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ORAL HISTORY WITH ROBERT R. GITT

Interviewed by Shelby Sanett

Completed under the auspices
of the
Center for Oral History Research
University of California
Los Angeles

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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: December 6, 1941, Hanover, Pennsylvania.

Education: B.A., Government, Dartmouth College, 1963.

CAREER HISTORY:

Technical director, WDCR Radio Station, 1962-63.

Programmer, Dartmouth College Films, 1963-70.

Film booking and technical manager, American Film Institute, 1970-73;
Technical officer, 1973-75.

Film restoration technician, Film Technology Company, 1975-77.

Film preservation officer, UCLA Film and Television Archive, 1977-present.

AFFILIATIONS:

Member, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Member, Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.

AWARDS AND HONORS:

British Film Institute Archival Achievement Award, 1991.

Prix Jean Mitry, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, Pordenone, Italy, 1995.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Shelby Sanett, Gold Shield Intern. B.A., University of Phoenix; M.B.A., University of Phoenix; M.L.I.S., UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Gitt's home, Studio City, California.

Dates, length of sessions: April 6, 2000 (90 minutes); April 13, 2000 (70); May 16, 2000 (86); May 28, 2000 (88); June 1, 2000 (78).

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Persons present during interview: Gitt and Sanett.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

The interview is organized chronologically. Major topics discussed include film exhibition in the sixties, the American Film Institute, the development of the UCLA Film and Television Archive, and techniques of film restoration and preservation.

EDITING:

Daniel Lee, editorial assistant, edited the interview. He checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Gitt reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Jane Collings, senior editor, prepared the table of contents. Gail Ostergren, editorial assistant, assembled the biographical summary and interview history. Gail Ostergren compiled the index.

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had already been set. Therefore these four pages are labeled a,b,c and d, and numerical pagination resumes on page number twenty-seven.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 6, 2000

SANETT: This is Shelby SANETT and I am interviewing Robert R. Gitt. Hi Bob, how are you?

GITT: [laughs] I'm okay.

SANETT: Good. I'd like to start with some questions about your early life. When and where were you born?

GITT: Okay, that's easy enough. I was born in Hanover, Pennsylvania on December 6, 1941, the day before Pearl Harbor, and, of course, the beginning of World War II for America.

SANETT: Exactly.

GITT: And I had an older brother, Bill—William [Carleton Gitt]—and an older sister, Ann [Blackwood Gitt Clippert], and myself. And if you put the three initials together: William, Ann, and Robert, it spells "war." That was always a little story in our family. The day after I was born was Pearl Harbor.

SANETT: Oh my goodness. Can you tell me a little bit about what your ethnic background is?

GITT: To the best of my ability. Older members of my family were quite knowledgeable about the family tree and everything, and I'm embarrassed to say a lot of that knowledge was lost when they died. It didn't get passed on to me, but I'll tell

you what I know about it. Supposedly, I am related in some very distant way to Captain Kidd, the pirate, Captain William Kidd, who was in the newspaper today, actually, an article—

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yeah. On my father's [Harry Newman Gitt II] side I have German and British and Irish ancestry, I believe. I think my first relative who came to America on my father's side was named James Kidd—around 1760, 1770, somewhere in there—and settled in Pennsylvania, I guess near Hanover. The name got changed over about one hundred and fifty to two hundred years to Kitt and then to Gitt.

SANETT: Quite a transition.

GITT: It is a transition. What I'm told is that a lot of German-speaking people settled in Pennsylvania—the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Amish and so on. My hometown was heavily German in background and the people who speak English with a German accent sound a little bit like Lawrence Welk, if you remember him from TV.

They mix letters up, so, for example, S and C are mixed up [as well as] G and K.

They don't say "singing," they say "sinkink." Instead of "lessons" they say "lekons."

And W's and V's— Some of the older people in my hometown used to refer to Wicks Wapor Rub instead of Vicks Vapor Rub, that kind of thing. So apparently Kidd was pronounced Kitt. Even though it was spelled K-I-D-D, it was pronounced Kitt; then they started spelling it K-I-T-T. And apparently G-I-T-T is also pronounced Kitt if you're from that background, because G's and K's are kind of interspersed. So they

started spelling it Gitt but pronouncing it Kitt.

It's embarrassing to me now that I go to England sometimes, of course, because in England there is an unfortunate word spelled G-I-T, git, which is a word people say in fun or in jest. It means in effect "you stupid bastard." They say, "You stupid git," or "This is Mr.Git and his daughter, Stupid." They have all kinds of uses for the word git, but it's considered not very complimentary. So whenever I go to England, people always look a little bemused when I tell them my name, but it has nothing to do with that spelling of git, it's G-I-double T. I can tell you about my mother—

SANETT: Sure, I was going to ask you about your mother's [Helen Carleton Gitt] side.

GITT: My mother's maiden name was Carleton. And once again, probably British, Irish and Scottish, I think mainly on that side, maybe not so much German on that side.

Other family names on my mother's part of the family are Blackwood—my sister's middle name is Blackwood—and Roper. My middle name is Roper and my brother's middle name is Carleton, after my mother and grandparents. The interesting thing is that my mother and my mother's parents all were from Mississippi in the deep South and my father was from Pennsylvania in the north. It was most unusual that they met and got married.

SANETT: How did they meet?

GITT: At Columbia University in New York back in the 1920s. My father graduated

from high school in Hanover, Pennsylvania—I think around 1917—and then briefly served in the army just at the tail end of World War I and then went to Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. After leaving Dickinson College, he was active in the town theatricals and the amateur society that put on plays and so on. He also became a high school history teacher for awhile, which he apparently loved. He loved teaching kids history and so on.

So that's what he was doing in the twenties—and in his twenties, because he was born in 1898, December 21, I think. Anyway, he went to Columbia University—I think to Teacher's College or that part of Columbia—to get more advanced courses in education, which is where he met my mother, who had—

SANETT: What was she doing there?

GITT: She was doing something very similar. She grew up in Mississippi and she actually went to a college in Mississippi. I've forgotten the name of the school now, but it was a college—Mississippi College for Women I think it was called—which in that day and time was a fairly rare thing. Most young women did not go to college, at least not in Mississippi. She did because my grandmother was a schoolteacher. I think my grandfather had a lumberyard business or something like that, but my grandmother was very involved in education and so forth, so her daughter went to college, did well, and then went to graduate school at Columbia University. That's where she met my father. So they were in New York City around 1927-28 and they went to all the shows and the nightclubs and the speakeasies and all those things, and

they got married, I think, in December 1930. So that's the two branches of the family.

SANETT: Let me go back. Do you know the names of your grandparents on your mother's side?

GITT: Pretty closely. My grandmother was named Nellie Blackwood; I believe [that] was her maiden name and then she was Nellie Blackwood Carleton. My grandfather had a most unusual name; Finis Ewing Carleton was his name, I believe. Finis—at least that's the way we pronounced it. My mother's brother was also named Finis Carleton and his son—who's my cousin—was also named Finis Ewing Carleton, I think the third, so maybe my grandfather was Finis Ewing Carleton the first.

SANETT: Do you know your grandparents' names on your father's side?

GITT: Yes. My father's father, my grandfather—whom I never knew because he died seven or eight years before I was born; he only lived to be sixty-three—his name, I believe, was William Gitt. That's who my brother is named after. I don't know his middle initial offhand. My grandmother was named Ida Rebecca Angeline Kline Gitt, so that was her full name. She had all these different biblical or whatever names, Ida Rebecca Angeline Kline—

SANETT: So both of your parents then were teachers?

GITT: At the time they met they were. My mother was teaching physical education and that sort of thing to young women—to girls, I guess, in a school in Mississippi—and maybe other things as well. My father was teaching history, as I

said. What happened was, after they met, the Depression came along and the family business—

My father came from a family that was very involved in the glove business, interestingly enough. This sounds like Hollywood and everything. A lot of glove people came out here to Hollywood, Samuel Goldwyn and people like that. But, anyway, my family had a glove company called the Hanover Glove Company in my hometown, and in the Depression it was in a lot of financial trouble. I understand my family was fairly wealthy around the turn of the century. We were among the leading families in Hanover, Pennsylvania and among the wealthiest families, but apparently there were several black sheep in the family who frittered away the family money on the horses and gambling.

I don't know what happened exactly, but by the time the Depression rolled around we were not rich at all. My father's father and grandfather—who was still alive at that time, George W. Gitt, my great-grandfather whom everybody loved—They didn't much like my grandfather for some reason, but my great-grandfather everybody thought very well of. They asked my father to stop teaching [and] to come and help the family business, which he did. He didn't like it very much, but he was very good at it and he stayed and became the president of the company, ultimately.

The whole time I was alive he was in charge [as] the president of the Hanover Glove Company.

SANETT: And is the company still in existence?

GITT: I don't think so anymore. When my father died in 1963, the day before I turned 21, which is an upsetting experience, of course, within a year or so my mother sold it to a larger, conglomerate-type thing called Fairfield industries of Iowa as I remember, something like that. They kept the company open for awhile but eventually began laying people off and just using it as a warehouse and importing cheap gloves made in Taiwan and other countries. That was the fate of the glove business. It would have happened anyway, had my father lived, eventually. The glove business was hitting hard times by the early 1960s. American gloves, well-made gloves, which they were— They made good gloves at a reasonable price, but they were being hurt by cheap imports, so it would have put him out of business eventually, anyway, I think. So as far as I know the name may still be used—I don't know—but the business itself I'm sure hasn't been there for a long time.

SANETT: What were your parents' political beliefs?

GITT: They were both, I guess you would say, liberal Democrats. My father was almost a socialist. In fact, he voted for Henry [A.] Wallace in 1948 and my mother voted for Harry [S] Truman and they always voted for Franklin [D.] Roosevelt. They despised Calvin Coolidge and Herbert [C.] Hoover and they hated Richard [M.] Nixon with a passion and— You get the picture. So that's my political background and surprise, surprise, I'm somewhat the same way. That happens to people. Although, I must admit, as I get older, I can see many of the faults in the liberal side of things and I can see some of the values in conservatism. I'm getting a little more mellowed, I

suppose, as I get older.

SANETT: Maybe that happens as we get older.

GITT: Yeah, I think so.

SANETT: How active were they politically?

GITT: I'm not sure.

SANETT: I mean, it sounds like there was discussion.

GITT: Oh yes, there was discussion and we subscribed to a lot of newspapers and magazines. The house, I must say, was full of good books and that sort of thing. Strangely enough, of the three children in my family, I'm the child who actually wound up reading the least. I don't know why. My brother read a lot, my sister read all kinds of things. To this day I like reading biographies and I like reading newsmagazines and newspapers and so on, but for some reason, I don't know why—Every now and then I've read works of fiction and really enjoyed them, but I'm not an avid reader of fiction, either classic fiction or new works. Every now and then I read something and I enjoy it, but I don't seem to take naturally to it—I don't know why—whereas the other members of my family, all of them, were voracious readers, and of fiction, too. I'm not sure why this is.

SANETT: Excellent. Well, kids are just different from each other. So your parents both had a college education?

GITT: Yes, and even graduate education.

SANETT: Graduate education as well. Both of them?

GITT: Yes. At Columbia, yeah.

SANETT: And your mother is still living?

GITT: Oh no, no, no. My mother died in 1969. She was on a vacation trip to the West and was touring the West Coast with a lady friend of hers and she had a heart attack in Seattle, the day after the moon landing. That's why I can remember it very clearly. The next morning after a man landed on the moon, my mother had a heart attack. Seattle was a good place to have a heart attack at that time because they had a very good program, apparently, and they were able to keep her alive. We all flew out to see her from different parts of the country. We all had high hopes, and she did too, but, unfortunately, it didn't work out and she died about three weeks later.

SANETT: But she had seen her family?

GITT: Yeah, we all saw her, and that was good.

SANETT: What was their religious affiliation?

GITT: Let me think a minute now. My father ostensibly was raised a Methodist and my mother was a Presbyterian, but neither of them were terribly religious in the conventional sense. They didn't really go to church regularly and so on. Although, when I came along I was—they did not force me into any particular religion or anything— But I was confirmed—I think it was called Emmanuel Reform Church in Hanover, Pennsylvania—when I was thirteen. I was baptized or whatever. It's now United Church of Christ, I think. For awhile I did go to church. I went through a very religious period when I was about thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old.

I read the Bible and I was very afraid of all kinds of things and afraid I was a sinner and all this sort of stuff and I went to church and I took it very seriously. I remember all that, but I sort of grew out of that, maybe by the time I went to college. And the truth is I've never been really religious in the organized religious sense since then, so in that sense I'm not religious. And my father told me later on that he was—I guess you'd call him agnostic. He's not an atheist, but he didn't believe in the organized religious way of telling things. But he certainly was in awe of the mystery of it all.

SANETT: So he had a sense of commitment, if not a practice?

GITT: Yes, he was a spiritual person, but not in the conventional way. And so was my mother, too.

SANETT: What did your parents want for you in life?

GITT: Well, it's hard for me to say, of course, but I think they wanted me to be successful and happy, financially and so on. They did kind of encourage us in our schoolwork and they encouraged us to go to good schools. My sister went to Smith College, and both my brother and I went to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. I kind of went to Dartmouth because my brother went there and I knew about it and I already kind of felt good about it. That's one of the reasons I applied there. I had also applied to Antioch College in Ohio, a very different kind of place. They had an interesting program where you would work part of the time and go to the school part of the time, which I thought was interesting. But when you get accepted at

Dartmouth and Antioch, you sort of feel like going to Dartmouth, particularly when my brother had gone there.

SANETT: I'd like to ask you some questions about your siblings. You've mentioned their names— Could you give me your brother's full name?

GITT: Yes, William Carleton Gitt.

SANETT: And when was he born?

GITT: He was born April 26, 1932.

SANETT: And he's still living?

GITT: Yes he is.

SANETT: And your sister?

GITT: My sister is Ann Blackwood Gitt, but now she's married, Ann Blackwood Clippert is her name now and her husband, my brother-in-law, is Conrad Clippert. She was born January 16, 1935— It could be 1936, but I think it's 1935.

SANETT: And they're both older than you?

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: And of the two of them, which of them are older?

GITT: William was born first. He's now, I guess, about sixty-seven, approximately, and she's about sixty-five or something like that.

SANETT: And what did they go on to do?

GITT: Well, he was quite a remarkable child, apparently. He was considered to be practically a genius when he was a little boy. He had a very high IQ and all of that

sort of stuff and was a standout in school, particularly in high school. He did a little bit of everything. He was active in all kinds of clubs and things and was very bright and got very good grades, particularly in science, electronics, and mathematics—that sort of stuff—which was a hard act for me to follow. My sister was very good, too. I was actually the least gifted academically of the three children, the third one. I did okay in school. I got good grades and everything, but I was nothing like, apparently, my brother or my sister. The teachers were always kind of reminding me how wonderful they had been and so forth and I knew that they had been.

Anyway, my brother, after graduating from Dartmouth, was drafted into the army—this was during the Korean War—and he went into the Signal Corps. After two years in the army, he went to work for RCA [Radio Corporation of America] working on microwave for the U.S. air force—I believe it was the air force, or the army. He was stationed in Thule, Greenland and St. John's, Newfoundland [Canada], and also Goose Bay, Labrador [Canada], so for two or three or four years he was flying around in all these planes and helping to work on microwave—radio installations—for the U.S. army but for RCA.

