself down. And this, I think, served very well, both for them and for me. (By the way, this is not what I had intended to say, but I think I'll continue in this vein.) [laughter] When I first decided to become a bookseller as a result of my association with Ben Abramson—who later founded the Argus Book Shop—I was driving a truck in Texas, and Ben Abramson was my helper. I was by far his junior, but I could drive a truck, and he couldn't; and he needed a job, and I had the advantage of being the boss's son. After a few days, he started talking. He was a nonstop talker, a man whose capacity for having no terminal facilities became famous in later years when he developed his bookshop in Chicago. And so he enchanted me with his talk about McClurg's bookshop in Chicago, the Saints and Sinners Corner—which was frequented by people like Eugene Field in its early days, and later by Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg—the Dill Pickle Club, the Whitechapel Club, all of which were more or less formal groups of people interested in books and general hilarity. When Ben Abramson departed, approximately in 1919, I had pretty well made up my mind that what I wanted to do was to be a bookseller. I had developed a number of friendships among the people who owned books, with the manager of the leading book department in The Fair department store and with his opposite, a man by the name of Teale, at Stripling's department store. Both of them were men who had a real dedication to books and people, surprisingly literate in spite of their appearance of being purely merchandisers. And so I moved, rather ruthlessly, as I see it now, away from my own family's business away from the obligation I had to my family, which was dependent on it--and took a job as a clerk in the book department of The Fair, a department store there in Fort Worth. I don't think I was very good at it. People came in and talked, and I talked to them. My tendency to encourage people to stay--I encouraged them to talk about themselves and their

interests—became so noticeable that the manager of the book department spoke to me about it; the merchandise manager in the department store spoke to me about it. But this was, for me, not something that I could consciously control. I think that all my life I have moved by tropisms, sort of an unconscious response to pressures about which I had very little conscious knowledge. What their roots are I don't know, and I don't suppose I ever will, and maybe it would be just as well if I didn't. When I finally decided to leave my hometown, my choice was purely in terms of what I hoped would be a bookselling future. In fact, I tossed a coin: if it was heads, I was going to go to Chicago, where I hoped to go to work for my friend Ben Abramson and his associate Gerry Nedwick, both of whom had worked for me; if it was tails, I was going to go to Los Angeles, where my friend Franklin Wolfe had some friends who he thought could help me find a job in a bookstore. Well, it came up tails, so I sent my wife by train to Los Angeles to these unknown friends of a friend. I borrowed fifteen dollars, and I started walking across the country to Los Angeles. Of course, I had no idea how far away it was, or the fact that there were dry, empty prairies and deserts and mountains in between. If I had known it, I'd never have started; and if I hadn't started, I wouldn't have got here, so I guess it was just as well. There are great blanks in my own recollections of how I got from place to place in some parts of New Mexico, and I especially have trouble remembering how I ever got as far as Needles from Gallup, New Mexico, and then from Needles to Daggett. It was as if I was moving in a dream: I can't remember where I slept or what I ate or how I traveled. Of course, I did hitch a number of rides, and where I couldn't get a ride, I would walk at night. But in the course of about three weeks, I got as far as Daggett; and from Daggett to Los Angeles was one quick ride on a truck. The man who was driving it was selling dairy products-- butter and cheese and milk—to restaurants and grocery stores, traveling out of Los Angeles. And the trip from the desert down into Los Angeles was, I suppose, one of the most magical unrolling of landscape and of a new world that I have ever experienced. Without dwelling in detail on what I think I have told in some of the previous parts of this series of interviews, I think the most crucial point in my whole life was the night of the Sunday in 1925. I had been fired by Holmes the night before; I had no idea where I would turn next. And that day the house caught fire. That evening, we found ourselves sitting around the table-- my wife Edith and my friend Bates Booth, a young law student then attending

the University of Southern California law school, who had come out from Fort Worth. He had previously attended Sewanee [Institute] , and he had attended Stanford law school. He had taught English in the high school in Fort Worth, and he came out to California after I ventured out here. And he was living in the house with us while he had a part-time job and was struggling to complete his degree in law. The roof and ceiling had been burned off the house. We lit candles, gathered up all the food that was left, made one big meal of it, and sat there. And my friend Booth said to Edith, my then-wife, and me, "I think we're licked. I think we've tried, and we've done our best, and I think the best thing to do is get in touch with our folks, tell 'em we don't have any money, we have no shelter, and we'd like to come home. And they'll send money to us. We'll go back home." And I said, "No, we can't do that. If we go back, we'll be defeated for the rest of our lives. We give up, and we're done for. We'll be captives. I'm going to stay here, and someday I'm going to have a bookshop, and it's going to be a bookshop where you'll find first editions of the classics and the great names in literature, and beautiful art books, and etchings of Rembrandt and Durer on the walls, and hangings and carpets on the balconies. And I'm going to stay here till I get it." We went to a neighbor's house that night and slept in the attic. The Monday morning afterward, I went down to the May Company--one of the department stores in town-- to the manager of the book department. I presented myself and said, "I can sell books, and I'd like a job. I want you to give me a chance." The manager of that book department was a woman by the name of May Perks. I'm sure that she was no candidate for any beauty prize; she was a very plain-looking woman, and, at that time, seemed to be a rather dull, unimaginative person. But she had enough imagination to say, "Go down to the personnel office and tell them that I sent you and that I'd like to have you in my department. And if there is an opening, they'll give you the job, unless there's someone that is ahead of you." So I went down, and the next day I was given the job. This very plain May Perks was the first person to have the idea of exploiting film personalities for product sales. She acquired the rights to represent Shirley Temple; and she licensed the use of Shirley Temple's name, helped develop products in clothes, in dolls, in books, and in all kinds of other products, and ended up a very wealthy woman. I didn't stay in the May Company book department for more than about three weeks. By that time, I'd discovered that up the street about two blocks was Bullock's, which had a much higher

quality of merchandise, which had a book department that carried a great many more books of a higher level, had some pretensions to wanting to merchandise bindings, well-printed books, literary works, and sets, as well as the usual run-of-the-mill best sellers, the staples of department-store book departments. Nobody really trained me. I did, very early, subscribe to the *Publishers Weekly*. I started reading the departments of the *Publishers Weekly*, the sections which were conducted by Jake Blanck, at that time, and later by Sol Malkin, for the benefit of the antiquarian-book trade. I haunted secondhand-book stores in the evenings and on my days off. A great deal of the time, I would go together with a young man who worked in a stockbroker's office on Spring Street. His name was Max Hunley, and Max and I would spend our time going from one bookstore to another trying to find books which we could buy for a dollar and take down the street to another bookstore and sell for two dollars, or take to some of the individual collectors that we'd learned about. These were the early beginnings. And it was a combination of the friendships which I formed in the bookshops where I worked, and the curiosity in my head about books and the desire to learn more and more about them, the appetite I had for reading, the lack of humility-- which must have been a considerable asset. I was neither bumptious nor shy. I wrote to Paul Jordan-Smith, whose book on strange authors I had read—a book of essays about Ambrose Bierce, James Branch Cabell, Arthur Machen, and a few other literary names—and told him that I was working in a bookshop in Los Angeles, that I would like to call on him. I got a letter back saying, "Please do." So on a Sunday, I took the Red Car out to Claremont and was met at the station by this tall, very kindly, very handsome man, with a big German shepherd dog. We walked down the long rows of eucalyptus trees to a charming old house, and for the first time in my life, I really saw a collector's library. He was one of the first men to discover and write about James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and it was there that I saw a copy of the first edition in the original blue wrappers. Some of the people he was interested in never really amounted to very much, people like Eden Phillpotts, who wrote a tremendous lot. Phillpotts wrote one or two books of some merit, including *Children of the Mist*, which Paul Jordan thought was one of the great English novels about Devon, and which I feel is a book which has merit far beyond which has been recognized. He collected the works of people like J. Mills Whitham, who nobody had heard about then and nobody has heard

about since. On the other hand, he was a great follower of John Cowper Powys and Llewellyn Powys and T.F. Powys, all three of whom had great merit. John Cowper Powys was a lecturer then and a writer of essays, but he really found his outlet and found his highest level of achievement in the writing of novels--rather dour, grim novels which I think have also not been appreciated enough. Here were first editions of Arthur Machen —*The Hill of Dreams*, *The Great God Pan*--as well as the first edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the book to which, of all books, Paul Jordan-Smith was most dedicated. He was engaged in doing a new edition of it in which he was annotating every reference that Robert Burton made to the various sources that he'd drawn upon. He was interested in reading (so that he might understand Robert Burton's sources) all of the works that Burton referred to. He was collecting them in first or early editions or the editions which had been read by Burton. So he had a houseful of books that were being collected not only because of their rarity but because they were useful in his scholarly endeavors. And I think this really lit the torch more than anything else; gave me an idea, of what the uses of a collection of rare books could be, other than that of just being able to possess something rare and expensive. It was very exciting. It was exciting to listen to Paul Jordan-Smith because he was a great conversationalist, he was a man of tremendous enthusiasm, and he was a man of widely varied interests in special kinds of literature. He became my very strong friend and sponsor. How I impressed him I don't know. As some of my friends have said, because I have accumulated in my boyhood in Texas quite a variety of folk songs, which I used to sing with great enthusiasm, I gave the impression to some of the people who are still alive and who remember my performances that I was playing the guitar. As a matter of fact, I was only singing and clapping my hands in rhythm for background. While at Bullock's, I met Phil Townsend Hanna.

1.24. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, Side Two
(April 25, 1978 and May 9, 1978)

ZEITLIN:

Phil Townsend Hanna became the editor of what then was called *Touring Topics*, the house organ of the Automobile Club of Southern California; it later became *Westways* and now has developed into a very respectable magazine.

Somehow I stimulated the curiosity and the interest of Phil Hanna, and he in turn brought in Will Connell, a photographer. Will Connell then introduced me to Lloyd Wright, the son of Frank Lloyd Wright. I met Grace Marion Brown, a designer. And before very long I had formed a circle of friends, a quite astonishingly varied circle, which included Merle Armitage, then manager of the Los Angeles opera; Carl Haverlin, who was manager of KFI, the leading radio station in Los Angeles; Gordon Raye Young, who was the book review editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. In a very short while, I developed a broad spectrum of friendship; as I look back on it now, it's hard to explain. There was Bill Conselman and his wife Mina Conselman. He was a writer at Twentieth Century-Fox, and between them, they developed a strip called "Ella Cinders" that made them wealthy. There were many other people in this circle, and as time went on, I think I became a sort of a binding element. The person most responsible, I think, was Will Connell, who had a great talent for bringing people together and who also was generous beyond the call of duty to a great many people. By the time I was ready to open my own bookshop, I had formed a wide circle of acquaintances, friendships which were more than casual. People commenced to take trouble: to further me, to introduce me to people who might buy books, to lend me support in all kinds of ways-- help me design my bookshop, lend me stocks of books so that I'd have enough books to fill the shelves, send me drawings, prints, photographs to hang on the wall to sell. As I look back on it now with some perspective, I think it was the most marvelous spontaneous phenomenon. I was young; I was eager; I was articulate. And I think all these things affected other people, and very soon we had, really, the beginnings of an intellectual circle. Some of the participants weren't so profoundly intellectual, but the chief thing that brought them together was an interest in one or the other of the arts, and particularly in books, writing, printing, music. Carey McWilliams became a part of the group. An architect and designer of furniture by the name of Kem Weber was a part of the group. Arthur Millier, the art editor of the *Times*, was a part of the group. Why it was a group at all is hard to understand; we took to meeting without ever really having an organization, at quite regular intervals, at the French restaurant near us on West Sixth Street, a place called Rene and Jean. Then we'd repair to the bookshop, sit around and talk. Of course, this all provided me with customers as well, but as I look back on it now, I didn't really take the advantage I might have if I'd known the ways of business better. A

great many of the people who came, participated, and took a lot of my time, and so on, weren't really customers. They certainly were friends, and they helped build the ambiance the whole spirit out of which my bookshop grew and which sustained it even when it didn't do so well financially. I think what I'm trying to get at is the idea that after a while my bookshop became a community expression rather than just the expression of myself, and that is how it has grown. The thing which has kept me going in spite of my deficiencies as a businessman (and I certainly had many of them to start with; I've learned something about business management since, but I certainly didn't know anything about it then) was that after a while the bookshop became more than the expression of myself; it became the expression of the wishes and the dreams of a great many other people. I remember that when I moved and my friends decided to hold an opening party, it was presided over by a man by the name of A.G. Beaman, and the people that came represented all facets of the community. There were my fellow booksellers, like Ernest Dawson and Mrs. Millard; there were printers; there were writers; there were musicians. They were people like Hamlin Garland, who wrote me a beautiful letter. I have a very thick portfolio of letters which were written to me by people from all over the community, and from all over the country, expressing their enthusiasm, assuring me that their heart was with me in this bookshop. It was something different, I think, from any other bookshop, certainly in this community, and I don't think there's been any other quite like it. Dawson's, of course, is a community institution. I think as time has gone on and my business has increased in size, and I've had to isolate myself more from the public, my shop doesn't represent now what it did then. But it certainly is a product of the dreams and the good wishes, the hopes, of a lot of people for whom the bookshop was a personal expression. They were fulfilling their ambitions as well as mine. I wish I could name all the people who, in one way or another, went out of their way to help me, people like Mrs. Estelle Getz, Julius Jacoby, members of the Jewish community. There was quite a large number of the Jewish community then--the well-to-do leaders of the organized Jewish community--who helped me, men like Sol Lesser, like George Moschbacher. I can't remember all their names. Then there were medical men, like Dr. Hyman Miller and Dr. Arthur Cecil and Dr. Elmer Belt, and a great many more. There were people like Hugh Walpole who came and bought books from me and extended me their friendship and their support,

people like Wilbur and Ida Needham, who really are among the dearest people that we ever had in this community. One of the most important people who saw me through many difficulties and provided the financial support that really has made it possible for me to go on was John Valentine, a man from Decatur, Illinois, who had helped found the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago and then came out here. He was a man who collected books. He loved books; he loved good company. He went traveling with me to buy books, and he supplied me with the funds to buy libraries when I couldn't have gotten the money any other way. There were people in the book trade, especially Ernest Maggs, of Maggs Brothers, and there were librarians like Nathan Van Patten of Stanford University, and Harold Leupp of the University of California, and Willis Kerr of Pomona College, Claremont universities, that gave me their patronage and their advice and their encouragement. And there were other booksellers in addition to Ernest Dawson, like John Howell, who were very helpful, and the firm of E. Weyhe in New York, especially the man in charge of the print department there, Carl Zigrosser. Dr. Rosenbach came out, called on me, sent me books to sell. Just the prestige of being associated with him was a tremendous asset. [There were] people like Frank Hogan, one of the greatest trial lawyers America ever had, a tremendous book lover and a tremendous friend of book people, who had a particular weakness for booksellers, and Mrs. Doheny, who was a very faithful patron, and all of the many small collectors, not just the great and famous ones, but the many people whose two- and five- and ten- and twenty-five- and hundred-dollar purchases made it possible for me to keep my doors open. Whatever my personal differences might have been with Homer Crotty--and mostly they were differences of politics and ideology--he was certainly very supportive. Very often he would come over, and I'd say, "Look, I need to sell some books today," and he would pick out a large pile of books and take them away. And [there were] men like Will Clary, of the firm of O'Melveny and Meyers. The bookshop became, as I said before, the product of so many different people's interests and affection and loyalty and support that it was not just my shop. And I like to think that it still isn't. I like to think that what it has grown to be, as a rather large business, is very much the expression of all the people who have felt a sense of participation and to whom it has been an expression of themselves as well as of me.