Then he came back in the late fifties and worked in Cherry Hill, New Jersey for RCA, when they were just starting to make computers. RCA was a competitor in the computer business in the fifties with IBM [International Business Machines] and some of the other companies. Later they fell by the wayside, but in the fifties they were trying to beat IBM and so they had these big, old, huge vacuum tube computers

that took up floor after floor of office buildings and these big, old tape machines with reels going around. That's what my brother was involved in. I remember there was a thing called Bizmac and the RCA 501.

But, anyway, he worked at RCA in New Jersey for quite a number of years, but, then, in the middle sixties, late-sixties, at the time of the Beatles and so forth, he underwent a kind of transformation and became almost somewhat of a hippie, actually, and became very countercultural and so forth. He basically quit his job with RCA and just sort of basically began living with different friends and people and married couples and whomever that he knew, first in Cleveland, Ohio, and then in Boston, Massachusetts.

He finally settled in Boston and got very active in the Orson Welles Cinema. He was a technical person and projectionist and just general whatever at the Orson Welles Cinema in Boston and was also involved in putting in sound recording studios and designing electronic equipment and things. And later—in the early 1980s I guess it was—he, at a fairly late age, got married. He is still married, although he and his wife are now separated as it turns out. But they have—or he now has—a very beautiful home there in the Boston area. He's now working for the Berklee [College] of Music in Boston. He teaches courses in audio engineering and in electronics and he designs audio consoles and things like that for the— Audio equipment—

SANETT: Very interesting evolution.

GITT: Yeah, and there's more to his influence on me, not only his interest in science and electricity, but, also, he was a very big enthusiast for movies and for making home movies and collecting home movies, which we should talk about, because that's how I got into this whole thing, because of him.

SANETT: Yes, we will talk about it.

GITT: And my sister, Ann, was very good in science courses in particular. After graduation from Smith College I think she was particularly interested in biology and animals. And she loved horses and dogs, and we always had dogs. After graduation, she went to work for Parke-Davis Company in Michigan, in Detroit. That's where she met her husband Conrad, who had a family brick business there, a very large company [that] made bricks in Michigan. So she worked for Parke-Davis for a couple of years, but then she got married and has been married and [has been] basically just raising three children, who are all now grown. So I have two nephews [William Clippert and John Clippert] and a niece [Susan Clippert Stolzer]. They're all in their thirties now.

SANETT: Time flies.

GITT: Time flies, yeah.

SANETT: Well, we've talked a little bit about your family in general. Do you and your family gather—?

GITT: Yes, every now and then. We are kind of scattered. My brother lives in Boston, my sister in— It's actually Bloomfield Hills Township, near Detroit. It's not

Detroit itself, but it's Detroit just as this is Los Angeles. The last time I was there I think was when one of my nephews got married. Yeah, Bill Clippert got married and I was there for the wedding. That was a couple of years ago. We don't get together as often as I suppose— My brother and sister get together a lot more often than I do. I'm a little further away. He flies to Michigan for Christmas once a year and maybe sometimes goes to visit in the summer and so on. I have visited there in the summer, but not for ten years at least. I've never been there for Christmas, come to think of it.

I've been there at Thanksgiving a couple of times, particularly when there are weddings and things like that, but I don't go as often—that's true.

SANETT: Do you stay in contact with either your brother or your sister more often?

GITT: We do stay in contact, once again, maybe not as often as would be good. I am fond of them and they like me and everything, but I'm not super close to them either. I guess I'm very wrapped up in my work out here and being out here and so forth. So now we certainly talk on the phone every couple of months or whatever throughout the year, but not like every weekend or something.

SANETT: Can you tell me a little bit about the area you grew up in? For instance, what sort of work did your neighbors do?

GITT: Gosh, I don't know the exact work that the neighbors did. Hanover itself was a very Republican, conservative sort of working class—I suppose you could call it—kind of town. There was a big shoe company there, the Hanover Shoe Company, that was run by a very wealthy man named [Harper D.] Sheppard. He and his partner

Mr. [Clinton N.] Myers— Sheppard and Myers basically ran our town. Hanover, Pennsylvania, was kind of owned by Sheppard and Myers. They had the biggest company in town, the Hanover Shoe Company—no relation to the Hanover Glove Company.

SANETT: I was going to ask.

GITT: No, no. Mr. Sheppard, who was an arch-conservative Republican, was the president of the school board and announced when he was on the school board [that] he saw no reason why any girls needed more than an eighth grade education and why any boys would want to go to college, because all they needed was to get a high school diploma and come and work in his factory. But I will say this, they were both ultra-conservative. They owned the town newspaper which voiced their opinions, the *Evening Sun*; they gave the town its reservoir; they gave the town the general hospital in which I was born—Hanover General Hospital—they gave the town Sheppard and Myers Athletic Field for the football team. Anything in the town at all they were involved in some way or another, so it was like their town.

SANETT: And the town was suburban, basically?

GITT: Yes, it was pretty small. When I grew up I think it had about a twenty-five thousand population. The nearest major town was York, Pennsylvania, about nineteen miles away. And it's about five or six miles from Gettysburg, which is a bit better known, of course, than Hanover. It's above the Mason-Dixon line, roughly about halfway across Pennsylvania, not quite— The nearest really major city is

Baltimore, Maryland, which is actually closer than Philadelphia. Baltimore, I think, was 65 miles away, a little bit southeast I believe; and Philadelphia was 110 miles east; New York was 212 miles away to the northeast; and Washington D.C., I think, was 85 miles away. You didn't travel very much in the fifties, not like we do today. It was considered quite a journey just to go to York, 19 miles away.

SANETT: In your community that you grew up in, what ethnicities were represented?

GITT: Unless I'm mistaken it would almost be all German origin, English-speaking, people. As I said, when I was young there were still a lot of older people who still spoke with German accents. That would no longer be true today; it's much more cosmopolitan there now, I'm sure. They tended to be very Republican. Our family was one of the few Democratic families in town, yes. There were some Jewish people in town, not a lot. There was some anti-Semitism, I'm sorry to say, not a lot, but there was some, and I would hear it at school. I'm not Jewish, but, I mean, I would hear people that I knew who were and hear boys making nasty cracks and things. I never understood that. It was an anti-Catholic town, interestingly enough.

Yes, there was a big football rivalry with— There was a nearby town called McSherrystown, which was all Catholic, and our town was all Protestant. The football teams would meet and there would be these very nasty Protestant versus Catholic-type goings on.

SANETT: Rivalry.

GITT: Yeah, rivalry. I remember when John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960, there was an awful lot of dark talk about the Pope taking over the White House and all this sort of stuff and a great deal of anti-Catholicism there. So I tried as much as I could not to go along with any of this, particularly. In school, we had no courses on art. They did have courses on music, but only to a limited degree. We had the school band and so on which I was involved in, but there was very little art history taught and very little about music history. Just in general, the arts were considered something not part of the important part of daily life there. The fact that I was interested in old movies and collected movies and had an unusual hobby was maybe looked down upon, you might say. But when I got to college, people thought this was very interesting. I had a lot of validation when I got away to college.

SANETT: You had to wait until college to get that?

GITT: I had to wait until college to get that. I never had that in my hometown, no.

SANETT: What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about your education and your educational background at this point. You've mentioned you went to Dartmouth for college? And did you graduate?

GITT: Yes, I did.

SANETT: So you have a—

GITT: I have an A.B. or B.A. degree.

SANETT: In?

GITT: In [laughs] government. And I laugh because I have to be completely honest here. I got good grades in high school. I went to college and the first two years at Dartmouth, when you could just take a lot of liberal arts courses of various kinds, I did pretty darn well. I got some A's, some A-minus's, a lot of B-plus's. This is before grade inflation, in the early sixties when it actually meant something. I got a couple C-plus's too, but on the whole I had about a B-plus, B, B-minus average, which at Dartmouth was not bad for somebody like me coming from a little public school in Hanover, Pennsylvania.

I did pretty well, actually, at first, but then I had to take a major. They made you specialize for the last two years, and I was very young and very immature and very out of it in some ways. I was just really mixed up. I didn't know what I wanted to do—I had no idea whatever. All I knew is I wanted to keep taking just these different courses in different things like art and music and government and whatever. There was a good course on the Supreme Court that I took—the history of the Supreme Court and the different court cases and so on. I really liked it, and because I liked the professor who taught that course, Vincent Starzinger was his name and he taught government and he had a very good course in the Supreme Court, and because my roommate at the time in college was going to major in government, for those two reasons alone—I had this one course I liked and my roommate—I decided to become a government major, because I had to decide something.

Well, it turned out to be a terrible mistake because I hated government. I

found it very boring. The other professors on the whole were deadly dull—at least to me, because I just wasn't interested in the subject—and I hated every minute of it.

My grades went down and I did not get very good grades. I got occasional D's and things, but I got a lot of C-plus's and C-minus's and even D's.

SANETT: Was there an option to change your major?

GITT: I don't know if there was or not, but as I said I was too immature and too frightened and shy and whatever at the time. In that sense, Antioch might have been good, had I gone there and been forced to go out for awhile and then come back, when you really know what you want to do. See, at the time I was at Dartmouth, film was not considered a respectable thing to teach or learn about in college. It was something that was an extracurricular activity and as such was supported. Dartmouth was very supportive of film because a lot of famous Hollywood people were alumni at Dartmouth and there was a very good film program there. So film was a very active thing at Dartmouth, but it wasn't academically respectable, and I think that was true of most colleges and universities at that time. There were a few exceptions: NYU [New York University] I guess, and USC [University of Southern California] and so on, maybe UCLA a little bit at that period, just starting with Colin Young and so on I think.

Had I been able to major in something I really was interested in, like radio—I was very involved in a college radio station [WDCR]—or film, I probably would have done very well. But I had to major in something and I chose government. I could

have done well in sociology. I got very good grades in sociology classes, but I really found them to be kind of worthless in a way. They seemed to be so belaboring the obvious. To me it was just too easy, and I remember not thinking very much of the professors and I would get very good grades for not really doing very much work and it just struck me— So I probably should have majored in sociology. So the upshot of it was I squeaked through and I did graduate.

But one of the things that happened— Six months before I graduated, my father died. It really was unexpectedly traumatic, very upsetting to me. Somehow through all of that I got through and I did graduate, but not with any distinction—whatever—I did not get very good grades in that sense.

SANETT: Was his passing unexpected?

GITT: It was to me, yeah. He either had a heart attack or a cerebral hemorrhage or something. He just keeled over in the street very quickly and—

SANETT: Very shocking.

GITT: Yeah, it was a shock, yeah.

SANETT: When you made the decision to attend Dartmouth, had you considered any other options to college?

GITT: You mean rather than college?

SANETT: Rather than college.

GITT: No, it was like something you were just expected to do. [I had] basically middle class or perhaps upper-middle class parents, and that's what people wanted you

to do and what you did. So that's what you did; I really did it because they wanted me to. The thing was I made a lot of good connections—if that's the right word. I met a lot of wonderful people at Dartmouth. I did get involved there in the Dartmouth Film Society and the radio station, which has ultimately led me to where I am today. It was the extracurricular part of Dartmouth that is where I benefited the most.

SANETT: Which we're going to talk about.

GITT: We're going to talk about.

SANETT: So you lived away from home?

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: Okay, how did you feel about that?

GITT: Well, surprisingly, I liked it.

SANETT: What did you like about it?

GITT: Well, I liked the fact that people were bright and they had a lot of different interests, and they valued my unusual interests in movies and so on. And I met other people who liked what I did, radio and movies and electricity and whatever, that kind of stuff. I liked that. I liked, I guess, just being off on my own. I liked being away from my hometown, because I was not very happy. As a teenager I was quite miserable, actually, in high school. I was okay in junior high and maybe grade school, but senior high I was pretty miserable. I was very much, I guess, kind of a nerd you'd say. Or more than just "kind of," I was—I was really out of it and I

didn't have a lot of friends or anything. In junior high I did, but everything kind of got screwed up in senior high, so I was really glad to get away.

When I graduated from Dartmouth, I mentioned I was still kind of mixed up and that's why I majored in government. I wasn't ready to do anything yet, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I just stayed there. I got a job in the film department [Dartmouth College Films], because I was interested in that, but at a very low salary, not what a college graduate would get. I started at the bottom, like I just had a high school education or even less perhaps, and basically just started as a projectionist and a film rewinder and a delivery person and a film inspector and that kind of stuff, but it's what I wanted to do. I didn't know what else I wanted to do so I just sort of fell into that. I'll tell you more about that later.

SANETT: Excellent. Do you have military experience?

GITT: No. I would have been drafted into the Vietnam War, when I was— 1963, I think it was, like January of '64, as I remember, I got my report-to-whatever for the medical exam.

SANETT: Yes, a draft notice.

GITT: A draft notice, right. And supposedly—and I guess this is true—but what it officially says and what they tell me is that I have flat feet and high blood pressure, and that is why I was rejected for the U.S. army. And I do indeed have flat feet and I do have high blood pressure, and I take medicine to control— My father had high blood pressure, my mother had high blood pressure, so I suppose it's all true. But I

remember when all of us went to take the physical exam— A whole bunch of people got on a bus at five in the morning or something in New Hampshire and went to I don't know where in New Hampshire, and some of us were called into a room. This sergeant or something came in and said very scathingly to all of us that we should be ashamed of ourselves [because] we all flunked the physical. Everybody was sitting there looking very downcast—like this—but all secretly just elated inside, because thank God, you know— Because had I gone to Vietnam, I mean, who knows. I probably never would have come back, but I feel sorry for the people who did, but—

SANETT: Well, we know you liked government at one point during college, but what other subjects did you like?

GITT: Well, let's see. There were a couple of courses on art history that I liked—painting and so on. Professor Churchill Lathrop taught one on appreciating painting, and I liked that a lot. I mentioned the Supreme Court [course]. There were some courses in English literature that I liked. It was usually because the professor was good and because the professor was excited and lively and interesting and everything.

I've never been very good at languages, I'm sorry to say. I always had a romantic notion that wouldn't it be wonderful to speak French and be able to go to Paris and speak French and all this sort of stuff, and I tried. I took French in high school and I took French in college. For some reason, in my day, they didn't teach foreign languages to you until you were practically grown up. You didn't start young,

and that would have helped me a lot I think, but I just didn't have a good ability to pick up a second language. I struggled through French in college. There was one course in French literature where you could write your papers in English and so I actually liked that. I got good grades in that; I liked that one. But the ones where you had to speak French—I'm sorry—I just was not very good at it.

SANETT: That's difficult.

GITT: Those are some of the courses. There was a course, just elementary—some of these were just sort of starting level—a course in astronomy I enjoyed that was interesting. At that time people knew very little compared to today. We used to think there were five or six galaxies and, of course, today there are what, billions?

SANETT: Billions. Billions and billions.

In terms of subjects you didn't enjoy, government was a subject you also didn't enjoy?

GITT: Many of the government courses I didn't enjoy, as it turned out. Oddly enough—I remember something else—history I did like a lot, but I've always liked twentieth century history courses. I like the present century a lot, the movies, if you will, and radio and TV and so on. I'm somewhat interested in the nineteenth century, but when you go back to the Middle Ages—the Renaissance is kind of interesting up to a point—and the Dark Ages and all those early periods and it's nothing but a succession of popes and kings, I just found it deadly dull. There was one course that the professor seemed very dull, and I just hated the subject and I was getting very had

grades in it. I remember my father, who was still alive at that point, was very upset, because he had been a high school history teacher. I think he took it personally that I was failing—or near failing, I didn't fail the course, I got a D I think—but that I was doing badly in this history course. Fortunately, I got A's and B's in some of the other history courses, but this one is just one I couldn't stand. It was, like, the Middle Ages or something. I just couldn't stand it. Sociology courses— There was a very good one on propaganda, about propaganda films and propaganda during World War II and the Nazis and so on. I found that a very interesting course; I remember that. That was a good sociology course; I liked that one.