MAY 9, 1978

GARDNER:

Okay, as I mentioned, I thought we'd start out this evening and finish up with your publications, talk about what you did with Salusbury's materials.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the roots of the publication of Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections* go back to about 1942, when I met Stillman Drake. In the course of our acquaintanceship, which was related to a mutual interest in the history of science and history of logic and philosophy, he talked to me a great deal about Galileo, which was his favorite subject and still is. Stillman Drake was a product of the Depression. He'd gone to the University of California at Berkeley, and he had majored in philosophy. He had to stop school and start earning a living for his wife and two sons because of the Depression, and so he never got his PhD. He had a substantial knowledge of mathematics and particularly of statistics, so that he very early got a job with some one of the federal agencies, came down to Los Angeles, and wandered into my shop one day. We got into conversation, and he showed me a book which he had printed in an edition of about eighteen copies. It was a reprint of a very rare philosophical work by a remote American philosopher named A.B. Johnson, of Ithaca, New York, who in 1828 wrote a book called [*A Treatise on Language, or*] *Words and the Relation That They Bear to Things*, by far the earliest American semanticist. I said, "How can I get one?" And he said, "There aren't any for sale, and I have only a couple of copies left. And the only thing that would induce me to part with a copy would be if you could offer me a copy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*." And I said, "Well, just hang on here. I think I can get one for you." I reached for the telephone, and I called Larry Edmunds Book Shop in Hollywood. And I said to Larry, "If you'll turn around in the seat you're sitting in and look up at the third shelf from the top at about the fourth book to the right, I think you'll see a copy of a book by Wittgenstein called *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*." He turned around, he said, "Yes, it's there." And I said, "Well, you put it aside. A friend of mine's going to stop by and pick it up, and you bill me for it." And I turned around to Drake, and I said, "If you go out to Larry Edmunds Book Shop in Hollywood on Cahuenga"—which is where the shop was at that time—"go in there and tell

them you've come to pick up *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. "He was very much impressed. Of all things, I had remembered the location of that particular book on the shelf of this bookshop when I had been in there scanning the shelves one day.

GARDNER:

What was Larry Edmunds doing with that, just something he'd picked up?

ZEITLIN:

Well, that was before . . .

GARDNER:

. . . before his specialization.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, before his specialization. It was a general secondhand-book shop, and Larry Edmunds was specializing in secondhand-book selling and bootlegging at that time, [laughter] although I think that Prohibition had already been repealed.

GARDNER:

Which was he better at?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think that he did very well at bootlegging as long as whiskey-selling wasn't legalized. He was one of these people that you very often find in the book business. Like Stanley Rose, he appeared to be almost an illiterate, and yet he picked up enough by ear in the course of the years to be able to speak with authority on almost any subject. And that is what a lot of booksellers learn to do.

GARDNER:

Anyway, back to our story.

ZEITLIN:

Well, Drake, in due course, sent me down a copy of A.B. Johnson's *Treatise on Language*. And the next time he came to see me, he told me that his great

ambition was to translate Galileo's *Dialogue [Concerning] the Two [Chief] World Systems* and that his model for the English translation, to some degree, was going to be a translation by Thomas Salusbury in a volume called *Mathematical [Collections and] Translations*, published in London in 1657, consisting of translations from Italian, French, German, Dutch, Latin of important works primarily on mechanics and hydraulics. He introduced me to the obvious information about Thomas Salusbury. The first volume of Salusbury 's *Mathematical Collections* was published in England in 1664, and the second volume in 1665. The first volume was fairly easy to get; there were about fifty known copies of it, according to the censuses. But the second volume of *Mathematical Collections* consisted of about seven known copies. Just how it happened there were no more no one knew then, or still do not know, except that the great fire of London might have destroyed most of them. In any event, of the seven known copies of the second volume of *Mathematical Collections*, there had been one copy described in the middle of the nineteenth century which contained a life of Galileo, and that was the only copy of *Mathematical Collections* which contained this life, although all the other six copies had it listed on the table of contents. There was a great mystery of how this one copy, which was complete, had disappeared, but it was known with certainty that it had existed, and quotations from it had been published. Rumors turned up from time to time, and have turned up until recently, that the copy was stolen and taken to Australia. But my queries to Australian libraries and Australian booksellers, other bookish people in Australia, have not produced any record of this copy. Drake published a translation of Galileo's *Dialogue*, the 1632 work, the one which caused Galileo to be brought to Rome and tried by the inquisition. However, he did not depend upon the Salusbury translation. He produced an original translation. He had taught himself to read Italian; he had taught himself all that he needed to know in order to translate it into readable English. And, of course, being well trained in mechanics and astronomy and the logic of science, he felt that he was better equipped to interpret Galileo into English than if he depended upon a predecessor. Simultaneously with the publication of Stillman Drake's *Dialogue*, and unknown to him, there appeared another translation of Galileo's *Dialogue of the Two World Systems*. Drake's was published by the University of California Press, the other one translated by Giogio di Santillana [and published] by the University of Chicago Press. Giorgio di Santillana had

loaned heavily on the Salusbury translation, but in his introduction and all the way through, he criticized Salusbury for his misunderstanding of the essentials of mechanics and of astronomy, and accused him of being a poor translator. Drake felt that this was unjust, but he couldn't really prove why. He just couldn't see how a man who knew Italian, who had associated with the people who knew Galileo, could be so wrong. What Santillana did was point out a number of obvious errors in Salusbury's translation. The first publication in *Isis* of Stillman Drake's was an essay, "Galileo Gleanings," and this was a discussion of Salusbury's translation of Galileo. In it he pointed out that Salusbury was an unknown figure. There was no proof even that there was a man by the name of Salusbury. He leaned towards the conclusion that Salusbury was a pseudonym, and that whoever he was, he was most likely to have been a Jesuit in hiding in England. He put down all the known facts, which were very few, about Salusbury. It was not known where he was born, where he had died, whether he was married, whether he had any children, and when he had died was not even known. And thus it rested until one day, in a bookshop in New York called the Scientific Book Services, a shop which specialized in cripples. . . . The man who ran it, Sam Orlinick, was really a musicologist, and he knew a great deal about the literature of music and had a very good stock. But he also had accumulated over the years a large stock of early science books. He didn't care whether they were perfect, whether they were complete or not. He very rightfully gave them a home on his shelves, priced them so that anyone who wanted a copy that wasn't perfect could find it for very little. In wandering around, I picked up off his shelf a copy of Salusbury's *Mathematical Translations*, volume one. It was a very thin paper copy, and it had been rebound, and it had belonged once to Augustus De Morgan, a man who wrote *A Budget of Paradoxes*. And so, in spite of the fact that it was rather worn, and the title page was ragged on the fore-edges, I bought it. Much to my surprise, when I brought it back to Los Angeles and started to look through it, I found a complete errata sheet. I called up Stillman Drake in San Francisco, and he hurried down. He immediately recognized that all of the errors for which Salusbury had been blamed by Santillana were actually corrected in this errata sheet. There was no other known copy that had that errata sheet except this one, but it was the vindication for Drake of his faith in the correctness of Salusbury. It provided proof that it was not Salusbury but the printer who had introduced these errors, and that Salusbury

had corrected them, but the printer apparently had only put this errata sheet into a very few copies. So, of course, Drake was exalted. He offered me not only his own copy of the regular edition of the 1665 Salusbury volume one but a number of other books to make the trade even, because he knew I knew that this was a unique copy. And on the basis of that, he promised another "Galileo Gleanings" in *Isis* in which he expounded on this contention of his that Giorgio di Santillana had been wrong in blaming Salusbury for the errors. It was a great coup for him. As nearly always happens when a rarity turns up, within a year or two, other copies of Salusbury's *Mathematical Collection* turned up with the same errata sheet. But none have turned up since. This, of course, made me feel that I could be a participant in the discovery of anything else new that might be found about Salusbury. In the year 1955, late one night, I found myself unable to go to sleep, and I started to read an article in the *Book Collector* about Lord [Edward Hyde] Clarendon as a book collector. Now, Clarendon is considered the dullest writer in the English language; his *History of the Rebellion* has been offered to condemned criminals as a choice between reading it and being hung, and I understand they preferred hanging. [laughter] So I was reading this with very little attention, hoping that I would drop off to sleep, when suddenly there popped up before me a statement that went something like this: "I found Thomas Salusbury cataloging the library of my Lord Dorchester." And then it referred in a footnote to HA 10066, or something like that, and I knew that HA meant Hastings Abbey papers, and that this was the entry number of the paper from which the author, P.H. Hardacre, was quoting. I remembered this because a bookseller's mind accumulates a lot of rubbish. I also remembered that the Hastings Abbey papers were at the Huntington Library, so I didn't sleep the rest of the night, and the next morning I called up a friend in the manuscript department and said, "Would you mind taking a look and telling me how many letters of Thomas Salusbury you have listed in the Hastings Abbey papers?" And in a while he called back. He said, "I think we've got thirteen letters of Salusbury." You can imagine how quickly I rushed out there. Sure enough, there were thirteen letters in his handwriting written to the Earl of Huntington, who was a very young man at that time, and all signed "Thomas Salusbury, your humble servant." These letters revealed a great deal more than had ever been known before about Salusbury: who his wife was, what his coat of arms were, when they were married, the fact that he had two

daughters, and the fact that he was a translator particularly proficient in Italian; that he wrote a regular newsletter to the Earl of Huntington, who was a very young man at the time, in order that the earl might know what was going on in the world. From the related records in the collection I was able to determine when he had died and that he had died of the plague. This was a considerable coup, and I quickly reported to Stillman Drake, and suggested he publish it. He said, "No, you have the right to publish that as your own discovery." He encouraged me to do so, read the manuscript, corrected it. I submitted it to *Isis*, where it was published in December 1959, under the title of "Thomas Salusbury Discovered." I got a great credit out of having tried to find a way to fall asleep. Drake and I went to Italy in June of 1964. It was the first time he had gone to Italy, and it was a great experience for him. And on the way over, we went to the auction of the books of E. de C. Andrade. Andrade had been a sort of a secretary of the Royal Society. He had collected a notable library of classics in the history of science, and in his library was one of the seven known copies of volume two of Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections*. It was the only copy left out of captivity; all the other copies are in university libraries, or in places like the British Museum and will never again be offered for sale. I had a customer in Santa Barbara, Joseph Halle Schaffner, who had commissioned me to bid. There were two days of sales. On the first day I discovered that the bids he had given me were not good enough; they couldn't hold up against the new rise in prices that had taken place in the world of scientific-book collecting. And the leading buyer, the bull of the market there, was a man by the name of Bert Marley, manager of Dawsons of Pall Mall. So I cabled back to Joe Schaffner in Santa Barbara and said, "I must tell you that you're not going to get any books unless you raise your bids." And Warren Howell, who was sort of my anchorman back in San Francisco, called Schaffner. Between the two of them, they concocted the idea of calling me back and saying, "Triple all bids." So on the next day I had one of those great moments which every bookman dreams of: I sat in Sotheby's rooms and bought every book I wanted or made the competition pay dearly for it. After a while, they discovered that it wasn't really smart to try and go against me because I might drop it on them at a pretty heavy price. I could afford to pay high if I wanted the book very much; or if they felt that they could pay too much more than I could, then I would let them have it. After a while, the leading competitors decided they weren't going to draw my blood. [laughter]

Just before volume two of Salusbury's *Mathematical Collections* came up, Drake said to me, "I have commissioned Marley of Dawsons to bid up to 1,500 pounds for this book." I said, "In that case I will stay out of the bidding until it passes that figure. But if Marley does not get it at any price up to 1,500 pounds I will step in." The bidding went on, and I stepped in and bought it for 3,000 pounds. Then I told him Mr. Schaffner had authorized me to turn the book over to Drake for his use as long as he wanted it.

**1.25. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, Side One
(June 27, 1978)**

GARDNER:

Tonight we're going to discuss a monumental collection that you have just dealt with.

ZEITLIN:

To begin with, I think I should tell something about Mr. Robert Honeyman and the formation of the Honeyman collection and my previous associations with him. While I had known of Robert Honeyman in a very slight way for many years and he had known of me, it was not until about June of 1955 that I actually got to meet him, and it is to Warren Howell that I owe a great debt for having introduced me. Early in 1955, I had bought one of the Herbert Evans collections of books on the history of science. It was a very outstanding collection containing many of the classics. Herbert Evans was certainly the most prodigious of all collectors in the history of science in this country. His first collecting commenced somewhere in the 1930s. Early in 1942, as well as I can remember, he had formed a collection of outstanding classics in the history of science. He was a famous endocrinologist and physiologist and was professor of anatomy and physiology at the University of California at Berkeley. He had a large laboratory assigned to him in the Life Sciences Building there. Evans was known for having made a number of important contributions to endocrinology. To begin with, he had done the first dissection of the thyroid and the parathyroid for [William Stewart] Halsted at Johns Hopkins. As a result of this dissection, Halsted radically changed his operation for removal of the thyroid, and he decided that it was necessary to leave part of the thyroid in the patient rather than to extirpate all of it. It was found that

removal of the entire thyroid and parathyroid had a bad consequence, and that many of the patients either died or suffered very bad results. But with the dissection by Evans and the revision of the operation, Halsted was able to perform a successful removal of the thyroid and opened a whole new area of endocrine surgery. Dr. Evans had also isolated vitamin E. He had developed a test which was known as Evans blue, which gave a quick means of determining if the fetus in the process of formation was not developing normally, and that resulted in the introduction of certain techniques which prevented abnormal births in many cases. He was a giant of a man physically, and he was a prodigiously active man in many departments. He was also a naive and childlike man in some ways, and in other ways he was a man full of guile and temperament, and could sometimes behave in a rather disturbing manner. One of his great passions was the history of science, and he had succeeded in developing a collection which represented the first editions of the classics in all departments of the history of science. He had canvassed the leading authorities in the different fields--such as physiology, anatomy, geology, physics, optics, astronomy, mathematics—and through their consensus had developed a list of what they considered the greatest books. He then set about collecting them. He collected with tremendous zeal and abandon, so that he often exceeded his income and bought many rare books for which he couldn't pay, and then found himself being threatened by his creditors; as a result of that, he had to sell a number of collections. In all, he formed about eight collections; I have written a complete history of these, or at least tabulated them, in an article that I did for *Isis* shortly after Herbert Evans's death. In 1942, he had been divorced from his first wife for some time, and his collection had become part of his settlement with his wife. It was stored in the Life Sciences Building in Herbert Evans's office at the University of California at Berkeley. The first Mrs. Evans became ill; she had to come under the protection of a conservator. She needed money, and it was decided to sell that collection through the courts. Warren Howell and I decided to attempt to purchase this, and I in turn brought this collection to the attention of Lessing Rosenwald. Lessing Rosenwald first got in touch with the Librarian of Congress and asked him if he would like to have this as a gift, and the librarian made a mistake very often made by librarians: they made a check of their own collection and determined that they had about two-thirds of the books in the collection and therefore decided not to accept it. What they failed to take into

consideration was that the one-third that they lacked were the greatest and rarest of the books, and they would have been very wise to accept the collection and then discard the poorer copies of what they had in duplicate. When the Library of Congress declined the collection, Lessing Rosenwald decided to give it to the Institute for Advanced Study, and, as well as I can remember, he gave us a bid of \$36,000 to execute at the auction—at the court sale, I should say, because it wasn't exactly an auction. We were disturbed for a while, because Herbert Evans in San Francisco had heard about the collection being put up, and we feared that he might come into the court and make an offer which was greater than ours. Warren Howell tried to prevent Evans from having access to the inventory, but I said there's no way legally that we can prevent him from having access to the inventory, and it would actually be to our advantage to have him appear as a competitive bidder, so that there would be no question of collusion or any other improper procedures. What finally happened is that he appeared in court at the time of the court sale but made no bid, and it fell into our hands and was purchased by us for Mr. Rosenwald. And it was in '55 that I went to Princeton, unpacked the collection, met J. Robert Oppenheimer, and had a very good opportunity to become well acquainted with him. This was one of the finest of the Evans collections. In the meantime, Evans had started to form another collection, so that early in 1955 he was personally heavily in debt and needed to sell. I flew up to Berkeley, visited him, and made him an offer. I presented him with a check of \$5,000 to prove my serious intent. He in turn discussed it with his wife and the bank to whom he owed a great deal of money that he'd borrowed in order to form the collection, and in a few days, I was informed that he would accept our proposal. Now, I must say that I didn't have the \$27,000 which I offered him for the collection. I had, in fact, no money at all. [laughter] But a good friend, John Valentine, of whom I have spoken before, came forward with \$9,000 of the money. And on the basis of that loan of \$9,000, I borrowed an additional \$18,000 from Justin Turner and was able to close the deal.