SANETT: What other subjects, besides government, did you not enjoy?

GITT: Well, I'm trying to think of them—

SANETT: Some of the history courses. Were there any other categories of subjects you didn't really enjoy?

GITT: Well, I've never been too fond of mathematics. I did okay though. They had a kind of an elementary math starting course for people who weren't good at math, and I did okay in it and it was all right. But, strangely enough, I always hated algebra in high school, but I learned how to do it kind of by rote. I had tutoring. I had a very good teacher who had taught my brother—who by this time was retired—and I got A's in algebra without really understanding what I was doing or why it was worth doing it. I never understood what was the value of any of this, and I must say to this day I hardly ever use mathematics for anything. You see, I'm not

that kind of person. Obviously it's very valuable if you're into it. The one math course that I liked, I remember, in high school was plane geometry. I liked that a lot, where you did proofs and theorems and you prove things and logic—I like logic, I like that a lot. But solid geometry I couldn't stand. Plane geometry I like—The only math course I've ever liked was plane geometry. Other than that, I really don't care for it. And that will be true in college as well, but I didn't take a lot of math courses. I probably only took the elementary one.

SANETT: Right, the ones you had to.

GITT: The one I had to.

SANETT: Yeah, like the rest of us. Did you work during college?

GITT: Yes, in a manner of speaking, but it was at my father's factory in the summertime only. I did work at least two of the summers, maybe three, and it was not easy work. It was a long day working at the Hanover Glove Company. I would go in with my father in the morning. He would get up at 5:30 in the morning and we'd get there about 6:15, 6:30 in the morning and I would work the whole day until 5 or 5:30 in the afternoon, [with] time off for lunch, of course, in the middle of the day. I used to put linings in gloves and iron gloves and pack gloves and all this sort of stuff.

SANETT: When the linings were put in the gloves, were you sewing them in?

GITT: No, I wasn't sewing; I don't know how to sew. There was a metal hand. You put the lining over it, put the glove on top of that, that kind of stuff, then it would go on to the next person. I guess they would sew it, that sort of thing. And I

would pack the gloves in boxes and— There were things where you could stretch the leather on these heated iron sort of hands and things. I don't remember all the details but I would do that kind of stuff.

SANETT: That sounds like very hard work.

GITT: Well, it was in the sense that you could consider it boring work and it was hot and sweaty and so forth, but you talked to your co-workers and stuff. I got to know a lot of the people there and it was nice. I enjoyed it.

SANETT: Did the fact that you were the boss' son—?

GITT: They were very fond of my father, to the best of my knowledge, almost everybody was anyway. He was considered a very enlightened factory owner, if you will, for the time. This was, once again, the thirties, forties and fifties. He saw to it that the employees of the company had stock in the company, and so if the company did well they would get a bonus and everything, extra money. The union came to organize the employees of the glove company, and they went in [and] they said to my father, "There is nothing here to unionize for. You've already given them more than we are asking for at other places." And they shook his hand; I remember that. So he was very pro-labor in that sense, that is to say he was almost a socialist at heart. He didn't really believe in capitalism I don't think. I think he thought it was somehow immoral a little bit or somewhat sleazy, like playing the horses and gambling.

SANETT: As a boss this sounds very nice. This was kind of unusual then for the

time, don't you think?

GITT: I think it was a bit unusual for the time, yeah. I remember at the time my father said Mr. Willoughby—Willoughby's Camera Stores in New York—and he were the only people that he knew of who were doing this thing with the workers owning part of the company. There used to be a famous camera store called Willoughby's in New York that you've probably never heard of, but they were quite well known back in the fifties. It was very big, similar to Radio Shack.

SANETT: Do you think that the way your father ran his company might have been due to his education, his political leanings or any particular reason cause it really

sounds quite unusual?

GITT: Yeah it was kind of unusual, I don't know I guess those are just, he just did what he believed in doing.

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SANETT: It seems like your family supported you going to college, supported that idea of you going to college?

GITT: Yes, I do remember when I was little I used to put on movie shows for the kids from school and play with collecting movies in the basement of our home in Pennsylvania. My mother and father used to criticize me and say, "You should be out in the sunshine, you should be playing outside, you're ruining your eyes, you're ruining your health," and so forth. So they, in that sense, were not supportive of my interest in movies, but, I mean, they were really— And they got me a camera for one of my birthdays and they got me a projector for one, but, even so, they felt I should be out doing something more wholesome and healthy than locked away with my hobby, basically, just inspecting and splicing movies and so forth and tinkering with projectors. And I can see their point of view; they were probably right, but—

SANETT: Go back a little bit, if you would, to when you were first aware of your interest in movies.

GITT: Once again, it was largely because of my older brother, Bill, who was interested in all those things. When I was very little he already had a little 8 millimeter camera, and he would make home movies of the family. I still have movies of myself in 1946 with my mother and father and the beach in either Atlantic City, New Jersey or Ocean City, New Jersey— So he was making home movies, and

he had a little projector and would show them. At that time— This was long before the days of videotape or DVDs or any of the things you have today, but you used to be able to buy 8 millimeter and 16 millimeter— They were called home movies but what they really were were short subjects and excerpts from feature films from Hollywood movies. You could buy cartoons, you could buy comedies, you could buy newsreels.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yeah, and you could collect them, and there were a couple of different brands that were quite popular. Castle Films was one of them, and my brother began collecting Castle films. Castle Films was actually named for a man named Eugene W. Castle; it was his company. He originally used to do travel logs and things, but he was later bought out. It ultimately became part of Universal Pictures, out here in Hollywood. Universal Studios owns Castle Films, and so what they would do was release for the home market the films that they own. So you could get [Bud] Abbott and [Lou] Costello comedies—because Abbott and Costello were big stars of Universal in the forties—you could get Woody Woodpecker cartoons, Andy Panda cartoons—Walter Lantz cartoons is what they were.

SANETT: Walter Lantz, yeah.

GITT: Yeah, and so on. There were some other brands available. Official Films was another rival company that also sold—I think they had Columbia short subjects and some other brands of short subjects, I don't remember. The thing that was strange was that in those days 8 millimeter did not have any sound, so unless you had

16 millimeter sound in your home— And actually Robbie Myers, who was my age, who was the son of Mr. Myers, of Sheppard and Myers, he did, they did have 16 millimeter sound because they were very wealthy. They were millionaires, and they had sixteen millimeter sound in their home, but we just had 8 millimeter with no sound.

So you'd buy these movies and they would put titles in them. Even though they were originally sound cartoons that you'd see in color and sound at the movie theater, when you would buy it at home, normally it would be black and white. So I saw all these Woody Woodpecker cartoons in black and white, with titles telling you what was happening in the action—or dialogue titles—written in. They used to sell 8mm and 16mm movies for showing at home—cartoons, comedies, and so on. They also used to have the news parade too, news parade of the year 1945, news parade of the year 1950. Sports Thrill of 1948, movies about skiing, all kinds of stuff. So my brother began collecting these, as well as making home movies.

SANETT: About how old was he when he was doing that?

GITT: He would be in his teens, probably fourteen, fifteen, sixteen.

SANETT: And about how old would you have been?

GITT: And I would have been ten years younger, about four, five, six. And then, when he was in high school, he got a summer job of sorts projecting movies on the playgrounds in Hanover, Pennsylvania. What they used to do was, there was an outfit called the Hanover Recreation Society I believe was the name of it—or association. Anyway, they put on all kinds of sports events and things for kids in the summertime on the various playgrounds around Hanover, usually near schools, but they would have a playground. Anyway, they decided to have a movie show once a week on I guess Wednesday nights or Tuesday nights.

So when the sun would go down, my brother would take, from the local camera store in Hanover, Pennsylvania— They had 16 millimeter projectors for rent and they had all these same movies but with sound, and so he would program and rent a group of comedies and cartoons and so on, make a little program out of it that would run say eighty or ninety minutes, and splice them together on two reels so you'd have only one break in the middle, and go out and set up the projector on these playgrounds and put on these shows. There would be anywhere from seven or eight or nine shows during the summer, one per week, starting in late June and running through late August. I just loved this; I got so excited about this. So he once a week would bring the sound

projector home and set it up in our living room, and then mount the film and edit them together and so on. Then we would have a preview of the show. Sometimes, particularly when I got older, he would let me go to the playground with him and help set up the equipment and everything. I felt very important with my brother who was ten years older and everything, and I had a big— So that was one of my early fond memories of being interested in movies and so on.

SANETT: I was just going to ask you, how did he learn how to do the editing and the splicing, and what was the sort of equipment?

GITT: That's a good question. See, that's the thing about my brother, he was just a very bright person I guess and he just became interested in a lot of these things and kind of learned on his own. I learned because of him, because he showed me and had these things already, but I might not have even thought of it otherwise. I guess he just used to hang around the local camera store and saw all this stuff there. We actually did rent a couple of feature films—which today is nothing at all, you go to the corner drug store every night or Blockbuster or whatever—but in 1948-49, this was very unusual for a small town in Pennsylvania. But the first feature film that I recall that we actually rented a projector and rented a feature film one summer night and ran it in our home, was *Hellzapoppin*, with [Ole] Olsen and [Chic] Johnson. I don't know if you've ever heard of that movie, but it's quite funny actually. And then the next film that we got about a year later was *Meet John Doe* by Frank Capra, with Gary Cooper and

Barbara Stanwyck. I remember then, this was when the film was about eight, nine years old. It was relatively new, all things considered. That's a film I later got to work on to help restore a few years ago with the original negative.

SANETT: Full circle.

GITT: Yeah, full circle. A number of films that I saw back then in my hometown either at the movie theaters or that we would rent and show, I have later come to work on. The third film that we were supposed to get fell through and we wound up with this awful film called *Down Missouri Way* with Slim Summerville and Martha O'Driscoll. That's my memory, and it was this dreadful PRC [Producers Releasing Company] bottom of the barrel picture. That was the last time I think we rented a feature because that was such a bad experience—but [we are] getting off the topic a little bit probably.

SANETT: No, you're not, this is fine.

GITT: But anyway, when my brother went to Dartmouth in the fall of 1949, he left behind the 8 millimeter projectors and the beginnings of a collection of movies, of cartoons and comedies and Abbott and Costello and W.C. Fields comedies and so on—although you couldn't hear him you could only see him. So I began, particularly when I got just a little older— And then from college, he would send home the program notes for the Dartmouth Film Society of movies he's seen in the film society.

If you joined the film society at Dartmouth in the early fifties, you would get a subscription to *Films in Review*, which was a magazine that had a lot of articles about

film history and early films and silent films and serials and famous stars and big directors and so on. Actually, in those days, for the time it was actually quite a good magazine. It later went downhill and I don't think it even exists anymore. The last ten or fifteen years, it wasn't much of a magazine, but in the fifties it was quite good. William K. Everson used to write for it and Theodore Huff and a lot of people—James Card, who was the founder of [George] Eastman House [International Museum of Photography and Film] and so on. So I began reading *Films in Review* and about the time I was in junior high school—I'd say around 1954-55 right around in there—I got my own movie camera. Actually what happened was my sister took our movie camera to Europe—after she graduated from college she and some girlfriends went to Europe—and the camera was stolen in Ireland I think, so my parents got me a new camera. I began shooting home movies, and with my parents and myself and other friends and stuff. They were very amateurish of course, but I spent a lot of time editing them and putting titles on them and so forth. I made a number of Christmas films, Fourth of July films and family vacation trip films, that kind of stuff.

SANETT: Which did you like more, shooting them or working with them?

GITT: That's a good question. I'm not sure. I certainly do like editing and working with film, which is what I do today, putting pieces of film together. I do like that, so I suppose I liked that part of it, editing it and taking the bad parts out and choosing the good parts and so on.

SANETT: And when you were editing these films when you were fourteen, fifteen

years old, you had the equipment at home?

GITT: Yes, I had a little viewer and I had rewinds and by that time I had two projectors, and we got better quality. We started out with little [Eastman] Kodak [Company] projectors, but then we got Bell and Howell 8 millimeter projectors. As I said, I had a titling set and I would have these plastic letters and make up the titles and shoot them in color and so forth. I used to shoot black and white, too—mostly color but some black and white, just as a novelty.

SANETT: So were your parents supporting your film habit or was this coming out of—

GITT: Yes, they were. I used to buy—and this was expensive too—because Kodachrome 8 millimeter home movies, you only get, what, 3 minutes on a roll? I don't know what today it would cost, but it was a lot of money. It was like \$10 or \$12. Whatever it was added up; in those days that was a lot of money.

SANETT: It was an investment.

GITT: It was an investment. You didn't get very much, no.

SANETT: There are a couple more things we can talk about, traumatic experiences for me that probably are important. When my brother was still in Dartmouth, he continued to run these movies on the playground, so he would be nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old, and I would be ten and eleven. I really got into it. What happened was, he was drafted into the army during the Korean War in the summer of 1953. He had graduated from college and he had to go into the army, and there was

one more show left to do at the playground. So I, who was all of eleven years old, very proud of myself, because my brother was twenty-one so I was now going to put on the show all by myself, so I proceeded to call up anybody that I knew and brag that I was going to put this on all by myself—my brother wouldn't be there at all, I would be selecting the films, I would be putting on the show—and telling those people to come.

So I went to the camera store, and my father helped drive the car to get the equipment. We got the projector that my brother had been using, I selected the films just as he would have done—very similar. It was a good program that had a good Woody Woodpecker cartoon at the beginning and a good Andy Panda cartoon at the end and it had W.C. Fields and it had Chimp the Chimpanzee—there were these chimpanzee movies—it had all these good things in it. I had spliced all the films together just like he did, and I did a run-through in the afternoon and it was just fine. But that wasn't enough, I had to look at it again, I was getting such a big kick out of this, so I started running it.

I ran it again, and low and behold on the second time through, on the last film, the projector began malfunctioning. This was a particular kind of projector that you either loved or hated, and I never liked these nor did my brother, but it was all that the camera store had at that time. It was called a Victor projector—a Victor Animatograph was the name of it—and the man who designed the projector, Mr. Victor, was so worried about films being damaged that he put trips and little metal

detectors throughout the entire projector and plastic rollers. If anything happened anywhere in the projector, if the loop of the film became just slightly smaller, the machine would instantly shut off. If you threaded it very carefully— It was very complicated and time-consuming to thread this thing, and it was a very complicated threading path, the film actually went behind the lens at one, not behind the lens normally but around the side of the lens— It was a very strange machine.

So at the very end of the afternoon, running the last film again, the end of my ninety minute program, all of a sudden the projector began making funny noises and the loop kept coming out and it kept shutting off. I thought "What's the matter, what's the matter?" I thought, "Well, maybe there's some dirt on the film or maybe there's something," so I cleaned the film. I didn't know.

Then it came time to go to the playground that night. I get to the playground, I set up the screen, I set everything up, I set the projector up. Well, to get to the point of the story, it was a total disaster. The whole evening was totally ruined. I was absolutely mortified—I think is the right old-fashioned word. All throughout the evening, every single film, the projector kept shutting down and I would have to start it again and it would run for a little bit and the picture would start jittering on the screen. The projector had broken somehow. It wasn't anything I did, it was just something out of adjustment. If my brother had been there, he probably would have stuck a paper clip in or done something and it would have worked, but I didn't know what to do—I'm only eleven years old. So I was absolutely— That was the first

great trauma I think of my whole life, I haven't forgotten it to this day. I think I cried for a day afterwards because I was so embarrassed and ashamed, because I'd bragged to everybody that I was going to do the show, and I think I was trying, maybe this is sibling rivalry I guess, to show that I was just as good as my big brother who was ten years older than me, and I failed. In a way, I was very good for my age, but I just wasn't up to this kind of crisis.