GARDNER:

Now, what year was this?

ZEITLIN:

That was in 1955. Later on, Dave Randall of Scribner's said to me, "Jake, how did you happen to buy this collection when so many other booksellers were all after it? And I had said to Dr. Evans, 'Dr. Evans, if you're ever ready to sell the collection, please let me know!'" (I'm quoting Dave.) And I answered Dave, "Well, it's very simple. I offered him money." [laughter] In other words, I came to him with a specific proposition and a check in hand. Evans accepted my offer. I bought the collection. I tried to sell it to a number of people as a collection, including UCLA, and none of them would consider buying it. My price was \$55,000, and after they all refused it-- including a very serious group, the Friends of UCLA Medical School--I decided there was no course left to me but to break it up. The majority of the geology books went to Everette [L.] De Golyer in Dallas, and became part of the collection which he later gave to the University of Oklahoma. I printed two catalogs, and I wish I had those books now. When I look at the prices I asked, they are so pathetically small compared to the prices these books have brought now. For instance, I sold a first edition of Copernicus to Sam Barchas for \$2,000 and a first edition of Newton's [*Philosophiae Naturalis*] *Principia* [*Mathematica*] for \$750. The latest prices for Copernicus that I got was \$35,000, and for Newton's *Principia*, I recently offered a copy for sale for \$15,000, and it's under reserve now. Well, I had all these beautiful early books in the history of science, and I had heard that Mr. Honeyman was collecting. So I asked Warren Howell one day, when he came in my place, if he would tell Mr. Honeyman about these and if Mr. Honeyman would give me an appointment to come out and see him. I think it was May or June of 1955 that I went to see Mr. Honeyman on his beautiful ranch at San Juan Capistrano. We traveled up the hill on a winding road. The road was covered with lavender petals falling from the blooming jacaranda trees, which stretched for about a quarter of a mile along the road, and came to his house at the top of the hill. He took me into his basement where he had his collection on the history of science. Mr. Honeyman was very affable, very warm, as he showed me his books. We talked about them, and I was so enthusiastic, and I started darting from shelf to shelf, taking books out and talking about them and expressing my great pleasure in having found such a marvelous collection. He in turn became more excited as we talked, and he bought a few books. Finally he said, "Now, look here, I've only got a fair collection now, but I have a list of desiderata, and I would like to make this a really good collection. So why don't you go ahead and bring to my attention

any of the great books in the history of science that come your way, and I will give you my list of wants, and we'll see what we can do." And thus began a wonderful working relationship, which, for me, was immensely valuable, because I could go to the auctions and the booksellers all over the world with Mr. Honeyman's list and ask them what they had in the way of important items in the history of science. And if he [Honeyman] didn't have it, I was in a position to say, "We'll take it." So it was really a wonderful thing for me; it gave me great prestige. In 1958, he let me go to the sale of the Herschel books in London, and I bought not only a great many of the important books of the library of Wilhelm Herschel (Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel) , but also a number of the instruments of the Herschel Observatory at Slough. I gave most of the instruments to Greenwich, and it was at very little expense that I got a great deal of credit and kudos. Because, during the sale, the instruments were coming up, and they were being sold for four, five, seven, and ten pounds, and I thought this was terrible and I just kept going on bidding. When I saw what I bought, this big mass of stuff, I couldn't conceive of how I could possibly send them back. So I said to Frank Maggs, who was representing me at the sale and beside whom I sat. "Tell the people at the Greenwich Maritime Museum that they can have any of these if they'd like. I'd be glad to give them." So they picked out a considerable number of the instruments and added them to their collection. As a result, I was invited to spend a day at Greenwich and was received by the director. I was asked to sign the great book. I was given the VIP tour of the exhibitions, and lunch in the great painted hall. I was also interviewed for television. [laughter] So the few pounds that I spent on the instruments I gave them was very little in return for the great pleasure I had and the great consideration I was shown. Incidentally, I took some snapshots with a cheap camera that I had--of Frank Maggs and Frank Carr, the director of Greenwich, standing in front of the Cutty Sark , which had been set up on blocks and restored at Greenwich. Later, when Frank Maggs died, the only good photograph that the family had of Frank Maggs to use in some memorial that was published was the one I had taken there of him standing in front of the Cutty Sark . It gave me a great deal of pleasure and a great deal of prestige to be able to go to these auctions, and later I, in addition, was able to represent Joseph Halle Schaffner in the same way and go to the Andrade sale, where I bought a number of important books for Mr. Schaffner, and also some books for Mr. Honeyman.

GARDNER:

Let me interrupt you here and just ask a question or two about Mr. Honeyman. First of all, where did his wealth originate?

ZEITLIN:

Well, Mr. Honeyman's father was an attorney in New York City. They, the Honeymans, go back a long way in American history; in fact, one member of the family —John Honeyman, who was a butcher--was a secret agent for Washington, and he was the man who was responsible for the defeat of the British at the Battle of Trenton. Bob Honeyman also had married Marian Stewart, who had inherited a substantial fortune. She was the daughter of the Stewart who founded one of the largest automobile accessory manufacturing firms, Stewart Magneto, and a lot of other things. Bob Honeyman and Marian Stewart were married, I think, in 1927, and they rented an apartment in New York in which they spent their first several years. It happened to be the apartment of a man who was a great collector of books and autographs, Adrian [Hoffman] Joline. So they found themselves in this apartment, surrounded by rare books and autographs, and this inspired Mr. Honeyman to start collecting. He didn't start collecting science books, although he had graduated from Lehigh as a metallurgical engineer. His grandfather had been a graduate of Lehigh, his father was a graduate of Lehigh, Bob was a graduate of Lehigh, and his son was a graduate of Lehigh. Over the years, Bob collected many rare books and manuscripts, including James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Stephen Crane, Walt Whitman. And all of these literary firsts which he collected, with few exceptions, he gave to Lehigh. Over the years it was his intention to give his entire collection to Lehigh. Early in the thirties. Bob Honeyman came across some catalogs of Henry Sothorn in London, and these were catalogs of early science books which were prepared by a man named Henry Zeitlinger. Henry Zeitlinger sat down there in that cold basement and wrote descriptions and notes of these wonderful early science books at a time when nobody else was paying much attention to them in England, and he got out catalogs which have now become important reference works on the history of science. There were many great books there—presentations, copies of books by [Johannes] Kepler and [Johannes] Hevelius, first editions of Galileo, first editions of Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus* for thirty pounds, first edition of Newton's *Principia* for thirty

pounds. Over the years he accumulated a great many of the best books that were offered in Henry Sothorn's catalogs. He was a very systematic man, and one of the great advantages that I had when it came to determining its cost, was that he had a complete record of every book—where he had bought it, when he had bought it, and how much he'd paid for it. Mr. Honeyman is a very imaginative man, also a very astute man, and a very good businessman. He had a seat on the New York Stock Exchange at the time of the Depression, and he survived the Depression-- which is something very few men who held seats on the New York Stock Exchange did. He managed the properties, the funds, of both himself and Marian with great judgment; and, over the years, they accumulated a very large fortune. As I say, he gave a great many fine books to Lehigh, and he continued, up until a very short time ago, to plan that his books were all going to be given to Lehigh. And they would have been given to Lehigh if the administration of Lehigh hadn't been very stupid. [laughter] A couple of years ago, I guess it was, somebody at Lehigh got in touch with him and said, "Mr. Honeyman, you gave us a set of the photographs of [Eadweard] Muybridge. We need to pay for a parking lot here. It will take about \$30,000, which is what we've been offered for this set of Muybridge. May we sell it?" And you can imagine what effect that had on him.

GARDNER:

Oh, no. . . .

ZEITLIN:

He said, "I am not interested in giving them money. If I'd wanted to give them money, I would have given them money. I have given them some." They had given him an honorary degree. He had already won a Phi Beta Kappa. They had honored him in many ways, but the idea that the books he had spent years collecting, that really had meant more to him than anything else, might be broken up and sold by the university in order to pay [for] parking lots and things like that destroyed all that dream. So he cooled off substantially. In the meantime, I had arranged one exhibition of books from his collection having to do with the size and shape of the earth. That exhibition was held at UCLA, and Dr. Seymour Chapin at L.A. State had prepared the catalog notes. Then, during the Copernicus year, Mr. Honeyman lent Lehigh the best things he had concerning the predecessors of Copernicus, the important works of

Copernicus and his contemporaries, and all of the works right up to the early nineteenth century which had in one way or another contributed toward the establishment of Copernicanism, and the proof of it as a valid cosmological theory. Mr. Honeyman not only bought books, but he bought manuscripts. From time to time, I would bring people who were authorities in the history of science out to see the collections. I brought Stillman Drake out once, and it was Stillman, to some extent, who inspired Mr. Honeyman to concentrate on manuscripts. From the time of Stillman Drake's visit, Mr. Honeyman was very receptive to any good scientific manuscript, so that he formed a collection of approximately 150 manuscripts from the tenth century into the nineteenth century of important works or original manuscripts by important scientists. The collection was moved several times. He bought a house in Rye, New York, and he shipped it there, and then he shipped it back. He shipped it into New York City, and then, finally, he brought it back to California. He built a special fireproof building on the ranch, with air conditioning, and temperature and humidity controls, and that was where the collection was housed. He took great pride in having all the books put into leather slipcases, and he took great pleasure in having the visits of really qualified people who weren't just curiosity seekers. Among others that I brought out to visit him was Dr. Ynez O'Neill on the faculty at UCLA. Well, when Mr. Honeyman's enthusiasm for giving the collection to Lehigh cooled, he started to cast about for what else to do with it, and one day I learned. . . . Well, I must say, first of all, that I had taken Franklin Murphy out there, that I had taken John Burke, I had taken Robert Vosper, I had taken Lynn White out there and Rupert Hall and Marie Boaz when they were here--all with the idea of convincing Mr. Honeyman of the interest of UCLA in the collection. And then one day about two years ago I heard suddenly that he had said to Ynez O'Neill, "Tell the people of UCLA that I will deposit the collection there with the proviso that it will become their property upon my demise. Now, you go ahead and find me an attorney who will represent me, and you tell UCLA to discuss this matter and come up with a proposal." I must say this was—it was not until many months afterward, approximately six months after that, Ynez O'Neill or the people at UCLA told me anything about this. And none of them actually told me— it was Franklin Murphy.

GARDNER:

This was two years ago, you say?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, about two years ago. And then suddenly I heard from Honeyman that he was very disappointed that the people at UCLA had not shown any proper interest, they had not come back to him with any proposal, and that he was damned tired of this thing. And then I called up the people at UCLA, and I said, "Look, if you want this collection, you'd better get busy." Well, there were several things that went wrong. Ynez O'Neill had been sick for about three months, seriously ill. The attorney representing Mr. Honeyman had gone off on a trip and had let the matter slide. And the people at UCLA had been told by this attorney that they were under no circumstances to communicate directly with Mr. Honeyman. And so they had just sat there and done nothing. Now, if I had been told about this, I would have put certain things in motion. If Larry Powell had been told and known about it at the time when he was the librarian, he would have clinched this thing. And if Franklin Murphy had been the chancellor still, he would have clinched it, because it was some years earlier that I got Franklin Murphy to write a letter outlining what UCLA would do if Mr. Honeyman gave the collection to UCLA. When Franklin Murphy left, the people at UCLA--no one there (certainly not [Chancellor] Young) was imaginative enough to carry it forward. When [C.D.] O'Malley died, there really wasn't anybody who had the right kind of drive. And with the departure previously of Larry Powell, what UCLA lacked was the kind of person that could keep the contact up with Honeyman, show their enthusiasm. Finally, Mrs. Honeyman said, "We're not going to give that collection to UCLA because they don't appreciate it." So I called up the chancellor's office, I called up Page Ackerman, and they called a meeting of all the deans and the people. They invited me. And then they said, "What can we do?" And I said, "I'll do my damndest, but I'm afraid that it's like a love affair: it's cooled." But I said, "Sit down and write a good letter to Mr. Honeyman. I'll take it out and I'll go and see him." I went out to see him, and I asked him and Mrs. Honeyman to reconsider, and then I asked him if they would let me bring Ynez O'Neill out. So Ynez and I went out and tried to revive this thing, but the final answer was no. Then Mr. Honeyman said [to me], "I want you to do an appraisal of this." And for a number of months during the latter part of 1976, Josephine and I went out weekends and sometimes several days in the week and did a

systematic listing of every book in the collection. Then I enlisted the help of Harold Graves, who I think is the most dependable appraiser in this country today. He was formerly the head of Scribner's, had handled a great many books in the sciences, and had sold a good many of them to Mr. Honeyman. And I must pause here to say that I wasn't the only one who sold books to Mr. Honeyman over these years. When he and I met in London in 1956, I believe, I introduced him to Dr. Ernst Weil. We went to Maggs Brothers together. He bought a great many books from Dave Randall at Scribner's, because he and Randall had known each other for many, many years, and I think that Randall had also gone to Lehigh. He bought books from. . . Well, I'm sorry, I just can't remember the names, but he bought books from a great many other dealers besides myself, and, of course, continued to buy from the catalogs of Henry Sothorn. But he bought from Quaritch, he bought from Maggs, and he bought—the man I was thinking about was Goldschmidt; he bought a great many important books from Goldschmidt. He bought a lot of important science books from Warren Howell. Warren Howell [and I] worked together very closely and very amiably, and often we would go and buy books either jointly, or he would buy some and I would buy some. Over the years, the collection grew. Mr. Honeyman, in the meantime, continued to give some of his books to Lehigh; he gave them all of his Darwin collection. Finally, at the end of 1976 or early in 1977, Graves and I completed the inventory of his library, which consisted primarily of works in the history of science but also contained a few very choice works in English literature and a considerable number of books on Roman archaeology and other classical archaeology. And then he said, "Well, I think I'll sell this collection." And I said, "Would you let me be your agent?" And he said, "Well, that all depends--how much do you want?" And I said, "I will do it for 5 percent." The inventory which we prepared and the appraisal that went with it brought the value of the collection up to over \$5 million, and this was a conservative figure, because we had no intention, and neither did Mr. Honeyman, of inflating the value. He wanted to have a conservative market valuation on this library, and that's exactly what Graves and I tried to do. Early in 1977, I prepared a summary of the library in which I told something about the collection, including the fact that it was an assembly of collections, made up of whole collections of books, such as the Struve collection of twentieth-century astronomy, the Jacobsohn collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century science, and a very significant

collection of original contributions by [Otto] Hahn, [Ernest Orlando] Lawrence, [Lise] Meitner, [Enrico] Fermi--all of the important people who had contributed to the discovery of nuclear fission—as well as the literary items, which included the first edition of *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, the first four folios of Shakespeare, large paper editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, a very fine first of *Paradise Lost*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and so on. And I listed some of the outstanding books in the various fields, such as archaeology, nuclear fission, astronomy, mathematics. Among other things that Mr. Honeyman had specialized in was books of exchange; that is, the little handbooks that the people who exchange money at the fairs and in the markets in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth and eighteenth century had beside them in order to determine the comparative value of different national coinages. These have become very scarce, because from year to year they were discarded; but they're the best key to the values at different times of the coinages of different countries. He had decided that this would be something very desirable to collect, and he accumulated a number of these. There was an outstanding collection of early arithmetics, beginning with the first printed arithmetic and other significant arithmetics. His collection could only be rivaled by the collection at Columbia University, which had been formed by Dr. Smith many years ago; this was indeed a distinguished collection in itself. In addition, he had attempted to collect every edition of Euclid from the first until the end of the seventeenth century; and at the time that the collection was sold, I think he lacked only about five of the editions of Euclid which had been printed during that time. The classics which were included in the collection were far greater than in any other single private collection that I knew of. The Horblit Collection could have been lost in one corner of the Huntington Library. Bern Dibner's collection was larger in the numbers of books, but in terms of the quality of the important individual items and the rarity, I don't think Dibner could approach Honeyman. He had a first edition of [William] Harvey's *de Motu Cordis*, and he had the 1472 edition of Valturius's *De Re Militare*, the greatest book in the history of military engineering. He had first editions of [Andreas] Vesalius and one of the few copies, probably the only copy in the United States, of [Dimitri Ivanovich] Mendelejeff's work in which he set forth the periodic tables--things which simply . . . if you find one of them in one collection, you will not find the

others. So that his collection is certainly the greatest any private individual ever formed.

**1.26. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, Side Two
(June 27, 1978)**

ZEITLIN:

It was early in 1978 that Mr. Honeyman finally gave me a written authorization to represent him. In the meantime, I had talked to the people at the University of Arizona. Larry Powell and Dr. [John Paul] Schaefer came out to visit Mr. Honeyman. Honeyman actually made a trip to Tucson; they showed him their new library and impressed him immensely. And one of the reasons, really, why I feel that I would rather not have this interview made available is because Mr. Honeyman wrote into his will a proviso that if he should die before he had otherwise disposed of the collection, the collection should go as a gift to the University of Arizona. He was very much impressed by the enthusiasm of Powell and of Schaefer, and he also was impressed by the new library and the arrangements they had made for the care of special collections, including temperature and humidity control. Finally, early in 1978 . . . [aside conversation] I started approaching various people in 1977, and one of the first people I approached was Peter Wilson, the head of Sotheby's.

GARDNER:

What is the date on that?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the first correspondence that I have isn't here, but early in 1977 I brought Peter Wilson out to see Mr. Honeyman. I had previously attempted to interest the University of Toronto. I had written letters to a number of other places and got no favorable response. The amount was staggering to most people. Finally I said to Mr. Honeyman, "Would you object to meeting the president of Sotheby's and getting their idea of what they'd like to do about the collection?" He said no, so I brought Peter Wilson out; I think it must have been in January of 1977. Then in March he came back with Lord John Kerr, the head of their book department. Later that month. Lord John Kerr wrote a letter of intent in which Sotheby Parke Bernet would purchase the Honeyman

library for \$3.8 million, payable in various installments over a period of two years, and also telling me that they had made arrangements to send a representative from London, their rare-book man, John Collins, over to go into the collection in more detail. So all of this was subject to John Collins coming over and verifying Lord John Kerr's views as to the value and completeness of the library. Of course, they were very enthusiastic, and the idea of making a series of sales of the Honeyman collection appealed to them greatly. There followed a continued series of visits and discussions. Peter Wilson came back, and finally in early 1978, John Collins did come over, and he looked over the collection, was very enthusiastic, and reported back to them. (No, this was late 1977, somewhere in November, I think, of 1977.) And another proposal was made for a total value of \$4 million, with 6 percent interest, and this was to be in the term of a series of irrevocable letters of credit. Well, it was not until January 1978 that I did receive a letter of authorization from the Honeymans agreeing to pay me my commission (all my work previously was just on the basis of a mutual understanding of intent). And then Peter Wilson, in March of 1978, came back again and drew up two proposals: one proposal in which they wished to undertake to sell the collection on commission from Mr. Honeyman; and the other in which they undertook, through some principal other than Sotheby's themselves, to buy it. I advised Mr. Honeyman not to consign this collection to auction for many reasons—not only because you couldn't tell what the proceeds might be in the end, but also because books have a way of disappearing when they go to auction: autograph letters and manuscripts cannot be guarded against pilfering, and I just didn't want to see all those complications develop. In March, Mr. Honeyman agreed in principle to the price of \$4 million. Then started some very knotty complications. First of all, the principal did not want to pay interest on \$4 million, so it was agreed that the purchase price would be \$4 million less the interest on the balance—I mean, to include the interest on the balance of the payments. So that in the end, the total price paid to Mr. Honeyman would be \$4 million. This was very complicated. And the terms of the sale were to be that he would receive in April of 1978 \$750,000, and then not until September 30, 1979, would he receive \$1,625,000, and from then on, until 1981, the balance. However, this was to be paid in the form of irrevocable letters of credit drawn on the Morgan Guaranty Bank, and we then learned that letters of credit given to the seller within the year of the sale constituted a claim' on

the part of the Internal Revenue [Service] for the capital gains tax on the entire sale, which meant that Mr. Honeyman would be putting out more money in the first year than he would be taking in. Then started the hassles, and they continued. Finally, on March 7, 1978, I did receive a proper agreement from the Honeymans, stating the terms of my commission, and I was legally authorized. At that time Sotheby's offered me an additional 2 percent finder's fee, which would have been very nice. And I went to Mr. Honeyman and said, "Do you have any objection if it's not going to be out of your pocket?" And he said no. So I stood to gain not only 5 percent on the sale but 2 percent from the purchaser as well. And so it stood for a while. About that time, Warren Howell decided to see if he couldn't get Stanford to buy the collection. So Stanford got into the act.

GARDNER:

Was this now separate from you?

ZEITLIN:

No, it was through me. Warren and I agreed to share the commission, and, of course, I would have preferred to see the collection stay in California. So Warren Howell put on a big drive, and there were many visits back and forth, but I'm sorry to say that they could not get together enough money. Wallace Sterling came up. All of their big officials came up. They made all kinds of proposals, but the amount of cash which they proposed to put up was not enough. I think if they had come forward with \$2 million cash, Mr. Honeyman would have donated the rest of the value. Then along came the Huntington Library; Dan Woodward called me in great agitation and said, "Is there any way that we can have an opportunity to buy this?" And I said, "Yes. I know Mr. Honeyman would be glad to have a visit from you. He would be glad to give you an opportunity. He would prefer to see it stay in California." So I took Gary Bliss and Dan Woodward out there, and we spent a day visiting and seeing the collection. And Dan Woodward then went to a foundation and tried to get money, and I must say he tried very hard. I stalled the negotiations with Sotheby, because I, too, would rather have made less commission and seen the collection stay here. But in the end. Woodward simply couldn't get any foundation or any of the other sources that he had to come up with the money, and he very tearfully (and I must say that I joined him) informed us

that it couldn't be done. So we resumed our negotiations with Sotheby's, and finally I called Mr. Peter Wilson in London, and, in turn, I was told to talk to John Marion in New York. I said, "We have got other people interested. There are some institutions that would like the collection and have come forward with offers." (In fact, Stanford did finally come up to a million and a half.) "So if you want this collection, you had better do something firm." Finally I received a cable from John Marion on March 22, in which he said that they were confirming that they were agreed to purchase the Honeyman collection and that they were commencing the paperwork, and I was asked to extend the date during which they could carry this out (this is, mind you, 1978) until May 1st. And then started more correspondence concerning the terms of payment and the necessity for the first payments to be large enough to cover the capital gains tax. And there was very much discussion of the terms, and so on. On April 11, 1978, Mr. Marion suggested a down payment of \$1,750,000, with \$750,000 to follow within the year and the balance to be paid over a period of three years.

GARDNER:

Still with the \$4 million.

ZEITLIN:

Four million. In April of 1978, we received from a Mr. [John] Ames, the attorney for Sotheby's, a proposed contract. This was drawn up by a Wall Street lawyer who had no idea of what libraries consist of and how you go about dealing with them. He filled it with impossible terms. He called me, and I discussed it with him, and I said, "You cannot do it this way."

GARDNER:

What were some of the things?

ZEITLIN:

Well, he wanted, first of all, that Sotheby's were not the purchasers but agents for an unnamed purchaser and were to be relieved of all liability. The second thing is that the sale was to be made FOB London, and the title was to be given there; that there was to be no contract until the completion of delivery, which meant that we would be checking the books, packing them, and

shipping them without any signed contract in the hands of Mr. Honeyman; also that Mr. Honeyman was to guarantee completeness of every item in the collection and was to guarantee the collation, and they were all in absolutely flawless condition. The seller was to indemnify them against all loss, liability, damage expenses which may be incurred, and so on, and full of all kinds of legalese. That hassle continued until, finally, I set forth the terms that Mr. Honeyman wanted, which were that the sale should be FOB the premises of the seller and that, in order to avoid any liability for sales tax, the shipment was to be made through a broker, and they were not to get possession of it until delivery in London. The title they could have when they paid for the collection, but not possession. Also, no bill of sale would be executed before completion of all payments, and authenticity was at the risk of the buyer, who has previously inspected the collection and accepts it as is without warranty by seller. The agent must accept liability to the seller, and all brokerage fees and other fees were to be paid by the buyer. Finally it looked as if the whole thing was going to fall through because of this lawyer in New York, and Mr. Honeyman said, "To hell with them. I'll give it away. I don't give a damn!" [laughter] So I called John Marion and said, "John, it looks like we're not going to have any deal. I think you'd better get in touch with Peter Wilson in London, and I'm going to call him tonight. A few other people want that collection. You'd better get that lawyer off this thing and tell him that we won't accept those terms." Well, I called London, and the next thing, I got a call from John Marion, saying, "If you will waive your fee to Sotheby's, Sotheby's is prepared to offer Mr. Honeyman \$4 million cash for the collection. Do you think he would be interested in that?" Well, Mr. Honeyman said, "There's about \$24,000 worth of books there that I want to keep, and we can take that off. But," he said, "I'll go for that. Let them send us a new contract." So a new contract came, and they had written into it things that were not in the first contract. And there had to be more negotiations back and forth, and it looked like it was going to die a second time. So I again called London. I got ahold of Peregrine Pollen, the second-in-command of the international company, and explained things and said, "Now, if you want this collection, you are simply going to have to explain to this lawyer that there are some things that can't be done. If you and Mr. Honeyman were face to face, I don't think you'd have any trouble at all. This lawyer's trying to earn his money, and I'm sure that he means well, but these are conditions that simply

can't work in this case." Finally, it looked like the thing was going to fall through again, because they wanted Mr. Honeyman to sign a contract agreeing that the books could be checked, packed, and delivered within fifteen days. And I said, "I won't let Mr. Honeyman sign an agreement like that, because your man's got to come over there. We've got to check through 5,000 books. They have to be packed, and packed in such a way that they will arrive safely. We've got to make all kinds of arrangements, and I don't want any time limit. You can be sure that we will act as quickly as possible, because he's [as] eager to get his money as you are to get the books. There's one thing he wants. He wants to check before the shipment leaves his grounds." So, that was all written into a contract. Oh, there were other factors. They wanted Mr. Honeyman to guarantee title on all books in perpetuity, that any books that were in the collection—if anybody should ever claim that they had been illegally removed or illegally come by, that they were still the property of some claimant; that Mr. Honeyman was to guarantee the full amount of the loss, according to the value in the inventory. I succeeded in arranging a compromise so that Mr. Honeyman agreed to guarantee title but nothing else for two years, and that he was to guarantee the value up to 80 percent, and also that their representative was to come here and check the books with me, and that if there were anything missing, they were to accept books of equal value which had not been valued in the inventory for a value agreed upon between their representative and mine. Well, this almost brought things to a halt again. And again I called London at three o'clock in the morning. Finally the lawyers in New York threw up their hands and agreed to our terms, and their representative went out with the contracts, and they were signed somewhere about the twenty-fifth of May. And before the first of May, John Collins, their representative in London, was here. Mr. Honeyman erected a magnificent canopy in front of the library. He provided carpenters and helpers to build boxes. Richard Tse, who is my right-hand man, undertook negotiations for the clearance through the brokerage houses, and we got a team of men. On the sixteenth of June, the entire collection was loaded onto a container, and the container was sealed, and it stood there at the ranch while the final agreements were signed. The bill of sale was signed by Mr. Honeyman, and then we discovered that Mr. Honeyman's notary was not in the office, so we had to wait another hour before we found the notary. [laughter] And upon the notary's appearance, the final agreements were

signed. Everything was notarized, and John Marion, president of the local Sotheby Parke Bernet, delivered two checks--one to Mr. Honeyman and one to Mrs. Honeyman--for a total of \$3,976,000. And the signal was given and the truck moved off. [laughter] Wednesday night the shipment left for New York, Thursday night it flew out of New York, and Friday morning it arrived in England at the airport. Mr. Honeyman and Mrs. Honeyman took their checks and sent them off by registered mail to Dallas, which is where they have their account. And last Monday morning, Mr. Honeyman called up and said, "Jake, we're in business. Come out and get your commission check ."

GARDNER:

Terrific.