SANETT: It sounds like a fault in the machinery.

GITT: It was, yeah.

SANETT: But you really got that roll of film together and spliced and edited.

GITT: I did everything fine, because I'd watched him and I knew how to do it and everything, but it was really very upsetting. The other—I might as well mention this, there's no reason to leave anything out—bad thing that strangely enough happened right at that same time is that my father had a kind of a, I suppose in layman terms you'd call it a nervous breakdown, kind of. He recovered from it, but he just became exhausted. My grandmother had developed cancer, my brother was drafted into the army and my father was maybe worried he might be killed in Korea or whatever. There were some problems with the business that summer—it hadn't snowed, it was always good for the glove business when you had a heavy snow on the East Coast, so he was worried about the business. All this sort of happened at once, and he kind of just snapped, kind of, so he just took a rest. He was in the hospital for about two weeks or whatever. Then the doctor told him to stay away from work for awhile.

Basically, he was out of sorts for almost a year I would say.

SANETT: About how old were you when this happened?

GITT: This was a bad age—I was about eleven-and-a-half going on twelve. I would say eleven-and-a-half to almost thirteen, my father was kind of shaky at that period. Then it all became okay again. Maybe it was like a midlife crisis we'd say today. He and my mother were even— I think there was even some thought of separating because she and he were not getting along very well but they stayed together, I think because of me. But after a certain period of time went by, and he talking to the family doctor and all this sort of stuff and taking it easy— We began going on vacation trips and things, and we got a little closer and everything. By the time I was in the middle of junior high school or the end of junior high school, everything was fine. From then on he was okay and everything was okay.

But there was this one period of very great trauma—if that's the right word, upset—in my life. Not only was I sort of failing, my father was failing in a sense at the same time, and my brother was suddenly gone. I almost looked up to my brother almost like my father in certain ways, because my father was very involved in the business. Like a lot of fathers, [he] was not as active with his family as he probably ideally should have been, although looking back now, I can understand exactly how he felt and why he had all this responsibility at work and all these people looking— He had eight-five employees or whatever.

SANETT: Oh my, looking back is an advantage of getting older.

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: Were you the only child left at home during this time?

GITT: Yes, I was. My sister was at college at this point and my brother was already working for RCA and the army— Or a little bit before he was in the army, then RCA, and my sister was away at college, so yes, I was at home.

SANETT: So that's quite a traumatic time.

GITT: Well, it was kind of, actually. And I remember something else too that may be significant, not that this puts me in a very good light probably. About a year or two after this thing where I did this thing on the playground that was a big flop— After that, of course, they never asked me to do it again. In the following years somebody else started doing it—I greatly resented this—an older man, somebody like forty years old or whatever. Of course, that makes a lot of sense.

But a couple of years later, almost to kind of try to be an antidote to this or something, I saved up my allowance money and without telling my parents— I was sneaky about it, this is where I don't shine in a very good light, because I could have talked to them about it, but they would have tried to talk me out of it. I basically rented a 16 millimeter projector from the same camera store and rented some films and put on a movie show in the basement of our home with sound and everything. I don't know what I was thinking, how did I think my parents wouldn't find out that I'd spent my money renting these films and renting this projector, but I just didn't tell them about it. I actually carried the projector many, many blocks from downtown

Hanover to our home and lugged it home, but anyway it worked fine and I had the show and everything, but I was once again not—

SANETT: And was it a Victor projector?

GITT: It was not a Victor, no, it was another kind equally not very good I think. I don't remember what— No, it wasn't an Ampro. It was some brand I don't even think I've heard of since, but it was pretty—

It worked, and I enjoyed doing it but it was like I was kind of putting one over or something, the fact that I knew I wasn't supposed to waste my allowance money on something like this, but I did it. And my father found out about it and my mother found out about it and I was roundly criticized, I guess. But I put the show on and it was okay, but they thought I was being foolish with my money, I remember that.

SANETT: Why?

GITT: Well, because I guess it was expensive probably to rent a projector like this and to rent these films and what was I really doing it for? Why wasn't it good enough to run 8 millimeter silent movies? See, I used to run these shows five o'clock Friday afternoon after school, whatever, every week or every couple of weeks. I was quite the showman. I was like my father in the sense that I always gave away way too much. I would charge either nothing at all, or a nickel but then give them like fifteen cents worth of Coca-Cola and popcorn and give them food, give them drinks. I always lost money. Basically, I'm not a businessman, I never have been, but I'm a showman I suppose you might say. I used to have theme shows. There would be a

Halloween show and I would run scary movies and there would be a Christmas show and an Easter show and I would decorate the theater in the style of different times of the year—crepe paper with purple and yellow for Easter and red and green for Christmas and all this silly stuff.

SANETT: It sounds wonderful.

GITT: Well, it was sort of fun, but that's what I used to do.

SANETT: So where were you showing this?

GITT: This was in the basement of our home. It was called Gitt's Theater and it was somewhat like this, but a little bit smaller I suppose, and it had two 8 millimeter projectors in the back with portholes like that.

SANETT: Maybe you should describe the room we're in since you're referring—

GITT: This is here in Studio City at my house—basically what used to be the garage and guest room. Instead, the garage has been transformed into a, I suppose you'd call it a screening room with a movie screen and posters on the walls and carpeting on the floor and, theater-type seats, sort of. And in the back, the guest room is now a projection room with 16 and 35 millimeter projection, which actually I use all the time in my work for UCLA because until very recently, the [UCLA Film and Television] Archive itself has never had any projection equipment, so the archive cannot run any of the films that we have been working on. We can run them on the campus in the classroom that's used all the time for classes and public showings, but as far as the staff, the archive has never had— And only recently actually now at the laboratory that David [W.] Packard has very

generously equipped for us on the premises, that laboratory now has a single 35 millimeter projector, just set up in the office. It's not comfortable like here, but you could test something and look at something now finally, after all these years.

SANETT: That's amazing to me.

GITT: Yeah, it is. Well we've always worked under a lot of budgetary constraints at the archive, which we can talk about later of course.

SANETT: Yes. Thank you for describing the room we're in as well, because it's very unique. Let me go back to Gitt's Theater. Who came?

GITT: Just friends of mine, I guess you'd say, from school, mostly grade school. By the time of junior high I'd sort of stopped in that sense, a little bit. It was more like a grade school thing, like fourth, fifth, sixth grade, maybe into seventh a little bit, and then I got too old to do that kind of thing probably. But it would be after school and I'd just invite some of the people I knew from the neighborhood who lived up the street or a few blocks away or whatever.

My brother built me a little radio station at the time, too. I used to broadcast to the neighborhood. This is when he was in college. He built [it] out of old electronic parts and practically held together with Scotch tape and paper clips almost, but there was a box that had dials and knobs. Originally, the microphone was made out of a little loudspeaker. If you hook a loudspeaker up backwards, it actually becomes a very primitive kind of microphone.

SANETT: I never knew that.

GITT: So we had a coffee can on some sort of metal stand and it had this loudspeaker about four or five inches across and you could speak into it. It was kind of tubby sounding, but the loudspeaker became a microphone if it was hooked up backwards. We had a little oscillator-type transmitter and I could broadcast several blocks away. This was highly, of course, completely illegal, not approved by the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] and I used to worry sometimes.

I had a phonograph hooked up, twin turntables so you could go back and forth like a disc jockey and so on. Sometimes I would put a record on and my father and I would drive around the neighborhood and see how far we could get the signal.

WRRG I think were my call letters. Sometimes I used to rebroadcast network programs. I used to get my favorite programs off the radio and then retransmit them—without permission once again, too. Sometimes my friend or friends would help me put on these radio shows or we'd do little dramas or things or play music or whatever. Sometimes when I ran out of inspiration, I would ask my mother to play the piano and sing twenties songs, and play the ukulele. "Jada Jada Jing Jing Jing" I remember was one song she used to sing, just as a gag or whatever.

SANETT: It sounds wildly creative.

GITT: Well, I don't know how creative it was. Once again, it was because of my brother, though, who did this. He gave me this nice thing. Later, he built a better one out of metal with proper microphones and proper pots—or potentiometers as we would call them—volume controls and so on and really nice turntables and everything.

That was later. That was more like when I was in junior and high school. The funny thing was I used to broadcast with this, too, and I would occasionally be worried about the FCC swooping down and arresting me or something. Of course that never happened, and they wouldn't have cared anyway I'm sure. It was only at 550 on the AM dial, way down at the bottom. You could only get it three blocks away, but technically you weren't supposed to do it.

SANETT: But, it's an extremely creative enterprise. It sounds like you and your brother worked together a lot on this.

GITT: Yes, because he would visit from home from time to time and add new things to it and so on. When I was in college, by the way, I was very active in the college radio station. That was my main hobby, not the film society. I used to go to the film society. I liked the films a lot, and I still collected films, but the radio station and sound recording and tape recording and editing tape-recorded shows, that was what I was very interested in. That also gave me a lot of experience that I use to this day, because sound is something I've always been very interested in and particularly in film sound restoration and so on.

SANETT: Your radio work, then, was that the genesis of your interest in sound?

GITT: Yes, I think so.

SANETT: And the interest in film work came from the work that your brother was doing with the projector?

GITT: Yes, yes. I was active in both things in college, although more radio than

film. But after college, then of course, completely over to the film part of it. There's so much to tell and I'm probably telling you more than you want to know.

SANETT: No, this is fine.

GITT: There was another little wrinkle to all this, too. After my brother graduated from college, after he was out of the army and was now working at a regular job for RCA, he began collecting 16 millimeter movies and he bought projectors. He bought these very good projectors made by RCA, interestingly. He was working for RCA, but these were old RCA projectors made for the U.S. army in World War II and they were considered very good machines. He still has them to this day and they still run beautifully. They're fifty years old or more and they still run beautifully.

SANETT: That's wonderful.

GITT: These are very good machines. He basically began collecting 16 millimeter.

This is when I was in junior high school. I would have been in about eighth grade, I think. He initially had the machines with him in Newfoundland and would collect the films, but then, because he was traveling around for RCA, he actually finally sent the projectors and the films home so I could enjoy them and have shows for the family and for other people. I even presented some films at my high school in a few cases, which I'll tell you about. Because he had gone to the Dartmouth Film Society and read *Films in Review*, he had a general knowledge about film history and he had good taste and so on. The very first film that he bought was *Louisiana Story* by Robert Flaherty, which is another film I worked on recently, by the way, to help restore. So I

got to work on that one. That was the very first film.

SANETT: In fact, that was the film that I saw when I was taking the film restoration class. I believe you may have presented it.

GITT: I may have presented it. That's right. Well, that was the first film in my brother's collection, because he had seen it at Dartmouth at the film society.

SANETT: You spoke to our class about it afterwards, I think.

GITT: Yes, that's right. Well, that was the very first film. So we had our own print of *Louisiana Story*. At that time, Frances Flaherty, Robert Flaherty's widow, was personally approving each of the release prints. So when he ordered it, he bought it for quite a lot of money. In those days, I think it was three or four hundred dollars. I don't remember. He had to wait six weeks because Mrs. Flaherty had to personally approve the print, which was very nice. So that's kind of nice little thing. So that was the first film.

The second film he got was *The Great Adventure* by Arne Sucksdorff, [who] was a Swedish filmmaker who made films of the outdoors from an animal's point of view and so on. It was nice. I don't know how it would look today, but it was quite nice at the time. It was about life on a farm in Sweden and a lot of it is photographed from the animal's point of view—another documentary. Then the third thing he got, I think, was Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*, which of course is one of the great Hitchcock films, and then *Our Town* with William Holden and Martha Scott which I liked, too—Thornton Wilder and everything. It has been overdone to death, but other

than the ending which they chicken out on, it's a very good version of it, and of course, Aaron Copland did the music. My brother was quite fond of American composers like Aaron Copland and so forth. I like that kind of music, too, to a certain degree. Then, he went on for the *[The] Thirty-Nine Steps* and *Casablanca* and *King Kong* and just all kinds of things. He still has, I think, the films today. He must have a hundred, a hundred and fifty—I don't know.

There are people now who have four thousand laserdiscs, but it so much easier to collect now. What these were was these were old prints from the army. They were old prints that TV stations had thrown out. They were prints that you could buy at camera stores. Was it strictly legal to be able to buy these? Not really, probably not, but there was a black market so to speak of collectors, as there is to this day—both 16 and 35 millimeter. These were films that were sold out the backdoor for twenty-five dollars and then the next person would charge fifty. My brother nor I would never steal a film. I mean, that wasn't something you would do, but you would buy a film and not ask where it came from, certainly. He did that, and then later I would do the same thing. I'll tell you I got into film collecting later—35 millimeter. That's partly how I got into what I'm doing today too, but that's a whole other story.

SANETT: We'll get to that.

GITT: We'll get to that. So by the time I was in high school, even though I wasn't very happy at school and everything, at home we had 16 millimeter. We had these wonderful classic films that I could look at and show and enjoy. A couple of times I

did put on shows at the high school. I remember I did run *Louisiana Story* in high school. I ran *The Great Adventure* in high school and I ran Alfred Hitchcock's *Saboteur* of all things.

SANETT: In high school?

GITT: In high school. At this point, the film was about fifteen years old. It's not one of Hitchcock's better— Have you seen it? It's Robert Cummings and Priscilla Lane made at Universal [Pictures]. It has that Universal cheap look about it, unfortunately. Interestingly enough, though, the villain in *Spellbound* is played by an actor named Norman Lloyd, who has since become a friend of mine. He's a wonderful person. He worked with Orson Welles in the Mercury Theatre in the thirties. He worked with Hitchcock and Jean Renoir and Charlie Chaplin. He was in *Limelight* with Charlie Chaplin and played tennis with Chaplin every week. He knew Jean Renoir very well. He was in *The Southerner*, and then later he directed the Hitchcock TV show. He did most of the TV shows. He's still an actor to this day. He was in *The Dead Poet's Society* a few years ago playing the headmaster, if you saw that.

SANETT: Yes, I did, with Robin Williams.

GITT: He's on TV on *St. Elsewhere*. He's a very interesting man, but little did I dream when I presented *Saboteur* in high school in which he falls off the Empire State Building that I would ever get to meet this man one day and actually be friendly with him and so on. It was really kind of neat. I've actually met some of the people that I

never would dreamed— I remember, too, in 1952, my best friend Martin [Reiter] and I went to see 3-D for the first time at the State Theatre in Hanover, Pennsylvania— *House of Wax* with Vincent Price, directed by André de Toth. André is now a good friend. I met him. André, of course, is famous because he has only one eye and is a very unusual choice to direct the first 3-D movie. The thing is, if you know André, he's very bright technically. He had done a lot of study about 3-D and had written articles about it. He had all of his research and everything. He remembered what 3-D looked like when he did have two eyes. So he actually, from a technical point of view, was very good and knew exactly how the optics worked and how to set up the camera and everything. So he knew what he was doing with 3-D. Anyway, I'm getting off the point.

SANETT: No, that's quite interesting actually.

GITT: It is interesting, too, that memories of movies that I saw back in the forties at either the State Theatre or the Park Theatre in my hometown— I remember the family going to see *Road to Rio* with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour.

Then later, I got to work on that at UCLA and have the original camera negative that was there on the set with the actors and everything. It sounds a bit corny, but it's fun.