ZEITLIN:

So Josephine and I drove out, and we received two checks--one-half from Mr. Honeyman, and one-half from Mrs. Honeyman--for a total of 5 percent of the sale price, and joyfully came home . . .

GARDNER:

How wonderful.

ZEITLIN:

. . . and finally drew an easy breath.

GARDNER:

At long last, after two years! [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

Yes, after two years. But I must say that Mr. Honeyman behaved in a very graceful manner; that both parties—both Sotheby's and Mr. Honeyman—had great confidence in me, and trusted me, and gave me a considerably free hand in conducting the negotiations. And also Mr. Honeyman wrote a letter, finally, to Peter Wilson expressing his satisfaction in the way that I handled it as negotiator; and the way that Richard Tse, who was in charge of the packing and shipping, handled it; and in the way that John Collins, their representative, and I arrived at an agreement which evened out all shortages and left the deal completely free to be concluded.

GARDNER:

Sotheby's will have this up for sale, then, within the next two years, I assume.

ZEITLIN:

Sotheby's will have started to catalog the books. There will be, they told me, a total of nine sales, and they've asked me to do the foreword to the first catalog,

GARDNER:

So the connection doesn't stop. [laughter] Now what's going to happen when . . .

ZEITLIN:

. . . and when the books come up for sale . . .

GARDNER:

. . . right, and collectors come to you . . .

ZEITLIN:

. . .I'm going to be there bidding for some of my customers as well as myself, because I know more about the books in that collection than any other single person.

GARDNER:

That's wonderful.

ZEITLIN:

So, it hasn't stopped yet.

**1.27. TAPE NUMBER: XV, Side One
(September 21, 1978)**

GARDNER:

Okay, you said first of all you'd like to tell me a detective story.

ZEITLIN:

Well, this is something that happened within the past couple of months, and I think it is especially interesting because it illustrates the advantage of having been in business a long time and having a wide range of contacts. I think it must have been a month ago, on a Tuesday morning, as well as I can recollect. Glen Dawson called me and said, "There's a man in here with two books that are very unusual and in your line, and I thought I ought to ask you about them. One of them is a first edition of Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus*, 1543, and the other is a first edition of Galileo's *Siderius Nuncius*, 1610." I said, "It's very unusual for two books of such rarity and importance to come up for sale at the same time. What does he want to do about them?" Glen said, "He's not sure he wants to sell them. He'd like to just see if I can give him an idea of value." And I said, "You think you can hold him there until I get over?" He said, "No. But," he said, "I'll try and urge him to come over and see you." I said, "Find out what you can from him, where he got them and so on, if he'll tell you." After a while. Glen called back and said that he had not been able to get the man to wait; he also hadn't been able to get the man to say he'd come to see me. But he said the man had mentioned a lawyer in Providence, Rhode Island, and that the books had come from the estate of a relative in Providence. I said, "That's very interesting." He told Glen that he had been in the merchant marines and that he was staying somewhere near Riverside. And I said, "Well, that is even more interesting." When Glen hung up, I said, "There's only one place in Providence that those books could have come from, and that is the library of a man by the name of Albert Lownes," who's a very old man, somewhere past eighty-five. He had started collecting books on the history of science very early, far ahead of most of the other collectors, and had built a great collection. I had been to see his library some ten years ago. He was a very courteous, very quiet, modest man, who lived in an old wooden house in Providence. He was a very important officer with one of the insurance companies there. I called up Thomas M. Adams, who is the librarian of the John Carter Brown Library at Providence, and said, "Tom, what has happened to Albert Lownes?" He said, "He's a very sick man, and he's now in the hospital." I said, "There's a man out here offering two books that he says came from Providence. I think you ought to go over to Lownes's house, if you can get in, and find out if these books are there." He said, "Well, his daughter is living there, so I'm sure I can get in." I knew that Lownes had willed his books to Brown University; among them, a first edition of Audubon's *Birds* and a

great many other important science classics. Tom went over and had a look, then called back and said, "We found an empty place on the shelf where the Copernicus should be, but we don't know exactly where the Galileo might have been." I said, "Well, I know that Lownes bought a very special copy some years ago from John Fleming and paid a record price for it. And I think it was a presentation copy." And he said, "We can't find the book. Albert is in too bad shape for us to talk to him." So I said, "I'll look into this further." Then I called Glen again, and I said, "What did the man say his name was?" And he said, "Basche." Also he said he had sold some books to Jeremy Norman. So I called Jeremy and said, "There's a man around here who's been trying to sell a Copernicus and a Galileo, and I understand he's sold you some books and offered you some others." And he said yes, and he said, "I bought a Camerarius *De Sexu Plantarum* from him." I said, "There are only two people in the United States who have a Camerarius: one of them is Bern Dibner, and the other is Albert Lownes." And I said, "Did it occur to you that this man might be selling you some books from the Albert Lownes library?" He said, "No. Why do you think that?" I said, "Well, he refers to a lawyer in Providence." Jeremy said, "Yes, he gave me the lav/yer 's name for reference, but I didn't think I needed to call." He also said, "I bought the Camerarius from him." I said, "Didn't you buy something else?" He said, "Yes, I bought a couple of other things." So I called Tom Adams in Providence again, and I said, "Tom, I think you've got an FBI case, because the value of the books is over \$5,000 and they have crossed state lines." He said, "We've already alerted the police and the insurance company." And I said, "Well, you ought to see if they won't bring the FBI into it." Within a couple of hours I got a call from a local FBI man asking me for information, and I referred him to Glen Dawson, and Glen gave them the information that he had. Then I referred them to Jeremy Norman. They called him, and by Friday they had the man in custody. He had taken twelve books in all.

GARDNER:

How did he take them?

ZEITLIN:

He was a male nurse, and he had been working at Albert Lownes 's house. He had said, "Mr. Lownes, tell me about your books." Lownes loved to talk, and

this was an attentive young man, so he told him about his books. And the nurse said, "Mr. Lownes, which are the most valuable books in your library?" And Mr. Lownes told him. Of course, the Audubons were too big to carry away, but there were these other smaller books, and apparently when Lownes went to the hospital, this man removed a total of twelve books. So it seemed that Jeremy was out about \$4,500 dollars. The man was in custody here in Los Angeles. They evidently moved very quickly through the courts, because last week I had a call from the FBI saying that the man had been tried, and he had pleaded guilty, but they had recovered only eleven of the twelve books; the other book they hadn't been able to identify--they didn't know exactly what he took. They couldn't find out from Mr. Lownes because he's still very ill. And the thief wouldn't tell, because sentence had yet to be passed, and they assumed that what he was doing was bargaining for a reduced sentence if he revealed the title of the missing one and where it was. Following this, the FBI telephoned and said they would come down and have me pack the books for shipping and sending them by air. About three days ago the local FBI man called up and [asked if he thought] that airmail is safe for these valuable books-- asked Josephine; I wasn't there. She didn't know what had gone on before, and she said she would hardly send anything that valuable by airmail. The man said he really thought these books deserved a courier, and so he thought it would be nice to fly to Boston, where he had friends. And according to the last I heard, he was going to take them there himself and deliver them to the people from Providence.

GARDNER:

But just eleven.

ZEITLIN:

Just eleven. The FBI was hoping they might get the information out of this man, where the twelfth book was. And now I understand that the rest of the books are being removed from Mr. Lownes's house and are going over to Brown University Library. I have had a phone call from Stuart C. Sherman, who is the librarian there, concerning it. They are very pleased. So I seem not only to have helped them recover these books but also to have precipitated their being placed in safety in the library. Another interesting detail is that I told the story, as far as it had gone, a couple of weeks ago to Roger Stoddard at the

Houghton Library at Harvard, and he said, "That's very interesting." It seemed this list of twelve books had been offered to Goodspeed's, and among them there was this Camerarius. Roger said he was really very hopeful that they were going to get this book, which is one of the foremost rarities in the history of science.

GARDNER:

How many copies are there altogether, do you know?

ZEITLIN:

I would say less than ten. I don't think anybody has yet thought of going to Goodspeed's and asking them-- I've already passed this on to the FBI—what the list of twelve books were, because if they did, they might find out what the missing book is. I think I will make another phone call tomorrow

GARDNER:

Fascinating. Jake Zeitlin, FBI agent.

ZEITLIN:

No, I wasn't an FBI agent. The FBI was complimentary to me. They said that one of the hardest problems in the case of stolen books or jewelry or anything of this sort was to get the trade to cooperate. Here, for instance, was a case where it was necessary for me to tell them what I knew about Jeremy Norman's being involved. And Jeremy Norman took a loss, of course, because he had bought this stolen property, and they had reclaimed it, and he had no recourse. In general, the trade is always afraid they'll open up other cans of worms, and there's hardly an important rare book in the world that hasn't been stolen at some time in its history, whether it's recently or 500 years ago. The FBI men were most complimentary to me for having told them about other people in the trade and giving them other clues.

GARDNER:

Is this the first time you've broken a case that way?

ZEITLIN:

No. I'm trying to think—my memory isn't very good tonight. I have on one or two other occasions--I can't pinpoint them right now--been involved in the

discovery. . . . There was a young man who came in to see me and offered me one book in a Doves binding. It had cost marks written in which looked like Harry Levinson's. I called Harry, and I asked the young man to wait. Harry came over, and he said, "Oh, yes, these are my books, and this young man has been coming in and out of my shop." And he said to him, "Where do you live?" The young man told him, and Harry said, "We're going to drive right over there." [laughter] Harry proceeded to drive the man over to his house. When they arrived, the man said, "I can't let you in until I've talked to my wife, because she's been sleeping here. Would you allow me to talk to her before you go in?" Harry said, "Not unless I come in with you." Harry started to push his way into the house, and I said, "Harry, you'd better not do this, because you will be making a forcible entry of his house. If you do that, you'll get yourself into trouble." So he abstained from doing that, but the young man then came back and let him in, and Harry found a number of other books which he claimed. I didn't go in—I decided that it was not wise for me to go in there—but Harry recovered quite a few things. And then the next morning this boy's parents' lawyer called up and threatened to sue Harry.

GARDNER:

For what?

ZEITLIN:

For forcible entry and for—they had a lot of charges against him. You see, Harry wasn't satisfied to turn the job over to the police, who know what their legal rights are and could have proceeded legally by getting a search warrant. Before he was through, Harry was very glad to be just let off the hook by the parents. They didn't want the boy prosecuted, and Harry didn't want a lawsuit on his hands. But you have to be very careful when you find that something has been stolen from you. If a man has it on his person while he's in the place, you cannot take it away from him. You have to follow him out of the place and take it from him, because if you take it from him on the place, he can claim that all he was doing was keeping it on his person until he could pay you for it. And of course, he can charge you for having publicly humiliated him, with creating a confrontation, false accusation, and so on. You have a very difficult time. And the thing is that these people all know their rights. I don't remember right now other cases, but I have been involved in several where

there was a theft. The problem, as I said, is if you know a man has stolen something of yours and he has it in his possession, you [then] have a serious problem if you accuse him and threaten him with police, and he challenges you; also you may have a false-arrest suit on your hands.

GARDNER:

Is it hard to establish proof of. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

It's very hard to establish proof, and the district attorney's office is not very cooperative. And in spite of the fact that we did a very thorough workup on a case where we had a theft of about forty books from us that we discovered this past year, the district attorney's office did not feel that they had a very strong case. The man did not come up for arraignment; he skipped bail. Later he did return; was tried and sentenced.

GARDNER:

You did figure out who—an alleged suspect, or however you put in in legalese.

ZEITLIN:

Well, these are not the very expensive books we lost. These we've never recovered. These were a group of about forty books which were offered to Bennett and Marshall. And Danny Geiss called up and said, "There's a man over here in a Hollywood Boulevard apartment that's got a group of books that look like they came out of your place. What's more, his descriptions all look like your descriptions."

GARDNER:

Oh, you mean he left the descriptions in those volumes?

ZEITLIN:

He inked out our price and put the equivalent price in French francs, thinking that that would be a way of getting the best value for them. Danny said to this man, "Look, I can't make you a fair offer without doing a little research. Do you mind if I make some notes?" He wrote down the titles and descriptions of the books and then called us when he got back to the place. Then we went through our files and we found our descriptions and the date when we had

last seen them. Then I got ahold of the police. It took me a full day to get them into action, but they finally did go over. At first they were going to do a stakeout, but finally they just went right up to the door and knocked and said, "May we come into your place? We're looking for some property," and he said, "All right." They came in and found our books on the living room table. Then under a mattress they found all of our descriptions of the books. They brought the man in and booked him. They wouldn't let me see him because they felt that might prejudice his rights. I went over the books themselves and identified them as books which I knew we had owned. The man wasn't even held for twenty-four hours. They just took him right before the desk sergeant, I guess, who set bail at \$2,500, and the man reached into his wallet and took out twenty-five \$100 bills and gave them to the police. All the police could do was hold the books. He finally didn't appear for arraignment. His attorney called up and said that he'd been so nervous he couldn't come, but if they would not issue a warrant for him on bail-skipping, the attorney would bring him in within a week. A week passed and the man didn't come in, and by that time he'd gotten all of his affairs together and was able to skip the country. Now, this man had a police record of two similar offenses, and yet, when one of us went down to the city hall to attend the arraignment and appear as a witness and identify the books (we had a lot of cooperation from the sergeant of detectives at Hollywood), the district attorney's man walked in five minutes before the hearing was scheduled, looked at our evidence, and said, "I don't think we're going to be able to hold the man." He came back, was arraigned and held for trial. I was never advised of the outcome. We do have the books back, and we've sold some of them. There was a total of over \$7,000 worth of books in that lot.

GARDNER:

But those expensive ones you never recovered?

ZEITLIN:

Never recovered. I have no clue, but I suspect the man—he had some connection with an airline, he may have been a steward or something, or his wife may have been a stewardess, or his girlfriend. In any event, the more expensive books weren't there.

GARDNER:

Well, okay, that puts you on one side of the law. I thought perhaps you could recall for us some of the times that you were on the other side. You've always been active in the fight against censorship, and there are two or three cases I know of, and I thought I'd ask you to think of the important ones to you and then other ones as they come to your memory.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I've really not directly been involved in many cases. I remember that when the [*Memoirs of*] *Hecate County* case came up I was not directly consulted, but I was asked if I knew of some respectable-looking lady who would appear as a witness for the defense, to testify whether *Hecate County* was a book containing obscenities and was an indecent book. And I knew a very charming, very presentable lady; white-haired, dignified. Her name was Margarete Clark, and she'd been a member of the school board and active in a number of political campaigns, very fine-looking woman with a great dignity. . . . And so *Hecate County* lost. Now, the case I was involved in was called Zeitlin , Ferguson v. Arnebergh . [Roger] Arnebergh was the city attorney of Los Angeles. This was a case in which I was not the defendant; I was the plaintiff. I was in no jeopardy, and there isn't any special credit to me, but what Ferguson and I sued for was: I for the right to sell, and he for the right to buy this book.

GARDNER:

Who is Ferguson?