SANETT: No. Was that exciting?

GITT: It is exciting, particularly something that you remember from long ago. Who would ever dream that one day I would be working on this film.

SANETT: You have several full circles here with *Louisiana Story* and *Road to Rio*

and a few others. It's very exciting. So through high school, then, you were working on radio as a hobby. You were working on film as a hobby. With radio, were you playing music? Were you talking as a disc jockey?

GITT: I was doing just disc jockey-type of stuff. I mean, I wasn't very good of course. I'm not an announcer or anything. And doing live programs, interviewing people, that kind of stuff. It was all very amateurish. I wasn't professional or anything. It isn't like I was some child prodigy or something. You shouldn't get that impression. This was all for fun. It was all very, very amateurish—I think is the word—but I enjoyed it.

SANETT: What kept you going with this? It's a very unusual hobby. You had some opposition from your parents. What kept you going?

GITT: I don't know. I just was interested in it, and part of it was I think I was emulating my brother. I really do. My brother Bill.

SANETT: Let's go back to college when you were involved with the Dartmouth Film Society and you were involved with radio in college. Were these organized? Well, I know the Dartmouth Film Society was an organized group. What about the radio?

GITT: Very much so. Maybe this isn't so unusual today, but at the time it was the only commercial—professional, if you will—AM radio station in American wholly operated by students. There was a very vague—not board of directors exactly, let's say a faculty advisory committee—but that never really was directly involved in any way at all. The students completely— They elected all of the officials. At that time,

you had to have an FCC first class license to run the transmitter, and they always made sure they had a student from the Dartmouth School of Engineering on the staff who was an FCC licensee and so on. Actually, everybody in the station who was involved in the remote operation of the transmitter had to have an FC—I think it was a third class license, which isn't any big deal. I had one, too. So it was a very professional station. It was 1,000 watts during the day and 250 watts at night. It took commercial ads.

At that time, it was a very creative environment because not only did it have disc jockey programs during the day of popular music of the time and so on—rock and roll—but it also had classical music programs. It also had quiz programs with the faculty. It also did radio drama, which is something you wouldn't probably do today, but at that time we were close enough still to the old days of network radio that we did all these wonderful creative things with comedy programs and dramatic programs and so on. So it was an educational and yet AM commercial radio station with a mix of things that would get good ratings and get sponsors and sell products, but also educational-type things, too.

We did a lot of remote broadcasts—sports, of course. I was involved in the sportscasts of the football games and the basketball games with remote units. I was an engineer. I turned the knobs and set up the microphones and all that sort of stuff. I did tape editing and production shows and so on. I actually eventually became the chief engineer of the station in my senior year, which was a departure for them because

it was the first time— Here's where my mathematical liabilities came into play. I did not have an FCC license. I did not have the scientific abilities or whatever to get that.

I think my brother, I'm sure, could have done it had he wanted to. He's very good at that kind of stuff. I'm not quite in that same mold, but they made an exception—I was the first. Because I worked so hard and I was so dedicated and I was such a fixture around radio station, they made me the chief engineer even though I didn't have the license and they had somebody else there with the license. That caused a certain amount of problems because the person who had the license, who was more of a straight and narrow engineer and he didn't have the whatever you want to call that I had—the broader view of the whole thing—which I guess they appreciated, but he was more just that narrow type point of view. But even so, he resented that he wasn't the chief engineer and I was. There was a lot of rivalry and a lot of kind of unpleasantness. It wasn't as enjoyable an experience as I'd hoped it would be because of this undercurrent of unpleasantness that final year, but other than that, I really liked the radio station. That was my main—I spent all my time there. At times my grades suffered because of it.

SANETT: But it sounds like it may have also balanced some of those classes you weren't liking.

GITT: Yes, it did. That's true.

SANETT: Why didn't you get your license at that time?

GITT: Oh, I shouldn't have gone into that in such a big way. It's just to get a FCC

first class license, you have to be a real technician. You have to know math. You have to know science. You have to be good at all those things. You have to be really talented at those things. People often make the mistake of thinking that I'm a technician in film preservation. That's not quite really what I am. It's a little hard to say just what I am, but I'm not strictly a technical person. There's at least as much of the other side of it—not that I want to sound pretentious or anything—but let's just say an artistic side of it if you will as opposed to the technical side. There's a bit of both, but it's more on the artistic side.

SANETT: It sounds like it. What were your plans upon graduation?

GITT: I didn't have any plans. I was lost. I didn't know what to do. My father had just died. I had squeaked through college and now had my diploma. At that time, I was very shy. It's strange. I was both shy and friendly. I had friends at the radio station. I was functioning very well, and yet in other ways I was very shy. I just didn't know what I wanted to do. I was kind of depressed. I was down in the dumps, if you will. I didn't know what I wanted to do.

So I basically just got a job for the summer with Dartmouth College Films with Blair Watson, who was my first boss, who was also a good friend of my brother when my brother was there. He was inspiring to a lot of people and got a lot of people interested in movies at Dartmouth through the years. He has died now, but he was there for many, many years. Have you heard of him before?

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: Oh, you have? Isn't that wonderful. Blair was my boss, as it turned, for about almost ten years—wow. Anyway, I worked for him and, as I said, I started out basically just inspecting films, shipping films, and projecting films for classrooms and for public shows and so on. I had learned how to run 35 millimeter in the Dartmouth Art Center just before graduating, and I love running 35 millimeter. That was a great dream of mine. When I was a child, I used to go to the movies and look up at the back and see the light coming out of the projection booth in the dark and think there would be nothing more glamorous than to grow up and be a movie projectionist. That was my great ambition and I eventually got to do it. I've done it now, so I don't have anything else I have to do. That was my ambition—to be a movie projectionist, not a fireman.

SANETT: That's all right. Was it as glamorous as you thought it would be?

GITT: Well, it was fun. I used to like projecting movies when I was at Dartmouth, particularly in Spaulding Auditorium, which was the big nine hundred seat auditorium with this 35 millimeter. We later put in stereo and all kinds of stuff. I got a kick out of inspecting the prints and making up the posters and doing the publicity and helping to publish the brochure that would come out, [and] programming the series.

I was called the graduate manager of the film society after a fellow named David Stewart Hull. He was there. When he left to go to work for the Universal Pictures as a reader. He would read screenplays in New York for Universal. It actually eventually turned out into a good job. He became a literary agent and so on.

He died last year, sadly. He's roughly my age, but he had liver cancer. It was very sad. I hadn't kept up with him, but I heard of him and I knew he was successful in New York. Anyway, he was in charge of the Dartmouth Film Society for three or four years. I was his projectionist and sort of helper and Blair Watson's—

Then he left to get this job with Universal and that's when I took over, and so for about five or six years I was running, in effect, the film program at the Dartmouth Art Center. It was with the Dartmouth Film Society, but that's what it was. I would select the films and project them and inspect them and do the publicity and a little bit of everything. We did have students write the program notes and introduce the films in some cases. It was interesting—in those days I was very shy and I never got up in public. I couldn't say anything in public or introduce a film or anything or write program notes. I never did that, but I would program the films and I'd get students to do the other parts of it. But we're getting ahead of ourselves again.

SANETT: Oh, that's fine. When you were working at the Dartmouth Arts Society—

GITT: Film Society.

SANETT: Film Society. Were you doing any preservation work?

GITT: Kind of, later on. This was after I graduated from college and I was working there and everything. Because I used to program the film society, I got to know the different distributors and the Museum of Modern Art [Film Library], of course in New York. The museum actually used to send us a lot of very rare prints up on the bus. They trusted us. They knew that I—and we and whatever—took care of the films.

We were careful; we didn't damage their films. They actually used to send nitrate [film] prints on the public bus up to New Hampshire from New York City. This sounds funny now, but no one thought anything of it at the time.

I used to project nitrate all by myself, no second operator. I would just carefully inspect the film. I never had a fire—knock on wood—even now. Nothing ever went wrong. We used to ship things back and forth, but the museum sent the most wonderful things on the bus up to New Hampshire. They sent a print of D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, a tinted nitrate print, in fact two different prints. They said one of them is not quite complete, but has some parts that the other doesn't have. So I took the two prints of *Intolerance* and I put one into the other. I remember that. So that was one thing I did.

Then they sent *Olympiad*, a nitrate print of *Olympiad* by Leni Riefenstahl, which is a beautiful film despite Leni Riefenstahl's other little problems, but a wonderful film that she made, *Olympiad*. That one, somebody at the museum—I think Richard Griffith, one of the early curators of the museum who for whatever reason—had taken both parts of *Olympiad* and had put his favorite parts into one and just sort of put the leavings in the other one. So I found out how to put it back together again, and I put it back in order again and I sent it back to the museum in the correct order. Eileen Bowser, who was the curator at that time, was a little bit taken aback. She said, "Well, I don't know if I really approve of this, but since it's you and since it is in the right order now, I suppose we shall forgive you."

Then after that, there was a film distributor in those days, Thomas [J.] Brandon of Brandon Films. This was a very big distributor of classic films and foreign films to film societies all around the country. They had a film called *Diary of a Country*

Priest by Robert Bresson, a very fine French film from around 1951. Well, they had a print of the movie that had been cut, I guess. A lot of times when movies were first shown in America, particularly foreign films, either for censorship or for reasons of running time, the distributors would cut parts out of them—fifteen minutes or twenty minutes would be cut. Well, they had gotten a print of the part that had been cut—they found somewhere the leavings that had been cut out at the time, and then they had the print of the movie after it had been cut. I guess the Museum of Modern Art told them about me and what I'd done on *Intolerance* and what I'd done on the other one I mentioned.

SANETT: *Olympiad*.

GITT: *Olympiad*. So Thomas Brandon sent up these prints of *Diary of a Country Priest* and I put those together in order and spliced them and everything.

SANETT: About when was that?

GITT: This would be about roughly 1967 maybe? '68 perhaps, maybe '66—somewhere in there. Around this time, too, I was starting to collect 35 millimeter. Now I had projectors there at Dartmouth that I could use and I met people who were film collectors. David Shepard, who was well-known in the archival field and was a big film collector at that time and I think still is today, used to come to Dartmouth and bring rarities from his collection. He would give a lecture and I would invite him to come and he would show films. Bill Pence, who is now at Dartmouth interestingly

enough—was in charge of the Telluride Film Festival and used to be at Janus Films many years ago, on the side was— I'm not sure he wants people to know that, but he was a very big 35 millimeter film collector. He used to come to Dartmouth with extremely rare nitrate prints and 35 millimeter.

By getting to know all of these people, I began learning some of their sources and I began acquiring 35 millimeter prints of my own. I'll say what I had. I don't have them anymore. Years later when I got involved in archives, it didn't seem right to be collecting films and I sort of—

SANETT: Dispersed them?

GITT: Dispersed them. Some of them I gave away. Some of them, to be honest, I sold, although I didn't really make any money on it. I basically got reimbursed, you might say, after a period of years. Anyway, the very first thing that I got, and this is something that's completely— You're not supposed to have this, but I paid fifty dollars and I got a beautiful Technicolor print of *Bambi*, the Walt Disney film. That was my first film. I got some very good films quite early on. I had a 35 millimeter print of *Citizen Kane* off the camera negative at one time. That was nice.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yes. It was made in the fifties, but it was off the original negative. I got a very good print of *Vertigo*. In fact, that was another one. I was going to tell you about that.

SANETT: Actually—

GITT: Oh, it's going to run out?

SANETT: I'm afraid it's going to run out, so we need to hold the thought.

GITT: Maybe it's getting late, too. We can talk another time.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

APRIL 13, 2000

SANETT: Hi Bob, how are you doing?

GITT: Well, as I told you when we were setting up, I'm a little tired this evening because I was working very hard on a film today and it seems to have worn me out [laughs], but I'll do the best I can.

SANETT: Well, I appreciate that. Last time we spoke—I had listened to the tape and a couple of questions that I wanted to follow up on arose. One of them was what sort of genre of films have turned out to be your most favorite?

GITT: You mean that I have worked on or just in general? I don't know.

SANETT: You personally.

GITT: That kind of thing is difficult for me to answer. I suppose because I have somewhat of a technical interest and technical background—I've been a projectionist and was interested in sound recording at the radio station and the radio production and that sort of thing—I would say some of the technological developments like early color processes. I've always found those very interesting, not only early Technicolor, but early stencil color and just some of the other primitive processes that they developed. I find those quite fascinating. Also, early sound—the beginning of sound in the movies—I've always found very interesting. So those kinds of films, just because of what they represent, are very interesting to me.

But I like all kinds of films, I must say. I'm quite fond of, I suppose what you

would call, many of the masterpieces—what other word can you use—of the past by people like [Jean] Renoir and [Akira] Kurosawa and all of the regular old masters that people recognize— And [Luis] Buñuel and [Sergei M.] Eisenstein, etc., etc.—go on and on. And, of course, in comedy, Buster Keaton and whatever. I like all kinds of films. I like [Alfred] Hitchcock movies quite a lot.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: In fact, when I had a movie collection, which I don't anymore, I had quite a lot of Alfred Hitchcock films. At one time my goal was to try and get all of them, but I never got all of them. But I got quite a lot of them at one point. And I like science fiction, up to a point. Horror films, well-done, up to a point. Like Val Lewton's horror films, if you're familiar with those—

SANETT: No, I'm not.

GITT: —from the World War II era. Well, they were a higher class. They were low-budget films, but very well written and produced.

SANETT: Different from, say, the Roger Corman films?

GITT: Yes. Some of those can be fun, too. Some of the better Roger Corman films are a lot of fun. *Little Shop of Horrors* and— Oh, I don't know which one I'm thinking of, but there's a couple of good Vincent Price ones that were fun, too. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is a good movie—

SANETT: A classic.

GITT: —that's sort of science fiction. That's good; everybody likes that. I liked it

when I saw it in 1951 when I was nine or ten years old, and I still like it today.

SANETT: Oh, it's stood the—

GITT: It's a nice film.

SANETT: —test of time.

GITT: Yeah, it has.

SANETT: So it also sounds like you enjoy the films that span the transition from silents to talkies?

GITT: Maybe. I would have to say some of the films of that era are quite good. A lot of them are very awkward. I just find them interesting to work on and interesting to learn about and to experience. As far as being great works of art, a few of them are.

Applause, I think by Rouben Mamoulian, is a very fine film, a very experimental film for early sound. *All Quite on the Western Front*, of course. I mean, a film like that, you know? And some of the [Ernst] Lubitsch films and so on are wonderful in the early period of sound. But there's no question a lot was given up, too, when sound came in. Silent films were just beginning to really become fluid and really, really beautiful, and then sound came in and for a while it threw everything into disarray.

SANETT: When you say "fluid", what do you mean?

GITT: Well, the German influence. The German expressionism and the moving camera and the beautiful lighting and storytelling and expressing emotion through pantomime. And so it is quite a beautiful art form. I think sometimes when you have limitations, it makes for more interesting or perhaps greater art. In other words,

silent films, where you don't have sound; radio, where you don't have sight.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: In a sense, television has too much—it's got color, it's got sound, it's got sight.

It's got everything and you can't use your imagination to the same degree. Maybe that's why black and white is good too, because it's a whole different experience.

Maybe it makes you use your imagination a little more.

SANETT: Well, Mel Brooks did some nice work using black and white.

GITT: Well, yes.

SANETT: Among others.

GITT: Among others.

SANETT: I mean, you know, among contemporary work.

GITT: Contemporary. Well, Woody Allen sometimes uses black and white today.

SANETT: Can you talk a little bit about the sorts of films you chose to include in your collection, when you had your collection? Aside from including the Hitchcock films.

GITT: Of course. I haven't thought about it— I haven't had the films for a very long time now. I actually haven't thought about them in a very long time. I had mostly what you would call classic films, I guess. I had *Los Olvidados* by [Luis] Buñuel, and I had a couple of Renoir films, and I had *La Marseillaise* by Jean Renoir. I had, as I said, quite a lot of Hitchcock films. I had a lot of Howard Hawks films; I liked his films, too.

SANETT: Really? Which ones?

GITT: Well, I had *The Big Sleep*, which I've subsequently worked on, and I had *El Dorado* and I had *Bringing Up Baby* and *His Girl Friday*, *Only Angels Have Wings*—which is a wonderful one—*Red River* and so forth. My brother had a print of *To Have and Have Not*, another good Hawks film. Those were just some of them. I had *Twentieth Century* and so on and so forth.

SANETT: It sounds like, also, a very eclectic collection. When we ended our chat last week, we had left you with the Dartmouth Film Society and an amazing experience of having cut up a film and spliced it together that had been sent to you as nitrate film. It had been sent by bus—

GITT: The experience of cutting up the film and putting it in order— Was it *Olympiad* I was talking about?

SANETT: I believe so.

GITT: By Leni Riefenstahl.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: But in those days, people just were not as worried about nitrate film or as conscious of it, I suppose. Their consciousness was not heightened about the dangers, because in the 1960s you used to ship nitrate on public transportation and nobody really thought too much about it.

SANETT: Can you talk a little bit about nitrate film and its dangers?

GITT: Well, of course, if you go back to the first fifty years of this century, when

motion picture theaters were running almost exclusively nitrate film, nitrate was shipped by bus, by railroad train, by airplane, all over the country. The whole film industry was using nitrate film. Nitrate film was running through the camera in front of the actors. Nitrate film was being developed in the laboratories. It was being edited. All the prints were nitrate. People just knew that this was flammable and you just don't light a match to it or drop a cigarette on it or let a hot light bulb get on it.

There were occasionally some fires through the years, very bad ones, but considering how much nitrate film was in use, it was not a problem that many times. There were some disastrous nitrate fires in which people were killed, of course, through the years. There was a very bad one, I believe—I shouldn't be speculating; for an oral history I should have all my facts correct—but I know there was one in Mexico some years ago at a cinemateque, where they were storing nitrate film underneath an auditorium. People were there watching a film and the films there caught on fire and I think some people were killed. It was just awful.

SANETT: That's terrible.

GITT: And there were very bad nitrate fires where people were not killed, but films—countless silent films and early films—were destroyed in fires. Sometimes it's been rumored that the studio set the fire deliberately to get rid of the films that it didn't want to store anymore, but that may just be film collectors grumbling or something. Nobody really knows for sure.

One thing is for sure, that for many years they didn't take very good care of

their old nitrate films. I think initially, when the studios were prospering and flourishing in the thirties and forties and so forth, they had people who actually were airing the films—winding though them, and canning them and looking after them. But when budgets began getting cut and people began being more conscious of that sort of thing in the sixties and seventies and so forth, a lot of the studios just got very lackadaisical about their nitrate film and were not taking proper care of it. A lot of the films deteriorated and had to be thrown away. And then there were some fires where other films were lost. One of the reasons UCLA has the [UCLA Film and Television] Archive that we do is that the studios wanted to get rid of their nitrate print libraries; they didn't want to store them anymore. They were worried about the cost of the insurance—I suppose—the storage costs and so on. And so we were willing and eager, in fact, at the time, to take the nitrate film. That is how our collection really got started.

SANETT: And did you have a storage facility at UCLA for that?

GITT: We'll get into this when we go into UCLA—I'm jumping ahead a little bit.

No, we didn't. At the time UCLA took the nitrate film, they had nothing, no ability to store the film at all. I'll tell you all about this.

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: We're getting ahead of ourselves.

SANETT: When we were talking about the nitrate film that you were working on before, I was wondering—

GITT: Oh, up at the Dartmouth College?

SANETT: Up at Dartmouth, yes.

GITT: And there were some other films, too. There were several films that I put together.

SANETT: What were the names of some of them?

GITT: Well, I mentioned *Diary of a Country Priest* for Brandon Films—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: —and *Olympiad* for the Museum of Modern Art [Film Library], although I kind of did— *Intolerance*, I put a couple of prints together to show one good one—nitrate. And because I was starting to collect films at that time I had acquired a print of *Vertigo*, the Hitchcock film, perhaps his greatest film.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: And it was a beautiful Technicolor print, but it was splicy— It was missing some portions; it was not complete. So I managed, through collectors circles, to acquire a second print for a small amount of money— I think this was fifty dollars. I don't remember— It wasn't a lot of money, maybe a hundred dollars for one print, and seventy-five, fifty [dollars] for the other one. I don't know. And I got two prints of it, basically, and I checker-boarded back and forth and put both together to make one complete print of the movie. I remember that because that was one that I worked very hard on and I was very pleased with the result. That kind of was the beginning, in a sense, of the kind of work— Plus these other things I mentioned, but that's ultimately

what I got into when I began restoring films, was that kind of taking two bad prints and making one good one out of it. Or two negatives, or a negative and a print, and filling in the gaps and so on.

SANETT: Did the field of doing this have a name at that time?

GITT: Well, I'm trying to remember. Certainly there were film archives, as we now call them. The Museum of Modern Art had formed the film library, I guess it was called at that time in the 1930s, I think about 1935. When I used to deal with them—this was the 1960s—I remember Margarita Akermark was the name of the woman in charge of the film library there. And Eileen Bowser was there and Richard Griffith. I think it may have been still called the film library at that time. I do know that it wasn't until the sixties at least, I believe, that they began actually copying, and preserving and saving some by converting some of their older nitrate films to safety film. I think for a long time they just had a collection of films that were meant to be shown in their auditorium and in some cases exhibited around the country, at places like the Dartmouth Film Society that they knew would take care of them. They would actually send their valuable prints up and we would run them.

Just to inform you, a wonderful man by the name of Arthur Mayer came to Dartmouth. He taught at USC [University of Southern California], he taught at NYU [New York University], he taught at Dartmouth. He was a fascinating movie pioneer, if you will. He was in his eighties when he was at Dartmouth in the 1960s. He lived

to be ninety-four years old, I believe. He and his wife Lillie—Arthur and Lillie they were called, everybody called them that— He was in the movie industry in the late teens. He was working for Samuel Goldwyn as a publicist and he was the person who publicized *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* when Goldwyn imported it from Germany. He then went to work for Paramount Pictures and he publicized and did the publicity and the ads and the words or whatever for Mae West and the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields and so on. And then in later years he became a movie exhibitor and became known as the Merchant of Menace because he ran a lot of horror pictures at his theater, the Rialto—was it the Rialto Theatre? Maybe. I hope I'm getting the name right.

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: Anyway, he had a theater in New York that pretty much exclusively ran horror films, with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi and so on—*Dracula* and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, that sort of thing. So he became known as the Merchant of Menace, and then in later years he went into teaching. He wrote a pictorial history of the movies with Richard Griffith of the Museum of Modern Art called *The Movies*, which is still in print I believe today unless I'm mistaken. It was quite a nice book in the fifties. And then he began teaching at USC and at Dartmouth and so on. Because he had so many friends, and people all over the world and all over Hollywood, and New York, and the Museum of Modern Art and so forth— They had already been sending films to Dartmouth, but when he began teaching there they really were very, very nice. I think that maybe helped us to get *Intolerance*, because Arthur wanted it for his class

of the history of the movies, and that's why we got that. Anyway, I'm getting off the subject a little bit.

SANETT: Well, he sounds like a man—

GITT: He was inspiring.

SANETT: —who influenced you.

GITT: Yes, yes he did, he was— Everybody loved him. He was a fascinating person and just inspiring just because he was— He grew old so gracefully and with such energy and verve and enthusiasm, it was really quite marvelous. And his wife, too, she was a lot of fun. They're both characters, if you will, but wonderful people.

SANETT: They sound like a wonderfully inspiring couple.

GITT: Yeah, they were.

SANETT: By the time the sixties rolled around, was the work that you were doing on films called at that time "preservation"?

GITT: No.

SANETT: What sort of label did the work have at that time?

GITT: I'm trying to remember. Don't forget, I was working—and, in fact, programming the film program under Blair Watson. Of course, Blair Watson was in charge, it was ultimately his responsibility, but when David Stewart Hull left to go to Universal [Pictures], I sort of took over the programming and continued to do the projection. So I was very heavily involved in it under Blair's supervision and so on. But that's what I was doing and part of my work was— I suppose you'd call it print

preparation. I remember Gary Essert, the late Gary Essert now, whom I knew slightly at that time—I remember that we used to see programs that would come from Royce Hall. Interestingly enough, when I was at Dartmouth, David Stewart Hull was programming for UCLA's Royce Hall. I'm not quite sure how this worked out. I guess he had a good reputation for programming the [Dartmouth] Film Society, and he was hired by Frances [L.] Inglis—who used to be David O. Selznick's secretary, one of his many secretaries—and was working for UCLA and hired David to program a film series at Royce Hall. So we used to get the programs, and at that time Gary Essert was doing the projection—he was an undergraduate I believe. He later founded Filmex [Los Angeles Film International Festival] and so on. Anyway, I remembered seeing in the program something I never put in it or anything, but it said "Print Preparation by G. Charles Essert." I think he thought it was distinguished to call himself G. Charles Essert, but "print preparation by." So that was his credit that he gave.

SANETT: And around when—?

GITT: So in a sense that's what I was doing, was preparing prints for projection.

SANETT: And about when did you see that credit?

GITT: Oh, in the late sixties. Around 1966-67.

SANETT: Well, maybe now is a good time to ask you a couple of questions. How do you define preservation?

GITT: Well, there's a boilerplate answer that we always sort of try to give and I'm

trying to remember what it is right now. As the years have gone on, I think we think in a more broad sense about preservation than perhaps we used to. When I first got into the field, it almost always implied copying old nitrate film to acetate, to safety film.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: That was preserving the film. Well, first of all, we found out some years later that acetate isn't very good either. In fact, in some ways it's almost worse than nitrate. So obviously you can't continue to use that definition. So then we begin to say, "All right, preservation is transferring material from a less stable medium to a more stable medium," such as polyester film, which of course is now the modern replacement for acetate. So now both acetate and nitrate films need to be transferred to polyester, and indeed we are still doing that. But because a lot of research that's been done in Rochester [New York], at the Rochester Institute of Technology, I believe it is—RIT, maybe I've got that wrong—it's been discovered that one way of "preserving" films is through proper storage. That is, if you keep the films cool and dry, much cooler and much dryer than we used to think, the film life is tremendously lengthened. So in that sense, that is a form of preservation as well.

So what I sort of specialize in to a certain degree is what I would call restoration, which involves films that are incomplete or maybe films for which the quality of the materials that are generally available are not very good, and I've been able to find better materials—sharper picture, better sound or whatever. That doesn't

mean that we don't still copy films to preserve them, we do, because storage is one thing, but the truth is a lot of the films already— The nitrate films that we have, many of them are sixty, seventy, eighty years old. Even if you put them—and we're doing that—but even if you them into proper storage now, a lot of their life has gone. Same thing with safety films. The safety films in our collection, many of them are now thirty or forty years old. If they don't have it already, they're on the verge of coming down with the vinegar syndrome. So the fact that we keep them cool, that doesn't necessarily stop everything, all it does is slow it down. So you still need to, in some cases, particularly with these older films, get new copies so you start off fresh. And if you put something on polyester film and put it in cold storage, I'm sure the chances are very good that it will last a very, very long time. Although, we don't know that yet, we're taking that on—

SANETT: You're projecting.

GITT: —faith. We're projecting into the future, yes.

SANETT: Let me ask you a brief technical question before I ask you another definitional question. The technical one is when you store film, what medium do you advocate storing it in?

GITT: You mean at the present time?

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: Well, it's the year 2000 now—hard to believe, but it is. This is all going to change, obviously, but at the moment, 35 millimeter film on polyester base,

particularly 35 millimeter film with silver images, in other words, black-and-white images, is the highest quality, longest lasting, best storage medium—high definition and so on—at a reasonable cost that we know of. Electronic storage in high definition is at the moment very cumbersome, extremely expensive and actually very fragile.

It's a strange thing about digital technology at the moment, in its early stages of development. On the one hand, as you know, it's very robust or whatever, in a certain sense, in that if you keep copying it you do not lose through generations. You can keep copying it and copying it and copying it without loss, provided, of course, you're not using compression, which they're all starting to do—

SANETT: That's right.

GITT: —which is not a good idea.

SANETT: That's right.

GITT: But leaving that aside, in theory it can be copied without loss, and that is a tremendous improvement over analog copying, of course. Because even photographic copying on 35 millimeter film— Every time you copy that film to one more generation you lose a little bit of sharpness, you build up a little bit of photographic grain, you lose a little bit of gradations of the tonality of it, particularly in the highlights or the shadows or both. You begin to lose some of the quality, some of the differentiation. The subtle differences between white-white and super white-white. For example, everything just becomes gray-white, and the shadows— Like King Kong's fur in the prints today— In the old prints there used to be a lot of detail in different tufts of

fur and different degrees of blackness and grayness in his coat. Now it all has—on the whole— become more uniformly just dark gray. That's because of things being duped too many times—or copied.

With digital, that sort of thing won't happen. But, as you know, the present way of recording digital, which is generally on a magnetic tape—sometimes a very flimsy, little magnetic tape—is very unsatisfactory. Not only can it be easily erased, unfortunately by accident— In addition to that, the tape is so fragile that there are already horror stories of digital recordings that were made by the film industry, the Hollywood studios, of music scores and things only ten years ago that cannot be played anymore. And the bad news about digital is if it doesn't work completely, it doesn't work at all. With analog, at least you have a chance. If the tape begins to crumble slightly or the oxide starts to flake off or whatever, you can still play it and get maybe a pretty good result, or at least get something usable off of it. But when the digital tape starts breaking down, it just completely vanishes. That's it, it's gone.

Now in the future, when some better recording medium comes along, perhaps an optical disc of some kind or maybe some kind of computer memory storage— I suppose if they keep making strides there in getting it smaller and smaller and smaller, I suppose you'll be able to simply have a storage device that will just store maybe dozens of films—or maybe hundreds of films, who knows—in a small area and with high quality. I don't know, but—

SANETT: We can hope.

GITT: —we can hope. But right now the old technology is still tried and true. It's standardized, everybody can still use it, and it works. The new stuff, it's wonderful, but things become, as you know, obsolete. Two years from now, three years from now, five years from now, the format that you chose to put your material on is suddenly no longer in use, and the machines aren't being made, and you have to archive the machines along with— And the technicians who know how to fix the machines.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: We're going through a difficult transitional period right now, I'd have to say. I am very hopeful of the future though. I think film restoration is going to be very exciting in the future, when you have this technology available at an affordable price— Because right now, for example, we're doing things with soundtracks we couldn't do even ten years ago, in terms of removing subtle little crackles and pops and clicks without hurting the actual audio itself. And we'll be able to do that to the picture, too.

It can be done already, but not in an ongoing, affordable way right now. We will be able to, but it's still just beginning. It's in the early stages right now. But imagine being able to take all the dirt specks and scratches and little blemishes in the picture out completely. It means that everything that I've worked so hard on will all have to be done over again by somebody who will say, "Well, why didn't they take care of these problems?" Well, we didn't have the technology, that's why. We had to do things photographically. I'm still getting ahead of myself a little bit, I'm sorry.