ZEITLIN:

He taught English at L.A. State College. And what we based our suit on was the fact that in San Diego County a man had been acquitted for selling *Tropic of Cancer*, and then in Los Angeles he had been found guilty of selling *Tropic of Cancer*. Here was a case where there was a conflict which we felt should be brought before the state supreme court, so we carried it from the municipal court to the superior court, from the superior court to appellate court, and finally up to the state supreme court. And we got a very wonderful judgment throwing out the conviction, or rather declaring that. . . Well, what it did was, it effectively brought to an end all the prosecutions on grounds of obscenity in this state. The decision was written by Justice [Mathew] Tobriner, and it was a

magnificent decision, one which I wish could be reprinted because I don't think there's ever been a finer statement with regard to freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of the right to communicate ideas. Well, Arnebergh was the city attorney, and later I had occasion to realize what the consequences could be for being the plaintiff in the case. But in the meantime, he lost the case; and, as I say, this effectively brought to the end any prosecutions on the same basis as *Tropic of Cancer*.

GARDNER:

About what period would this have been--what year? Do you remember?

ZEITLIN:

I think it was 1955. In any event, the case of Zeitlin v. Arnebergh is in the law books, and it is a landmark case in the history of the battle against censorship. Although it isn't mentioned in the newest volume on banned books, it is mentioned in several other anthologies and bibliographies.

GARDNER:

Weren't you involved in something with Connor Everts?

ZEITLIN:

Yes. That was much earlier. I was involved, but I made no court appearance. Richard Sherwood, who is a member of the respectable firm of O'Melveny and Myers, became the attorney for the defendant in this case. Connor Everts had exhibited some drawings in a gallery on La Cienega Boulevard which were regarded as being obscene. They evidently were rather explicit drawings of the pudenda of women and the sexual organs of men, and at that time the district attorney's office had a man attached to it--I think his name was Casey--who was a deputy specially placed in the district attorney's office for ferreting out violations of what were considered the decency laws. Dick Sherwood asked me if I could provide him with any examples of explicit sexual art by great masters, and it happened that I had an etching of Rembrandt's *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, and so I lent it to him to present as evidence, in order to sustain the argument that the subject matter of great artists had not avoided the explicit illustration of the sexual organs of people. This was one of the telling exhibitions. Connor Everts was acquitted, I think, and that case went

down in the records as one of the important defenses of freedom of expression in art. But I was not a witness.

GARDNER:

Were there any other cases you can think of?

ZEITLIN:

None that I was associated with.

GARDNER:

You've always been close to the Los Angeles art community, but more so, say, through the first thirty years.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, that's true. I was giving original exhibitions to artists because there were very few galleries, and artists had few opportunities to exhibit their works. The County Museum was not showing much in the way of contemporary art, and there were only a handful of galleries around, and many of those were so far up on the scale that they didn't want to be bothering with the small, local artists, the beginners in the field. So I had exhibitions like Edward Weston's first photography exhibition; Peter Krasnow, exhibition of lithographs. There was a very fine woman artist by the name of Grace Clements; a man by the name of Anders Aldrin, who was a distinguished artist; and Fred Sexton, who had great promise. I showed drawings by S. MacDonald-Wright. There was a very considerable group of artists, some of whom became well recognized, that I showed first at my place. I did sell some watercolors, some of the California watercolors group—of people like Millard Sheets and Tom Craig and Phil Paradise, Milfred Zornes, Jim Patric, Phyllis Shields, and Arthur Millier—some of whom were forgotten and may never be resurrected, others who are commencing to be rediscovered. One of the people that I'm most proud of having exhibited was Paul Landacre, whose prints I showed for the first time in any gallery, and who did illustrations for some of my announcements. In time he became well known as an illustrator of books by Donald Culross Peattie and did a number of illustrations for the publications of the Limited Editions Club.

GARDNER:

When did you begin to drift away from the local art scene?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I did show other artists a long time ago. I showed people like Kathe Kollwitz in 1937.

GARDNER:

We talked about that.

ZEITLIN:

And I had exhibitions of a good many of the English etchers of the time: John Austen, G.L. Brockhurst, Eric Gill, Muirhead Bone, who were all from quite a distance. I had a sort of working arrangement with Weyhe Gallery in New York, which was then managed by Carl Zigrosser, who became a prominent authority on the history of the print in America. He used to send me exhibitions of various artists. Rockwell Kent was one of them. Then I had exhibitions of Orozco and Siqueiros, mostly of their graphics. When I moved over here on La Cienega, my wall space commenced to shrink as the book stock grew, and I had less and less exhibition space. The other problem was that living artists commenced to crowd in on me so much, demanding that I look at their portfolios, that they occupied too much time. It interfered with my work, interfered with my ability to tend to business. I had to finally announce my policy that I was not exhibiting any living artists. This was unfortunate, in a way, because it didn't give me the opportunity and didn't give the artists who were deserving of attention the opportunity to exhibit. But it was also fortunate in that I didn't have a great many of the problems that came along with the temperaments of some of the artists that I exhibited, people who were often outstanding as artists but a little less than outstanding in terms of their sense of obligation.

GARDNER:

It's ironic, in a way, that at the time you moved to La Cienega, La Cienega was becoming the center of the Los Angeles art scene in some ways.

ZEITLIN:

At the time I moved here, in 1948, there weren't any galleries showing contemporary art. That all came after I moved here.

GARDNER:

But the point I'm trying to make is that at that point the galleries are out here, and yet you're pulling away from the contemporary art scene.

ZEITLIN:

Well, yes, of course it's always been my policy to pull away from competition. If the competition got too strong, I left the field to them and carved out another area. And I've always been able to discover new areas, where the competition was less, into which I could go. That's been true throughout the history of my bookselling and my art selling. When everybody was selling abstract impressionism and the New York School, I went back to selling some of the old fogies. I was having exhibitions of people like Whistler and Forain and Durer and Rembrandt because there was no competition; there were no dealers exhibiting these things. In the late forties and early fifties, black-and-white graphics had practically no market. There were very few outstanding collectors around the country and a few very quiet amateurs who were collecting the people they liked. Certain highspot etchings were bringing what then seemed to be extremely high prices: in other words, *Adam and Eve* of Durer would bring a high price. *Three Trees* of Rembrandt would bring a high price—or the *Hundred Guilder* print of Rembrandt—but a lot of the other things were bringing very little money. There was at that time a considerable interest in people like D.Y. [David Young] Cameron. But the great drive was to buy Matisse and Picasso and Cezanne and Chagall, and I wasn't handling them. Except for an occasional rare graphic, I was not trying to cater to those kinds of customers. I mostly sold the kind of art that went with books and that appealed to the people who were collecting books or who were essentially tradition minded; they looked to the past rather than the future.

GARDNER:

What about dealers? Were there any art dealers you were particularly friendly with, close to?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the great model for me in the field of graphics was a man by the name of Irwin Firman, a very brilliant man, a man who had been an outstanding chess player. At one time he had been a business reorganizer. He decided to liberate himself from the pressures of business and opened a little gallery out in

Hollywood, on Sycamore Street. Irwin Firman had the choicest prints of anybody of his day or since in this part of the world. He had really first-class Whistlers, firstclass Rembrandts, first-class Durers, and nobody since —and I'll include myself—has ever had so fine a collection as he had. He had a small clientele, overall, except for the people from out of town who would come and buy from him. When he started to close out, he sold me his reference books and some of his prints, but I was not perceptive enough and I didn't have capital enough to buy the major prints that he had in stock. I'm sure that nobody before him or since him has come near Irwin Firman in the quality of the materials that he had. I knew him quite well; we cooperated, and we were friendly. I also knew Earl Stendahl, who was a delightful buccaneer, a very engaging man who'd been a dining-car chef, who loved to cook, and who, when his business was most successful on Wilshire Boulevard, used to start in and manufacture candy every year before Christmas and take advance orders. I used to put in orders for about 100 two-pound boxes of chocolate. They were very good and made great Christmas gifts for my customers. In modern art such as Picasso and Matisse, Frank Perls, who came here in the early forties, was above all the outstanding dealers. He was also a man of great integrity, unsparing in his hatred of fakers and charlatans.

1.28. TAPE NUMBER: XVI, Side One
(September 24, 1979)

GARDNER:

As I mentioned to you, I have three topics that I'd like to discuss, in no particular order. So let me start out and ask you to talk about the museum that Bart Lytton was involved with, which you said was a motion picture collection, since Mr. Mink has instructed me to inquire into that.

ZEITLIN:

Well, that began with a man by the name of Mogens Scott Hansen, a very charming Dane who came over here to Hollywood as the UNESCO representative to the film industry, the idea being that he could get the film industry to slant their productions in one way or another to build up support for UNESCO and the United Nations; spread it around the world where all the films were going. Scott Hansen was a very charming, highly cultivated man. His

wife [Elin] was as charming a woman; her father [Karl Henriques] was the leading private banker of Denmark. Of course, being the leading private banker of Denmark makes you about the equal of some of our small-town bankers around here. But he was a charming man, too, and an international figure, a man of great understanding and tolerance and remarkably liberal. Their idea of a progressive banker in Denmark would make him into a socialist here. That's a digression, except that Scott Hansen had over the years been very much interested--he was a film producer in Denmark, and he'd been engaged in forming a collection of the history of the cinema before the modern motion picture: everything from the itinerant traveler with a magic lantern to the different devices which were used to create the effect of moving figures. He had assembled a great collection of praxiniscopes and magic lanterns, camera obscura and so on; it was one of the finest that'd ever been formed. He'd spent many years at it. Around 1945, he went back to Denmark, and he wrote to me that he'd decided to sell this collection because he wanted to buy a place in the country--they didn't have the money otherwise, and did I know of someone. At that time Sol Lesser, who had also become a friend of Mogens Scott Hansen's, was developing the Hollywood Motion Picture Museum. I got in touch with Sol, and I said, "Scott Hansen wants to sell his cinema collection, and it's almost a museum in itself. Wouldn't it be great if you could join it to the Hollywood Motion Picture Museum that you're promoting?" He said, "Yes, that's fine. Let me think it over, and I'll get in touch with you." Sol Lesser is an unusual kind of man: if he says something like that to you, he means it, and he will surely get in touch with you. In a short while he called me, and he said, "Write a letter to Bart Lytton, in Lytton Savings and Loan; tell him about the collection, and tell him that I suggested that you get in touch with him." Bart Lytton had come to Sol Lesser and said, "I want to do something in connection with the museum, but I don't want to just make a trifling gift. I want to do something important for which I can get the benefits of publicity and credit for having done it." And he said, "After all, I was a film writer, I'm interested in films, and I'd like to help promote this museum." So Sol had called up Bart Lytton and said, "Bart, you always said you wanted to do something special for the museum; now, here's an opportunity." And Lytton said, "Well, fine, have Zeitlin write me a letter giving the details and give me the poop on it." I had an album which showed all the different pieces of equipment and described the collection. It was very

well prepared by Scott Hansen. I sent it on to Lytton. Then I got a phone call from Lytton 's lawyer to come over and talk to him. Lytton at that time had space in the lower floor of his savings and loan at the corner of Crescent Heights and Sunset Boulevard. He was setting up a kind of a cultural activity which included exhibition by different artists around town, lectures, and recitals. He had an auditorium. He had decided to link himself to the cultural side of the community activities as a way of getting his bank noticed and attracting a certain type of depositor. He had a very fine, brilliant woman [Josine Ianco-Starrels] who was running it, and he had a publicity man by the name of Herb Klein--not the same Herb Klein that was public relations man for . . .

GARDNER:

. . . Nixon?

ZEITLIN:

. . . Nixon.

GARDNER:

No, your friend Herb Klein.

ZEITLIN:

Nor my friend Herb Klein.

GARDNER:

Not that one, either? [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

No. He was another man by the name of Herb Klein, who was in charge of public relations and particularly in charge of this sort of cultural center that went with the bank. Bart Lytton's attorney called me in and said, "Mr. Lytton will buy the collection." Then he gave me a written contract which Lytton had signed and which I was to sign in which they agreed to buy the collection for \$45,000. I assumed that this was all done with Sol Lesser 's knowledge and that it was going to the museum, but after I signed it and I reported to Lesser, Sol said, "What do you mean? This guy isn't buying this for the Hollywood museum. He's buying this for his own private show over there at the Lytton

Center." Lesser was quite indignant about it. He had as his lawyer the most powerful lawyer in town at that time, at least in the motion picture industry, Mendel Silverberg. Sol came to me and said, "I want you to rescind that contract. I want you to just notify Lytton that you will not deliver those things to him on the basis that"--you see, I hadn't delivered them yet; they were still in transit, and so I hadn't been paid—"on the basis that he had misrepresented me. You can say that you were led to believe that Lytton was buying this for the museum. Now it turns out he's buying it in order to set up his own museum of the history of the cinema." Sol Lesser also said, "I will give you an absolute warranty. I will sign a contract agreeing to defend you against all suits or any demand for damages that might come from Bart Lytton." I went to my lawyer, and my lawyer, who was then Bob Kenny, and Mendel Silverberg worked out a contract which was intended to protect me, and then I wrote a letter to Bart Lytton notifying him that I was rescinding the contract, Bart Lytton, of course, was indignant and threatened to sue me for breach of contract and so on, and I simply didn't do anything. Sol said, "You leave it to Silverberg and me." The collection was in transit. Fortunately, it was directed to the Los Angeles County Museum, where it was to be stored so that Mr. Lytton couldn't lay hands on it, couldn't take possession. The museum people took possession because it was directed to them, according to the forwarding papers, and then they went into conference with Mr. Lytton. They got Mr. Lytton to agree that he would give it to the motion picture museum. In the meantime, he would have the right to exhibit it until the motion picture museum was built; that is to say, he could set it up and install it in his establishment and exploit it, and the motion picture museum was to get it, provided they had a museum actually built and set up to function within five years. After five years he was no longer obliged to give it to them if they did not fulfill the plan. I paid off Scott Hansen. Bart Lytton then set about working out a plan to wreck the motion picture museum. The motion picture museum—through funds that Sol Lesser had been able to accumulate in various ways, and through the funds that the county had appropriated—had acquired land opposite the Hollywood Bowl. When the properties were condemned, there was a big argument. One of the tenants there refused to move. He was an ex-marine, He barricaded himself with guns, and got a great lot of publicity. They finally evicted him, and like so many of the things where eminent domain is invoked, to this day nothing has been built on that spot.

Bart Lytton worked very shrewdly. He got together with Ernest Debs, who, I think, had learned various ways to line his pocket without taking it out of the public till. And between them they got into an arrangement with [William] Pereira. Pereira came up with what he called the Pereira Plan for a museum to be built on the ground which had now been acquired for the Hollywood museum. The Pereira Plan was presented to the committee of the board of supervisors, was found to be unacceptable, and the entire plan for the museum ...

GARDNER:

. . . was scrapped.