SANETT: I read somewhere that there was a computer program that was either

being developed or had been developed that was basically washing the film, in a sense of taking out specks and dust and—

GITT: Well, the computers can do just so much by—at least at the moment—automatically. That is, they can remove white specks and sometimes black specks and sometimes little scratches, but if you have, for example, just a constant scratch in the picture—a gray scratch right down through the center of the picture—the computer cannot do anything about it at all. It thinks—if that's the word—that it's part of the picture. It takes a human being to go in and paint it out frame by frame at huge cost. They haven't yet worked out something that will— There's all kinds of damage in films that computers cannot take care of. There are other things that they are very good at taking care of.

Interestingly enough though, the old technology is useful too, because if you have a piece of film that has abrasions and scratches and you immerse it in a liquid and photograph it, or even print it contact, immersed in a liquid, that will fill in the scratches and make almost all of them go completely away. And at a much lower cost than trying to take them out digitally.

SANETT: What sort of liquid?

GITT: It's a liquid with the same refractive index as the film, if I understand correctly.

I think they use different fluids, but Perc is one of them and I don't know the—I'm not a chemist and my knowledge of that is not nearly what people probably would think it would be as a film preservationist. I don't know. It's called wet printing, and you

can have wet optical printing, where the film is actually in a sort of glass chamber which is filled up with liquid— And once again, all of the scratches— Unless the scratch is so deep it goes completely through the emulsion and becomes a white scratch or becomes a deep scratch. If it's just a moderate or mild scratch or abrasion, it pretty much completely eliminates them. The other possibility is to literally have the entire film printed in a fluid. You fill up the entire active part of the film printing head, or the printer, and make a contact print. That's done all the time now and it works very, very well.

There are all kinds of things that you can do using old technology that mean you don't need to spend the money to do anything digitally. For example, in sound reproduction, suppose we want to preserve an old movie soundtrack, an optical soundtrack. And suppose the optical soundtrack is basically very high quality, but about a third of the way over on one side, because the film was mishandled and maybe was projected many years ago with a stuck roller in the projector, it now has a very bad scratch, an intermittent scratch that makes a rustling sound. You could scan that soundtrack the normal way and then try to clean it up digitally.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: But even so, it's not necessarily easy to do, particularly if the kind of noise keeps changing constantly rather than a— You know, if it's a rustling sound, let's say.

Whereas, if you simply, depending on the kind of soundtrack it is—and this takes a lot of care and we can go into that later, but let's just say for the sake of argument right

now— If you mask off—just optically or visually mask off using even, frankly, a piece of black tape or a piece of paper or something by eye—the area of the track with the scratch and just play the rest of it, you can get rid of that noise and get a good quality playback. You don't need to do all of this other stuff.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yeah. Now there are different kinds of soundtracks—variable density and variable area—and the technique I just mentioned works very well with variable density. There's not a problem at all. With variable area, because of the way the modulations are recorded, you can't just necessarily block off part of the track. You may get a rough, distorted sound because you're cutting off the edges of the waveforms.

But you may be able to block off exactly half of the soundtrack then and do what I mentioned. So there are all kinds of little tricks that you can do using the old conventional technology to get rid of some of the problems.

SANETT: Can you give me an idea of a movie you worked on where you used that technique?

GITT: Well, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the Vincente Minnelli film with Judy Garland and Margaret O'Brien and so on. That one, MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer] themselves, years and years ago had transferred the old soundtrack and had re-recorded it, but I did not agree with what they did. How can I put this? Particularly back in the thirties and forties, movies used to have a kind of— Within the limitations of the sound recording at that time, because the soundtracks were fairly noisy back then, but even so,

they worked out ways of having a pretty good dynamic range. That is, they could have people talking quietly, or normally at a normal volume, and yet when a musical number would begin, the sound could become very loud. Or if there was a clap of thunder, it could be very loud and so forth. And then when people were talking again later in the film, it would be just quiet again. This is a very good way of doing sound.

There was a tendency in recent years for a lot of people, particularly re-recording old movies for commercial reissue, to do what's called compression, which is to basically to bring the low level sound up higher to make it less noisy—to get it off the noise floor, as it's called. And then, because you could only go so loud on the soundtrack, if you bring up the normal conversation louder, it means the thunder claps and the musical numbers are basically no louder than the conversation, or not much louder.

Well, that's what they had done in *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The whole thing was just sort of loud from beginning to end—or medium or low depending on where you set your volume control in the theater—but everything had a kind of sameness about it. It didn't have the impact that the film originally had. So we got an old nitrate print that had been sent for copyright purposes to the Library of Congress years ago. This was done out here at UCLA and at YCM Laboratories, in cooperation with Turner Entertainment at that time, before they joined up with Warner Bros. Anyway, the sound on the original print had the quality that it was supposed to have, it had nice dynamic range and I basically re-recorded it that way. However, some of the reels had a bad intermittent scratch which happens in the gate in the projector, the picture

gate, when the film is moving through intermittently if there is a buildup of dirt or abrasive particles in the gate as it's being projected in the theaters. This could have happened many years ago. It could have happened in 1944 for that matter, before it even went to that Library of Congress. You can get an intermittent digging into the soundtrack which makes either a rustling noise or a kind of a intermittent digging, clicking kind of noise, almost. Basically, this scratch, I think the one I'm thinking of, it had that on one part of the track. There was another area of the movie where there was a stuck roller and a bent reel and the film was wavering back and forth and it put this deep gouge wavering to the left side of the track to the right side of the track to the middle.

So what I did was I—this was a variable density soundtrack, which lends itself to this type of technique—I scanned it with a stereophonic or stereo solar cell, two solar cells. The left half of the track going to one solar cell, the right half of the track to the other solar cell. I made magnetic recordings of both. And then listening to hear the noise move back and forth, and also watching on the Steenbeck [editing machine] because I could actually run the nitrate print on the Steenbeck in sync with the two magnetic tracks I made. I could see the scratch wavering back and forth. I would just tape-splice back and forth between the two magnetic tracks to always get the quietest sound, as the scratch would move from first to one side and then to the other. That's the sort of thing that even today with digital technology, yes we could kick some of that noise out using NoNOISE or Sonic Solutions as it's called, but even

so, it's better to do this, to get it out before you even have to think about that. It's just better if you can eliminate that problem to begin with. So I would even use that technique now, even though we now do everything digitally. I would still use that.

SANETT: A tried and true—

GITT: Yeah. I might now do the editing back and forth between the two playbacks digitally, rather than splicing magnetic stock; I don't think I would probably go to that trouble now. I think I'd do it digitally, that aspect of it.

SANETT: Well, that leads me to probably my last definitional question then. We've defined preservation—

GITT: Well—

SANETT: —defined restoration— Well, to an extent.

GITT: Sort of. [laughs]

SANETT: Yes, talked a bit about what restoration is. In your opinion, what is conservation then?

GITT: Well, okay. Conservation certainly would take into account the storage. I think conservation is bringing the films in to a safe place, let's say like an archive, like UCLA, and then storing them carefully and taking care of them, conserving them. I think that's conservation.

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: I certainly think part of all of these things, though— You don't want to just have conservation and not let anyone see the films or be able to use the films.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: I think that's very important. You have to have access to the collection and use of the collection or what's the point in having it? So conceivably, you could have a conflict if you're trying to conserve something— People used to talk about librarians worrying so much about the books that they didn't want anybody to take them off the shelves.

SANETT: That's right.

GITT: Well, we have to guard against that with films as well. On the one hand, yes, you want to take care of them. On the other hand, they should be shown, too. In fact, Bob [Robert F.] Epstein, who was certainly one of the two founders, and I would say the main founder of UCLA's Film Archive many years ago, did believe that actually showing our nitrate films—taking them off the shelf, rewinding them, airing them out and projecting them—actually was good for them. And I think he was actually right. It was good to get them out of the cans and let the gases escape and so on, provided of course, they were handled with care and they were projected with care on good equipment. Yes, it was good for them.

SANETT: Speaking of cans, when you're storing film, what sort of can are you storing them in? What's the material? There's a lot written about what to do. What have you chosen?

GITT: Yeah, it's strange I'm— I have a reputation, I suppose, as a film preservationist. I am up to a point, but there are many, many people who know a heck

of a lot more about storage and about cans, and about air quality and about all of those—to me, quite frankly, and I'll just say it, rather dull— [It's] very important, don't get me wrong. I'm all for storing films properly by all means, but I didn't get into this field to put in air conditioning or worry about whether this type of plastic is better than that type of plastic. I'm glad that people do worry about that. Thank God there are scientists and there are archivists and storage people who are doing a good job on this. I'm really more of a film restorationist, I guess—and, yes, a film preservationist—but when it comes to storage, I want to do whatever's right, but it's not something that I get passionate about or really down deep really care for. I don't care personally about it except that I want it done correctly, obviously. We've heard so many different stories over the years about what kind of metal cans, what kind of plastic cans.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: Some years ago we bought a lot of plastic cans for some of our 16 millimeter prints, only to find out two or three years later that they discovered that there's a certain chemical in this particular color plastic can that wasn't good for the film after all. So now I guess there's a certain kind of so-called archival plastic cans that I guess are now currently approved. And the problem is— We are using them for many of the films in our preservation vault—films that we had preserved ourselves, for our soundtracks in particular, but also picture elements too. But we don't have the money, quite frankly, to buy them for the whole collection. So pretty much, at least for the time being, the vast majority of our films are still stored in metal cans, which— I'm still hearing

conflicting things about that. I've heard that it isn't good for the films at all, and certainly vinegar syndrome you don't want to have around metal, I know that.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: Vinegar acetate film.

SANETT: And something was written about glass storage containers—

GITT: Yes, but good heavens.

SANETT: —at one point.

GITT: And earthquake country, imagine— I mean, really. I think there's a lot that still needs to be learned about storage. Nothing is perfect, but I suspect that the current archival plastic cans are probably about as good as you're going to get for the time being. I think glass is just way out of line, and metal— [Eastman] Kodak [Company] does make an improved metal can that seems to be rather good, but then who knows what's going to happen in the next fifty years or so—whether they will rust and so on. Strange thing, this is sort of typical I guess of what happens to most people as they grow older, but when I was young and I would go—or younger—and I would go to Warner Bros. and see all these brownish old cans, I thought, "How careless this is.

They're storing all their films in these old, brown, rusty, brownish, dull-looking cans and these old yellowish labels and so forth." And what I didn't fully realize—I suppose I realized a little bit, but not really—is the fact that those shiny, new cans with those nice bright labels that we put on the shelf, after fifty years, that's what they look

like, too.

SANETT: Exactly, exactly.

GITT: And these looked nice when they were done fifty-sixty years ago.

SANETT: They looked very nice.

GITT: They look very nice. [mutual laughter].

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SANETT: Okay, we're back. As long as we're talking about definitions, you mentioned a new word, modern—

GITT: Yes, modernization.

SANETT: Could you explain that a little?

GITT: Maybe I'll just quickly go through— Conservation, of course, is storing carefully, getting the films and taking care of them and so forth. Preservation, you might say, goes a little bit beyond that in the sense that perhaps you do have a very old film and you want to transfer it to new film that will last longer—let's say polyester film off of acetate or off of nitrate. So that would be preservation. Just simply taking what you have, sending it to the laboratory, making a good quality copy of it.

Restoration usually implies putting together the missing pieces of a film, the censored scenes, the lost scenes, whatever. Or a film that's just been in very poor condition—finding enough prints or negatives to put the film back together again. But it could also mean restoring the quality of the sound to what it was originally, the quality of the color to what it was originally, the quality of the image to what it was—or at least approaching what it was—originally. In a sense that's restoration as well.

Then, finally, I mentioned to you there's a word that is sometimes used now that's called "modernization", and that usually is done by commercial users of films.

Archivists generally try not to do this, and I generally try not to do this, although there are times that you get on the borderline, you get very tempted. Modernization, in its worst form, would be taking a black-and-white film and colorizing it, for example, to appeal to modern tastes. Or taking a film recorded with a single channel sound—mono sound or monaural sound—and trying to stereoize it; turn it into multiple channels. This is done all the time for VHS and laserdiscs and DVDs and so forth. You take the movie that was mono originally and you add some surroundsound, and you have the explosions in the war pictures coming from the left and the right, and you use some trickery with the music to spread out the orchestra and make it sound bigger and try to have some frequencies on the left and some on the right and so on and spread it out. Well, this is really changing the way the film was originally experienced, and the way it was made by the people who made it. Most archivists, I would say, would not really approve of that.

From a commercial point of view, there's something to be said for it. If you're reissuing a modern version of *Metropolis*, let's say, with a pop music or a rock score, and you want to add colored effects and you want to print the film backwards and upside down and make a light show out of it or whatever, well, you're creating a whole new film. It isn't Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* anymore, let's say it's a variation of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* as seen through the eyes of Giorgio Moroder or something. I suppose that's understandable and maybe it's okay, provided it's presented that way and people are not fooled into thinking this is what the film always was.

SANETT: And is that done?

GITT: Well, it was done. In the case of *Metropolis*, some years ago there was a kind of rock- and-roll version of *Metropolis*. There are other instances where a film that— Well, I might as well mention it. *Vertigo*, which of course is Hitchcock's—perhaps his greatest film—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: —that Bob Harris and James Katz worked on. On the whole, what they did was a very good thing. The film was originally photographed in Vistavision, which is a horizontal system of photography, that actually has, in effect, double frames. It has a larger area on the negative, giving you a sharper picture. And it's almost, not quite, but almost as big as a 70 millimeter image would be. Basically, they had the idea of printing the old Vistavision negative, which usually was reduced down to 35 millimeter and then shown in theaters by enlarging it again, which compromised the sharpness and beauty of the original. The idea was to print it on 70 millimeter for the first time. I think that was a good idea and I applaud that.

They also discovered, for the record album, if I understand correctly, the—today it would be a CD or DVD, but at that time stereo LPs were just starting to come out around 1957-58, and apparently when they recorded the score for *Vertigo*, they did do a kind of stereo recording or at least they had the instruments grouped in a sort of a stereo recording— Well, they found that the studio, or Hitchcock's hiers or whatever—and Universal now owns the film—actually had the music in stereo and it

sounded wonderful. Well, this is a fine thing, too. Good. Although the thing was, when the movie came out— Stereophonic sound was used in the fifties. Hitchcock could have used it had he wanted to. He didn't do it; he did the film in mono. He did not choose to use stereo. Twentieth Century Fox was pushing stereo at that time in Cinemascope. Now *Vertigo* wasn't in Cinemascope, it was in Vistavision. Paramount wasn't pushing stereo the same way Fox was, but Hitchcock didn't insist on it or anything, did not have stereo. Just as today, Woody Allen's movies are— People don't realize this, they're all mono. He doesn't like stereo. His movies are all played through the stereo system, but the way they are mixed, all the sound comes out of the center channel. So Woody Allen to this day, he could do his movies in stereo but he doesn't. He doesn't like it. Well, Hitchcock in the fifties didn't do them in stereo; he could have, but he didn't. Well, anyway, they wanted to have the music— The music does sound very good in stereo, and I can perhaps see— Certainly from a commercial point of view, fine. For a modern audience, why not hear the music in stereo?