ZEITLIN:

. . . was scrapped. Mr. Lytton got his way . . . insofar as he got to retain the collection. But of course he didn't keep it for very long, because Mr. Lytton, while a brilliant man, was also a megalomaniac and had very poor discrimination when it came to matters of what was ethical banking and what wasn't. The Lytton bank often had more funds than it could properly lend out, and the practice of savings and loans and banks who can't lend out their money directly under the conditions of banking laws is for them to lend the money to other banks at a lower rate of interest; other banks that need more money can borrow the money from them for, say, 6 percent, whereas they're paying their depositors 5 [percent], so that they make a little money, while the funds are not applied to more profitable loans. Mr. Lytton had several million dollars at the time to deposit with other banks, and there were other banks who could use the funds; but whenever he lent money out to the other banks he made a condition that they should make him personal loans for some of his investments, so that if he lent them \$2 million or \$3 million through the Lytton bank, they often would lend him in turn \$100,000 or \$200,000, which he could use for making loans that would never pass the bank examiners. He had friends who were in the quick-profit jerry-building business and using federal financing. There were structures which went up in Hollywood which purported to cost a million dollars, and there was probably \$300,000 of excess charges in there that were fed back to the people who participated, the difference being what were the inflated charges that were put into the mortgage that the federal money had financed, and other things like that. The only trouble is you

couldn't—a bank couldn't lend that money to these kind of promotions, so they had to go to private lenders, and in turn they paid what then was a considerable rate of interest: 12 percent, whereas the average rate of interest was 6 percent, so it would appear to be very lucrative. In order to get these loans, these personal loans, so that he could lend the money to his friends who were promoting these scams, Mr. Lytton would have to put up his own stock in the Lytton Savings and Loan, put that up as collateral for the money that was lent him. And after a while the amount that was lent to him commenced to increase, and some of these scams didn't work, and he didn't get his money back from some of those promoters that he was involved with. And one day the banks got together and discovered that between them Mr. Lytton owed an awful lot of money, and they were holding his controlling stock. So they closed down on him, took over his controlling stock, and took away his voting powers in the Lytton Savings and Loan. And Mr. Lytton found himself virtually out—certainly out of control—and a pensioner of the banks. When that happened, the leading stockholder who took over the Lytton Savings and Loan (they couldn't afford to let it go on the rocks, because that would have been bad for the whole savings-and-loan industry) was Glendale Savings and Loan, and apparently Glendale Savings and Loan in turn was one of the many subsidiaries-- as far as I am informed--of MCA. Jules Stein, Lou Wasserman, and MCA in turn owned Universal. So Universal Pictures, without being required to bid competitively against anyone else, was allowed to purchase the cinema collection from the Lytton bank, and the cinema collection is now out in Universal City; the idea being to create a motion picture museum someday in the future.

GARDNER:

And in the meantime, nothing?

ZEITLIN:

In the meantime, nothing. The Scott Hansen collection is in storage, as far as I know. I made several attempts to go to the officers at the Glendale Savings and Loan, which had taken over Lytton, and buy the collection. I told them I was prepared to bid competitively. I had been asked to do this by Sol Lesser, who still wanted it to go, as it originally was intended, to the Hollywood

museum. But they ignored my efforts and my approach, and sold it off for a token sum to Universal.

GARDNER:

And there it is today.

ZEITLIN:

There's where it is.

GARDNER:

Well, that was a fascinating story, and I'm glad that Jim Mink prompted me to inquire. I suppose that his personal interest is that he too would like to see materials like that made showable.

ZEITLIN:

Well, there was a considerable amount of books, and broadsides, and early prints, and other literature in this collection. The library was quite extensive having to do with the forerunners of the modern film.

GARDNER:

To shift subjects now, subject number two (which was originally my subject number one) : since this is your definitive biography, in a way, I'd like to try to catch up with and get some idea of your family structure—your wives in order, your children, and where did they come from? Your first . . .

ZEITLIN:

That's a complicated ...

GARDNER:

Oh, I know it's a complicated tree, but. . . . We talked about Edith Motheral, right, your first wife?

ZEITLIN:

Edith Motheral, yes. She was my first wife. I married her in Texas, in 1925. I sent her out here to Los Angeles to stay with some friends of friends of mine.

GARDNER:

The Calverts.

ZEITLIN:

She stayed with the Calverts. I just got a letter last week from the granddaughter of Mellie Calvert telling me she had died. I'm very sad about that because Mellie was a lovely woman, a wonderfully kind person and one of the kind of people that makes the world as good as it is. And if there were enough of them, they'd make it much better. Edith came out here in April of 1925. I hitchhiked out, and I arrived, as well as I remember, in May. I was stunned. I had never been in a city where there were such crowds. I was completely dazzled by the enormous numbers of different kinds of people and how they streamed down the sidewalks and across the streets. And I remember the first time I went downtown, Edith had to take me by the hand and lead me across the street.

GARDNER:

Edith was with child, wasn't she?

ZEITLIN:

Yes, she was--we were expecting a child, and I went to work. I hitchhiked across from Texas . . .

GARDNER:

Right. Well, that story's already been . . .

ZEITLIN:

. . . I've already told in a previous part of this all too long narration. [laughter] And so we were very kindly allowed to stay in the Calverts' house, but there was very little room: there wasn't enough room for them. We started immediately to look for a place to stay, and there were ads for people to work--they were supposed to be apartment house managers, and they were to be given an apartment in exchange for managing the apartment house.

GARDNER:

When was the child born?

ZEITLIN:

Well, the child wasn't born, but we didn't have any money. I went around job hunting. I got a job first in Boos Brothers Cafeteria, and then I got a job for E.L. Doheny's oil company as a gardener. And we answered one of these ads, and we were given an apartment in the St. Catherine Apartments over in Hollywood in exchange for which Edith slaved all day long and did all the laundry, all the vacuuming, all the cleaning, was kept busy from dawn till dark. What these people got in exchange for their apartment was full-time slave labor. Well, she was expecting a child, and we couldn't remain there very long. This woman didn't want a baby in her apartment house. She didn't want a man who came home from working spreading manure all day, and smelled like it and looked like it, coming in through the front door, and I wouldn't go in the back door. It was a matter of maintaining my ego with me. And so we finally found a small apartment out near USC . I think it was Twenty-Eighth Place.

GARDNER:

And this is the place that burned down.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, and this is the place that caught fire and burned down. Edith and I moved sometime afterwards to Landa Street, which is at the north end of Echo Park Avenue. It was down a dirt road, and there was a little group of redwood houses there. I don't know who owned them, some woman to whom we paid something like thirty-five dollars a month, and it was a charming place--lovely view of the river below and the railroad yards and Forest Lawn and the Sierra Madre range. Mount Wilson. And we had some nice neighbors.

GARDNER:

Now, has your first child been born yet?

ZEITLIN:

The first child was born in October of 1925. That was Judith Louon. The name Louon seemed to have had a special attraction for Edith. And Judith was my contribution. It seemed to me that a child with a name of Louon would have a great handicap when it started to go to school. Something like "Judith," which

could be contracted to "Judy," would be a little easier to cope with. And we remained on Landa Street.

GARDNER:

Now, the next question is a tricky one. How long did the marriage last?

ZEITLIN:

Well, she had a breakdown in the summer of 1927. I had been in the Barlow Sanitarium, and I came home and was just getting started, and one night I got a phone call. Edith had taken a job distributing samples of soap for Procter and Gamble Company. They had teams of people who went around and just knocked on people's doors and left samples of soap and cleaning powder; this was a rather nice job. She traveled with this crew and made us a little more money. In the meantime, I was recuperating, and so I was staying home, taking care of the child. One night I got a phone call from San Diego, from a Dr. Arthur Cecil, a man I never knew and never met before, and he said, "I'm calling you from San Diego. Your wife was at the Coronado Hotel, and she was obviously very much disturbed. So I talked to her and I could see that she needed care. I have taken the liberty of putting her into a sanitarium here until you can get down and bring her home." I got a friend by the name of Charlie Dunning, who was a friend of Carl Sandburg's, to drive me to the station. I took the train and went to San Diego, and when I got there it was morning, and I went to the Coronado Hotel and met this Dr. Arthur B. Cecil, a southern gentleman who was a notable urological surgeon from Los Angeles. And he arranged for me to go over to this sanitarium, and when I got there I spoke to the attendant, and the attendant said, "I don't think you'd better go in and talk to her. She'll only be more violent." And when I went in the room she was very violent, and I had to leave the room. Suddenly she was violent towards me, and I went back to Dr. Cecil, and I called some friends in Los Angeles. The woman had been my secretary during the time that I was trying to get my business started from my home. She wasn't very well paid, but she needed a place to stay, so she had stayed there in the house. Her first name was Henrietta; I can't remember her last name. But she by that time had met a very close friend of mine, a man who had been very good to me and a patron, bought books from me and sort of kept me alive, a man by the name of Maurice Warshaw. He was an accountant. Maurice Warshaw had a great

reverence for literature and everything having to do with books, and for some reason he had taken me under his arm. So Maurice Warshaw and Henrietta came to San Diego. A nurse was assigned to come with us and take care of Edith. She was put under sedation and we drove back to Los Angeles, and Dr. Arthur Cecil, who owed me nothing, paid the entire bill for the sanitarium and for the nurse and for her care until we got down to Los Angeles.

GARDNER:

How marvelous.

ZEITLIN:

When we got to Los Angeles, I had another group of friends, some people by the name of Levine. She was a social worker, and she arranged, first of all, for Edith to go to Dr. Aaron Rosanoff, who then was the leading psychiatrist in Southern California. He talked to her, tried to evaluate her, and recommended that she be put into a sanitarium. And he said that she was a manic-depressive, that her condition was advanced, and that there was no hope that she would ever recover, which was rather a blow to me, with a child to look after, two and a half years old by then. Edith did have periods when she was lucid and cooperative, but they never lasted very long, and so we remained married until 1929. During that time she would disappear at times; she would take up with people who were as unstable as she was, mentally. It was a [pauses] hard time for me.

GARDNER:

It must have been incredibly difficult, with the new business and with the baby.

ZEITLIN:

I had no money. I was being helped by friends who bought books from me. I was being helped by friends who lent me some money. But of course the most disturbing thing was that she would disappear, that she was rebellious, that she was hostile, that she couldn't look after the child. She . . . she simply was not a disciplined person. And finally it was she that decided that she would be better off if she could divorce me. She got the notion that there was some magic in divorce, that if we were divorced that she could somehow or another

be liberated and go her way in the world, and that I wouldn't stand between her as a sort of a disciplinary figure. I was advised by the psychologist, Dr. Rosanoff, I was advised by the social workers that I consulted, and by friends, this was the thing that I should do. I didn't like the idea. I'd made such a gesture of defiance to my family and the whole background out of which I'd come by marrying her and going away and undertaking to start without anything. It was an admission of failure. And I had no idea how I would keep the thing going, but I did not like the idea of getting divorced. Well, finally that's what happened. She became interested in weaving, and she got to be a very good weaver. By that time I had a little shop going, and I was able to give her some support, and she, I think, got some WPA funds as well, so that she had a weaving shop out in San Fernando Valley. She was doing weaving of fabrics. It was good therapy for her, as long as it lasted. But as soon as she found herself with other people of similar instability, they all sort of blew up. The first thing, they became so infatuated with each other--that they were the most wonderful people in the world, and as long as that lasted, it was fine. And then, of course, they fell out, and it was a crash, a mental crash, and everything else. I continued to provide her with as much money as I could, and to sort of step in when there were crises. I had taken a house in the Echo Park Avenue area near Elysian Park. I hired a housekeeper, and I kept the little girl at home with me. I had a neighbor by the name of Hester Scott, and she had a son a little bit older than my little girl. And so we had this duplex house, and we were able to trade off on babysitting, we were able to entertain mutually, and we were very good friends. We were enamored, to a degree. But I certainly had no idea of becoming involved with her, or marrying her. I had a feeling that this was not the kind of person I wanted to marry. I had a number of other women friends, and the one that I really was very much attached to, devoted to, was a young woman much younger than me, Marjorie Rosenfeld, who had a fine family; her mother was a beautifully groomed woman who entertained and had a good home. They used to invite me there a great deal. It was sort of a second home. I was always free to come and have dinner. They had many parties and so on. And the one evening Marjorie's brother Pete Rosenfeld asked me if I would pick up a young lady by the name of Jean Weyl--this was approximately 1931 or '32--and bring her to a party at their house one evening. Jean Weyl's father was a superior-court judge. Her father

was of a San Francisco Jewish family but not very much identified as a Jew. Her mother was of French origin. She'd been a Catholic, but. . . .

**1.29. TAPE NUMBER: XVI, Side Two
(September 24, 1979)**

GARDNER:

Continue the story of Jean Weyl and her mother.

ZEITLIN:

Her mother's maiden name was Moisant, and the Moisants were a very spectacular family who had been in the ship-channeling business in San Francisco. One of the brothers was John Moisant, who was a pioneer aviator and who crashed in New Orleans; Moisant Field in New Orleans is named after him. One of the sisters was Matilda Moisant, who was the first licensed woman flier in this country, although she yielded number one to a woman by the name of [Harriett] Quimby, because Quimby wanted to make a profession of flying and wanted this special prestige mark. The Moisants were very well off. Matilda Moisant had barnstormed in this country and in Mexico. As early as 1912, 1913, 1914, the Moisants had a flying school on Long Island where they taught people to fly airplanes. It was the first flying school, I think, in the United States. Then the Moisant brothers had gone down to Central America, to San Salvador, had acquired coffee fincas and become very large landowners, and had become part of the ruling junta of San Salvador. So this was Jean Weyl's family. She was little, she was sparkling, she had a great deal of physical charm, and I was quite infatuated with her. And I thought, well, this is a young woman with good background, her father's a judge; she has a stable home. I like her, she seems to like me, and it's time I stopped trying to live alone, bring up my child without a mother. We got married. We were married by Rabbi [Max] Dubin at the Wilshire Temple. Then we got into my car, we drove down to Mission San Luis Rey. As we walked through the mission just as it was getting dark, she burst into tears and told me that she didn't really want to get married. She hated the whole idea; she wasn't ready for it.

GARDNER:

Oh, Lord! How old was she at this time?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I suppose . . . well, I was about thirtyone; I think she was about twenty-six. And that's the way that marriage began. [laughter]

GARDNER:

I take it from the way you say that, that things didn't get better.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I was determined that it was going to work out. The Depression was on. Her family was struck by it very hard. Her father by then no longer had a judgeship; had run for re-election and lost, and entered into the practice of law. He and his wife were separated. He moved out. Her two brothers were just getting out of school and college. They were undergoing hardship. The two aunts really felt that she had married beneath her. I had this bookshop going which was just barely creaking along. but I was able to keep the house going to provide the turkey for the family Christmas dinner, and we had a child, David, a very sweet boy. We moved up to a house on Altivo Way, which is also at the north end of Echo Park Avenue, a house hanging off the cliff, partly, just below the house where Neal Harlow and Marian Harlow live right now. Marian Harlow's father owned the house, and he was very friendly and sympathetic, and if my rent got to be a couple of months past due, he never threatened to evict me.

GARDNER:

Why can't I find landlords like that? [laughter]

ZEITLIN:

I don't know. The times are different. There's not a depression. And a man who paid his rent once every three months was better than a man who didn't pay any rent at all. [laughter] But his name was Gardner, as I remember, and this was one of the houses they had lived in. The house up on the top of the hill was the house that he had lived in, but then he'd moved out to Orange County and rented out the house. So Jean and I lived there until about 1935, when we moved over to Waverly Drive. It was not very far [from] near where Alvarado starts to drop off into Glendale, overlooking Riverside Drive again but further west. We lived there until 1937. My daughter Judy, and David, who

was Jean's son, lived there together with us, but all along she was dissatisfied. She was discontent. I was a struggling, small merchant, and I wasn't showing promises of making a fortune or being able to provide her with the kind of life--what she felt she should have. And she was immensely jealous; she was temperamental. She could be very charming. She was attractive to men; other men made her all kinds of attractive promises, as long as she was married. Finally, in 1937, I went off on a trip around the country. I went to Texas, to Louisiana, then to New Mexico and visited Frieda Lawrence and met Aldous Huxley, and when I came back Jean informed me that she was getting a divorce.

GARDNER:

So at this point you were 0-for-two, and a year later your home run came into your life, right?

ZEITLIN:

No, I met Josephine in the summer of 1937, before I left on this trip. However, I had no intention of becoming involved with her. I was very much attracted-- I felt that she had the qualities that I'd always wanted in a woman--but I had also made up my mind that I was married. I'd failed once, and I wasn't going to let anything bring about a dissolution of a second marriage. I was going to stay with it no matter what. But when I got back from my trip, Jean had in the meantime made her own plans and decided that she wanted a divorce.

GARDNER:

Fate plays a strange hand.

ZEITLIN:

Well ...

GARDNER:

As a result, you've now been married to Josephine for over forty years.

ZEITLIN:

Well, we didn't get married right away. I rented a house separately and moved into it, overlooking Silver Lake. And Josephine would come up there and visit me on weekends, and we got to be closer and closer. A friend of ours--Katy. . .

? i can't remember it. She was a designer and a sculptress and a little, perky woman, wonderful spirit, and she had a husband, Charles, who was not very much. He couldn't keep a job; she was the one who was the person. She was going to have a baby, and they had no house. So Josephine and I rented a house, which we occupied jointly with them, so that they could have a place to live. And that went along fine until some mutual friends of ours said, "This won't do. You and Josephine can't go on living together. It's going to alienate a lot of people that you need, your customers, friends and so on—people that your place in the community depends on." Especially Remsen Bird, who was the president of Occidental College then, counseled me. Josephine moved into a separate apartment, and I moved into the bookshop, which by then was over on Carondelet Street. We had an apartment upstairs over the bookshop, and I lived there. Josephine would come over evenings and prepare meals, and she had a job meantime with the Haines Foundation. It was not until October 28, 1939 that we were finally able to get married. One of the reasons for that is that Jean had thought things over in the meantime and decided she really didn't mean it, that she didn't want to be divorced. But things had gone too far, and I couldn't turn back. And I certainly couldn't ask Josephine to step out after the support she'd given, and I'd had a taste of what the good life could be. [laughter]

GARDNER:

Forty years next month! You'll celebrate it in London.

ZEITLIN:

Yes.

GARDNER:

So, two children by your final marriage.

ZEITLIN:

Josephine and I had a son, Joel, who's now thirty-seven years old; and then two years later we had a daughter, Adriana. And from the time I met Josephine on, my life has been very content. I've been a very contented man, and life has been much more peaceful than I ever dreamed it could be.

GARDNER:

Right. So wonderful. I would like to ask you to say a few words about your children. I know about a couple of them. What is Judy doing now? I met her at the "Diamond for Jake."

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Well, Judy lives in Laurel Canyon. She has for many years had an acting bug. She's gone to a number of acting classes; she's taken a lot of schooling; she's really dedicated to it. And I must say that when I've seen her perform I've been astonished at how she simply is transformed into the part she plays. I don't think she will ever be a great actress, and I don't think she thinks so, but it's what she wants to do, so she won't take any other jobs. She's now a member of the Screen Actors Guild. She's a member of AFTRA. She manages to get several days of acting a month. I don't know—she's a grandmother. She has a house she rents out. She lives in another house on the property. With my occasional help, she's able to live. And on top of that, she is a very good person. There's no malice in her. I've never heard her say a resentful thing about anyone. She's never said a resentful thing about either of the husbands she was married to (she's been married twice, but she had both of her children by her first marriage) . And when someone else is in trouble, when her younger sister was ill for a while, she just dedicated herself completely to being supportive, to looking after her. Whatever lack of practical success that she may have is certainly outweighed by her wonderful human qualities, her sweetness. So I find myself very pleased with her, all in all.

GARDNER:

David is next. David has a reputation of his own around town as a guitarist and guitar teacher.

ZEITLIN:

Well, David has always been a very lovable person. When he was quite young he was interested in music, and he used to drive Josephine mad--with his drums, with his trumpets, with all the instruments he could master. And he seemed to have a very quick grasp of any kind of a musical instrument—and so far as that's concerned, any kind of mechanism as well. He's very good at taking apart and reassembling complicated things like clockwork, and building motors and fishing reels and things like that. When he was quite young, I had

a visitor, a man by the name of Sam Eskin, who came to see me because I had collected a number of folk songs. And from time to time I would be looked up by people like John Lomax and Leadbelly and other people who were interested in songs and got the idea that I had some that they hadn't picked up before. Carl Sandburg had taken some of the songs I knew and put them in *The American Songbag*. This man Eskin, who had been quite a successful engineer with the United Parcel company, had set out to be a folk-song gypsy around the country, and traveled with his van and recording equipment. And he would come to our house and play the guitar and also encourage me to sing songs which he would record. I had a set of [Thomas] Percy's *Reliques*, a collection of ballads that Bishop Percy had collected, and this was an especially good set because the footnotes and the annotations were more extensive than the text itself. He wanted the set and said he'd like to buy it, and I said, "Well, instead of buying it, why don't you find me a guitar?" So he went to a hock shop and found an early Martin, a pre-Civil War Martin with a lovely tone, and he traded it to me for this set of Percy's *Reliques*. Of course, he then set out to try to teach me, and I discovered that I cannot play the guitar; I cannot coordinate two hands, and I cannot keep time, and I cannot stay on key. Otherwise . . . [laughter]

GARDNER:

Other than that . . .

ZEITLIN:

Yes, I'm a good musician. But the legend still persists—among people that I met forty, fifty years ago—that I used to play the guitar and sing folk songs.

GARDNER:

Wilbur Smith tells that.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. Well, I never played the guitar. I only clapped my hands. I could keep time by patting my hands. And yet there are people who will swear that I used to play the guitar, and I can't contradict them. It's no use. They're eyewitnesses, and you know how reliable they are. But David took this guitar and started to play around with it. My friend Sam Eskin showed him a few things about it,

and he quickly picked it up, started to play it. And then I sent him to a Mexican guitar teacher here in town by the name of Ylloriaga. I've been told since that Ylloriaga was the worst possible teacher I could have sent him to, [laughter] but I didn't know any better; and, you know, David, while he admits that the method was terrible, learned a great deal about playing the guitar, about classical guitar. From then on he got engagements to play for parties, play at coffee houses, and in some of the small Sunset [Boulevard] night clubs, and then he started teaching. And he's an excellent teacher. Really, he's a good performer for small groups, but he has no ambition to be a performer, He loves teaching, and he's taught hundreds of young people around town who remember him, who are very fond of him, and he's fond of them.

GARDNER:

He's been associated with McCabe's for years.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, he's been with McCabe's for years, and he earns a living that way. He's married, and now he has a little son, Benjamin, two years old, and they're about to have another.

GARDNER:

Move on to Joel, next. I have a particular affinity for Joel since he has the same name and same birth year as I do.

ZEITLIN:

Yes, well, Joel is a very warm, easy person. He was a golden child. He had golden hair and he was slim and self-assured, and he was lovable from the very beginning. I think he got a great many of his equable qualities from his mother. And I think as he grew he just seemed to do things the right way. He never excelled in any of the sports: he played on the basketball teams and so on, but he never was a very good basketball player. He quickly picked up games which required brains. He liked playing chess. He was not a chess prodigy, but he got to be a pretty good chess player. And he was an attractive person. He was a leader among his friends in school. He gave us very little trouble; he was never a problem child. And he went through high school with a pretty high level of achievement. He went to UCLA; he majored in

mathematics. He got his degree, doctorate. It's all seemed to come in natural order. Now he is grown up, married. He was married once before, to a high-school sweetheart, a girl that was the daughter of friends of ours, Gregory Ain, the architect--didn't work. They were divorced after a very short while—I think it was a year or so, they were divorced. She felt that she had married too soon. They were both nineteen; it was too young for them to get married. It was a blow to him—I think it unsettled him to some degree—but he never lacked for girlfriends, and he recovered, and he ultimately met Ann, his present wife, They lived together for quite a while, then got married several years ago. He'd discovered that he really isn't a research mathematician, but he loves teaching. He does it well. He is a responsible person. He seems to be very active in taking his share of the duties that go with departmental activities in the school itself, at Northridge, and I understand that he gets on well. People think well of him. And he lives a good life. And what's more, he's very good to me. [laughter]

GARDNER:

That's wonderful. I remember one evening that we sat, and the two of you exchanged commentaries on the history of science. And I found that fascinating that you, with your interest in history of science, should have spawned one scientist. It seems reasonable.

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think I stimulated some of it in him. I wish I'd been able to stimulate more, because I think if he had specialized in the history of science along with his teaching mathematics he might have developed a very useful specialty that would have served him well in his academic career. But then, it's not what I like and what I want that's important. I have had to learn that my children must find their own way of life and live it as best they can.

GARDNER:

Well, that brings us then to your fourth child, Adriana.

ZEITLIN:

My fourth child, Adriana.

GARDNER:

Your next-door neighbor.

ZEITLIN:

My fourth child, Adriana, was always a very volatile child, and very self-assertive. She was, I think, rather obsessive. When she was quite small, she dressed in older people's clothes; she tried to appear beyond her age. And she was, I think, competitive with her brother. I don't think Josephine or I ever told Joel or Adriana that we expected them to excel, but I think it got across to them. [laughter] She was a leader in high school, did very well. But then when she went off to the University of California at Santa Barbara, she discovered in her first year that there's quite a difference when you're on your own and when you have to make your way through the educational maze on the basis of your own resources. I don't think she was prepared for it. So she left for a while, and she came back here, had rather a hard time. She simply had to take time out. And she was going with a young man that she'd met in high school, a man obsessed with jogging and with athletics who's become a sociologist of sports. She went back to school at UCLA and got her bachelor's, and they were married and went to Santa Barbara, where they had two children and he got his bachelor's and doctorate—he got his bachelor's at UCLA, got his doctorate at Santa Barbara, in sociology. And they moved back down here. Then they discovered some strong incompatibilities. It's hard to be judgmental because we are of course partial to our own child. But finally, for reasons which I think were very good, she decided they could no longer live together, and they are now divorced. She has the two children and is very happy and in a very good mental state. She comes into our shop, she helps Josephine with her part of the business, and she also substitutes as a bookkeeper. And she is a very quick learner. She has sharp intuitions. I think her judgment of people is remarkably good, and her intelligence must be of a very high level because she can master anything she undertakes. Somewhere along the way I think she had a blow—it may have been that first year at the university eroded her self-confidence, and it's taken a long time for her to acquire her self-assurance again. But I think she has. She is more like my mother than any member of the family. My mother was the kind of person who seemed to quickly grasp a situation, know the right thing to do, wasn't afraid of emergencies. Adriana is like that. If anybody is injured in the neighborhood, she's the one takes them to a hospital or does anything that needs to be done. If some woman decides to have a

baby delivered at home, she's the one that goes and takes care of her and helps with the delivery. She is this little, thin wisp of a woman who has got a whim of iron and a tremendous amount of strength. And so I think she will continue to grow into being a fine woman.

GARDNER:

A question I feel I really should ask, since we have talked about generational bookshops and so forth and so on. Did any of your children ever exhibit real interest in getting involved in the book business? Did you ever encourage or push that, or did you. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

No, as well as I could tell, none of them really wanted to go on with it. It may be my lack of ability to involve them. All of my children at one time or another have worked in one way or another at the bookshop, but they always seem to feel that they couldn't learn what I know. Well, I've said to them I didn't know it when I started; it's taken me years to learn a little bit, and you can certainly learn as much as I can. I don't think salesmanship or bookselling is a special gift. I think it's a learned technique, and I think anybody of ordinary intelligence and acceptable personality could learn to do it as well as I have. The only thing that has made me successful to the degree that I am has been the pressure of need and the awful fear of failing. As long as I've had to do it, I felt that it should be done as well as I could do it. And I also never had a moment, until the last four or five years, where I could feel economically secure. But none of my children seem to want to carry on the business, or feel equal to it, and I don't think we're going to inveigle them into it. I think our daughter Adriana is going to come the nearest to it, because she at least has stepped in and learned something about what goes on.

GARDNER:

The actual operation.

ZEITLIN:

Yes. I think if she had a will to, she could really get to be very good.

GARDNER:

You have been very successful, clearly, as a bookseller, through the years. Do you ever regret that you abandoned poetry?

ZEITLIN:

No. I have no illusions about that.

GARDNER:

Are you content to have been a bookseller?

ZEITLIN:

I'd like to have gone on and written something serious. The things I wrote to the point in my life where I tapered off writing were either love lyrics or expressions, of a certain degree, of my own philosophy. But unless you can learn to draw the long bow, there's no sense in going on writing love lyrics and minor poems, and you can't do that unless you dedicate your whole life to it and give [it] all of your thought. I don't think you can be a good part-time poet.

GARDNER:

Isn't it true of anything?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I don't know. I think that Wallace Stevens seems to have been able to do it, but he was in a peculiar position: I think that his job with the insurance company was a sort of an off-and-on job where he wasn't held to much of a performance standard. But poetry has to be a constant concern. You can't start off the day thinking about composing that sales letter you're going to have to write or doing a big pitch about a book that you want to sell, drawing up a proposal to buy a collection, and have much of the kind of spiritual energy that you need to write poetry.

GARDNER:

And yet, at the same time, it requires the same sort of energy and concentration to create the bookselling business, not to mention acquiring the vast range of knowledge that you have through the years. It required that same sort of dedication.

ZEITLIN:

Well, the thing is, you don't have to focus it so much. It's a matter of quantity rather than quality. You can expend a lot of energy in a lot of different directions and get a percentage of good results; whereas when you're writing poetry, you can't have near-misses, you have to either produce or nothing.

GARDNER:

Well, we're nearing the end of the tape. Do you have any final comments you'd care to make, any sort of overviews about your career, your. . . ?

ZEITLIN:

Well, I think I've been very fortunate. I've been able to live the kind of life that I could live most successfully with my peculiar personality. I think of a remark that John Graves, a writer down in Glen Rose, Texas, made when he was being interviewed by Bill Moyers recently. He said, "The only thing you ever own is your own knowledge, the ideas that you've mastered. Those are the things that can't be taken away from you. You can't sell them, and you can keep them with you no matter what else you lose." I think that's a pretty good summing up of a good philosophy. Knowledge, and sensitivity to experience, sensitivity to the world in which we live, growing in sensitivity as we live, growing in knowledge, to the extent that we can know anything, is the greatest reward we can get out of life. I've been lucky in that.

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