But here was their dilemma: they found the stereo music, but the only other sound they had was the mixed final mono soundtrack with the dialogue, the sound effects, the music, all together on one track. They did not any longer have available separate sound effects, the separate music—mono—and the separate dialogue. Had they had that I think they could have successfully done what they were trying to do, which was to have the music be in stereo and have the rest of the film be mixed to sound about the same using the original recordings. Unfortunately, they didn't have

that. What they had to do was use some computer or digital technology to try strip away to the best of their ability the mono music from the dialogue, which gave the quality of the dialogue a rough, raspy edge which was not in the original film. There was only one scene in the new, restored *Vertigo* that they did—or the modernized *Vertigo*—that really sounded good dialogue-wise. That was a scene a scene at the beginning of the movie with Barbara Bel Geddes and Jimmy Stewart where there's no music and they just used the original mono recording. It sounds superb, it sounds excellent. But in the rest of the film, where they had to kind of keep the music down and try to separate out the voice from the music and then mix in the new stereo music, the voices all have this distorted, rough edge to them which I found very irritating.

Number two, once again, because the sound effects were in with the mono music, in order to use the original sound effects it would have meant the music would have had to keep going from stereo to mono, to stereo to mono and maybe they would have phasing problems on musical instruments and things. So they decided—since they were going to have stereo music and since they were able to get the dialogue separated successfully—they decided to do all new digitally recorded sound effects. So they recreated all the sound effects and they went to tremendous trouble, but—Some of them were rather well done and others are just wrong. And they overdid it in a few places. The birds are chirping much too loudly in the cemetery scenes; in the original film you're not that aware of them at all. There's a scene in which Gavin

[Elster], the bad guy, pushes his wife off the tower. In the original film you don't hear her body go splat on the roof, but in the new version you do: quite a big thud and a splat. It's most disconcerting. Little things like that. So what I guess I'm saying is, who am I to quibble about this? The critics all loved it. The audiences went to see it and they enjoyed it and it brought new attention to Hitchcock's film, and that was all good. But it just really bothers me that people today are seeing and hearing—particularly hearing—something that just wasn't done by the people who originally did the film. It's a different sound mix with different sound effects and a whole slightly different feel to the film; it isn't the same anymore. Commercially, yes; archivally and artistically, I would say no. I don't really think that you should do that.

SANETT: Well, it also sounds like there's a tension between maintaining historical integrity and meeting perceived—

GITT: There is sometimes—

SANETT: —commercial needs.

GITT: —yes. That's why they colorize films, that's why they stereoize films for home video and that's why this sort of thing happens. That's right. And the other thing, of course, too, about *Vertigo* is that the original negative had begun to fade and the new prints look good. They did the best they could to adjust the printing lights to make it look as close as possible to the way it should look. But the truth is the old, mono, Technicolor prints that still survive from the fifties have slightly better color and they have the original sound, and I would prefer to see the movie that way, you know?

But, anyway.

SANETT: Exactly. I wanted to talk a little bit about where you worked after Dartmouth, but before we go to that, or if we even—

GITT: No.

SANETT: —touch on that this evening, I wanted to ask you if there was anything more you wanted to share about your time at Dartmouth and the time after you graduated?

GITT: Well, I saw a lot of wonderful films there and projected a lot of films and inspected a lot of films and got to program a lot of films. I met a lot of nice people, some of whom went on to have careers in show business or the film industry or the theater or whatever.

SANETT: Such as?

GITT: Well, Michael Moriarty, who became an actor of some note; David Birney; and who else?

SANETT: Oh, *Bridget Loves Bernie*?

GITT: Yes, yes, *Bridget Loves Bernie*, yes. And gosh, I'm drawing a blank here, but there were other people, too, writers and so on. And, of course, there were old alums [alumnus] who used to come back to college, too—I hate that word "alums"—but people who had gone to Dartmouth. Dartmouth had a lot of people in the film industry. For example, Walter Wanger, who was a very important producer—*Stagecoach* and *History is Made at Night* and of course *Joan of Arc*—that I worked on

not too long ago—and, of course, wound up sinking himself with *Cleopatra* in the final years. But he was a producer. He used to come back to Dartmouth and give speeches. I met him and so forth, and he was there. Arthur Hornblow Jr., who was another very good producer, did a lot of good films at Paramount and MGM. He produced *Midnight*, have you ever seen that, with Don Ameche and Claudette Colbert?

That was a lot of fun.

SANETT: No, I didn't.

GITT: Billy Wilder wrote the screenplay, and Charles Brackett—

SANETT: I should see it.

GITT: He sent a print to Dartmouth of that. It was amazing; people used to send prints from the studio libraries and we would keep them for years at a time. We used to run *Midnight* like every couple years. We had the prints just sitting there the whole time I was there.

SANETT: So you must have been developing quite a reputation in the business?

GITT: Yeah, I guess so, up to a point. He also produced *Witness for the Prosecution* by Billy Wilder, *Oklahoma*, just all kinds of big pictures. Robert Ryan, the actor—I'm working on one of his films right now, *God's Little Acre*. We're actually—preserving I think would be the word, rather than restoring— But he was a very fine actor. He was a Dartmouth graduate. There were a lot of people; I can't even think of everybody else. Orton Hicks, who was the vice-president of MGM, had come to Dartmouth and became Dartmouth's vice president. He promoted what was

the Daily Film program, in which Hollywood classic films were run free of charge every day of the week for students just to come and see because it was considered an important thing for people to have. There were no formal courses in film at that time, but you could see these movies.

SANETT: That's wonderful.

GITT: And the local theater there, the Nugget Theatre, ran all the best. It was a very fine small town theater at that time. Of course, it was a college town, but that theater was very fine, too; it had a reputation. For example, when I was an undergraduate at Dartmouth, before I worked there, my first week I remember when I got there in 1959 as a freshman, at the theater, just the first week, the theater— They changed the program every two days, okay? Didn't run weeks at a time, every two days. The first week they ran *The 400 Blows* by François Truffaut, *Wild Strawberries* by Ingmar Bergman, and *North By Northwest* by Alfred Hitchcock. That was the first week.

SANETT: Amazing.

GITT: And that was the kind of programming they did all the time; it was just wonderful. Between that and the Film Society and the Daily Film program, you could just have a wonderful education in movies. That's what happened to my brother and that's what happened to me. And it got me further interested in all these things and it did affect me to this very day.

SANETT: Certainly.

GITT: Also, Joseph Losey, who went to Dartmouth, who was an important director

here, but more important in Britain than here because he was blacklisted in the early 1950s. His career was just taking off and he basically fled to Europe because he was blacklisted. He became a major director of British cinema; films like *The Servant* and *King and Country* and *The Go-Between* and so forth and *Don Giovanni*, which was one of his later films. And he came and— Actually, I did a film series of his films because I realized he had gone to Dartmouth, and a couple of years later he actually came and taught there. We repeated some the same films again. So I met him and worked with him and I quite liked him. He was considered to be very difficult, but I found him very easy. As long as you did your job well and you cared about quality, he got along— He and I got along just fine.

I did a Jean Renoir series that was one of the first in the United States, actually, a major retrospective of his entire career. And I wrote to him at the time and he sent a wonderful letter back, which has actually been reprinted in the book, about his philosophy about what his films are about. It's in a book called *Letters From Jean Renoir* that was published three years ago. And I'm very proud because I'm in the book; he wrote this to me and it's in the book.

SANETT: That's wonderful.

GITT: Yeah, it was.

SANETT: You did this series while you were at Dartmouth?

GITT: Yes, in 1967.

SANETT: How did doing this series or these series come about?

GITT: Well, that's because I was, as I've said, programming the Dartmouth Film Society. See, I had graduated from Dartmouth. David Stewart Hull had left after a couple years, so now I took his place. The Film Society, let's say, could have been completely run by the undergraduates, but it wasn't. I ran it with rather an iron hand, if you will. The undergraduates wrote program notes and they were certainly allowed to make suggestions, but I did the programming, I did the print preparation and projection, I even did the posters and the displays of the films. It was just my thing, my hobby, my life, I suppose. I just enjoyed doing it.

SANETT: Your vision.

GITT: Yeah, I guess. I'm sure if I were an undergraduate I might have resented me a little bit because I was keeping such tight control over everything, but that's what I wanted to do and that's what I did. And we did have a good reputation because we ran 35 millimeter whenever possible. This was in the sixties in a nine hundred seat auditorium. We had a good theatrical 16 millimeter projector—it was called a Hortsen [projector], made in France— and it did have, for 16 millimeter, a good picture.

But we still tried to do 35 millimeter whenever possible. And I had a lot of contacts with private collectors and got a lot of rare, old nitrate prints of classic films.

At that time the auteur theory was very current and so forth, and so we did a lot of director— We did a history of the movies series, but we also did a lot of director tributes and so on. We did Howard Hawks and Alfred Hitchcock, for example, and John Huston, etc., etc. And we did some foreign directors, too. So it was nice to

be able to see these great films in beautiful prints. That's something we prided ourselves on.

And that brought the Film Society, and, in a sense, me, a little bit to some people's attention out there in the field. That's ultimately how I got to leave Dartmouth and go the American Film Institute [AFI], because one of the people who used to come to Dartmouth was David Shepard, who at that time was teaching film at, I think, State College, Pennsylvania. And he got a job with the American Film Institute because he was very knowledgeable about film history and so on, and he was a kind of the budding archivist, if you will. He went to work in the archival department of the American Film Institute, just after the Film Institute was first formed, under Sam Kula—who is still in the field today, by the way. I just saw Sam a couple of weeks ago at a meeting. It's amazing; he hasn't changed a bit either. But he was one of my first bosses, actually—he and David Shepard. But David used to come to Dartmouth, and he had a quite an extensive film collection, private collection, of classic films. And we would program a lot of his films and he would lecture on some occasions and so forth. He liked what we were doing and thought well of it. Bill Pence—who's now at Dartmouth interestingly enough, and who at that time had not yet started the Telluride Film Festival, but was with Janus Films— He had some rare prints of a few things and he used to come to Dartmouth, too. So through contacts like that— And I met Kevin Brownlow through David Shepard.

Kevin and David invited me to come to Washington, D.C. and interview for a

job at the American Film Institute, and I did in the Christmas of 1969, I guess it was. And then there was an embarrassing problem because the budget was slashed, of the AFI, and they didn't want to give me the bad news that the job I had interviewed for was suddenly— Apparently, there was no money for it.

SANETT: Oh, boy.

GITT: So I was kept in the dark. And I was really beginning to feel very strange because I didn't know if I was going to be staying at Dartmouth or leaving at any time. I didn't know what to tell people and I didn't know what to do. So in the beginning of 1970, the first six months, I was just like this because I was still very actively involved in all these things but I didn't know what was going to happen. And finally what happened was the job that I had applied for— They were never able to revive it, but another job came along, not in the archives, but in the theater. They needed somebody to supervise the projection, to book the prints and to just generally help out the theater manager because they were starting the AFI Theater. Michael Webb was the person who had been brought over from England to do that, and so they hired me to do that. So in June in 1970 I left Dartmouth and went to Washington to work for the American Film Institute.

SANETT: And what was your job title at that time?

GITT: Well, it became technical officer after a couple of years, but I think my first job was film booking manager. I was responsible for booking all of the prints, finding the prints. You know, a series would be conceived and whatever, and I would have to

find the best prints from archives around the world or from distributors or whatever—or private collectors in some cases.

SANETT: So you used a lot of your contacts—

GITT: Yes, that's right.

SANETT: —from before.

GITT: And I also helped to put in projection equipment, and I was responsible for the technical— If the quality of the picture and the sound— And supervising the projectionists, and oh, boy, that was a little rough.

SANETT: Why?

GITT: We had a couple of very nice projectionists from the Washington union who were really neat and were easy to get along with, and we had a couple of really crotchety, difficult, old— Wow, I don't know what you want to call them, but [laughs] they were definitely a handful. A couple of them had chips on their shoulders and I had my hands full. I was pretty young, still, to be supervising these old guys who were old enough to be my grandfather. That wasn't so easy.

SANETT: What did they want to do that led to some of these conflicts?

GITT: Well, the people who were good, cared. They were easygoing and they cared about doing a good job. They didn't make trouble. If the picture went a little out of focus and you said, "Excuse me, could you touch up the focus?" they would do it, you know? Or if the sound needed to be a little louder, they'd do it. The people who were difficult were— There was one guy who—I don't want to speak ill of anybody,

but he got the job— This is understandable I guess, but the job was awarded by the local union on the basis of seniority, not on the basis of who wanted to do it or who was best qualified to do it. The fiction, of course, was that everybody in the union was equally qualified. That was the stance that they took, understandably, but it wasn't true, of course. So this guy was not very good at focusing, not very good at framing, not very good at maintaining the projectors. He had a wooden leg, not that that should be held against him, but he was not able to get around very well. Plus, he was in a fairly bad frame of mind most of the time. And there was a fire one time at the AFI Theater because he had removed some of the safety equipment from the projector that would have prevented the fire.

SANETT: Oh, my.

GITT: When the fire happened, it was the last reel of *The Lady from Shanghai* by Orson Welles, during the mirror scene. Have you seen the movie? There's this great climax where Everett Sloane and Rita Hayworth and Orson Welles are all battling it out in the fun house mirrors with mirrors crashing all around and some people firing guns and— Anyway, during that sequence, a splice broke in the projector—it was a nitrate print— and the fire raced up and set the entire rest of the reel in the upper film magazine ablaze. It blew the magazine door open, it singed the loudspeaker off the wall and it melted the magnetic penthouse on the projector. This was because there was a trip mechanism on the projector that when the film stops for any reason, because of the buildup— When the film stops, it begins to build up and puts pressure on a trip

which closes a fire shutter in the projector. Well, he thought it was too much trouble to thread around this thing, so he took it out.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: Well, he shouldn't have done that, but he took it out. So we had a fire.

Well, what did he do? You're supposed to turn the house lights on, help the audience get out safely, and the fire regulations required that there be drop shutters on the portholes. These actually have links on them, and some of them did drop because they melted from the flames later, but you're supposed— There's a lever, and you're supposed to drop them all. The idea is to prevent the audience from panicking, because [when] you have an audience of 150 people outside and they look back and they see flames in the projection booth, people can begin—

SANETT: They're going to get upset.

GITT: —trampling each other or screaming, whatever. Well, he didn't do that, he didn't turn the house lights on. He hobbled out and saved himself, basically, and everybody else had to stagger out in the dark with the flames in the back and everything. Fortunately no one was hurt, thank God.

SANETT: That's amazing.

GITT: It was amazing. And the thing was, the architects who built the AFI Theater— It was supposed to be a temporary theater only—behind the scenes backstage at the Eisenhower Theater—for a couple of years at most until the real theater could be built. Well, the real theater never got built, so this temporary

theater— There was a new firm of architects that George Stevens Jr.—I'm getting ahead of myself—was excited about. Hardy, Holtzman, Pfeiffer [Associates, LLP] was the name of the outfit. Well, they've since become very well known; in fact, they designed the modern improvements to the Los Angeles County Museum [LACMA] a few years ago. They're quite well known architects, but they had never done a theater before; this was their first movie theater. They didn't completely know what they were doing at that time, so the theater was like bleachers seating, but for some weird reason, the steps as you would go down the aisle they, for artistic reasons, they made the steps different widths. So some of them were that wide, some of them were this wide, so can you imagine—

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: —people used to fall down all the time when they would go to the AFI Theater because every step was a different width. So imagine people in the dark, with the film on fire, trying to get out of the theater. It's amazing that they got out okay.
[laughs]

SANETT: It's truly amazing.

GITT: Yeah, yeah.

SANETT: So what happened to him?

GITT: I don't know. He eventually retired. His name was Sidney—I can't remember his last name right now. There was a very nice guy named Carl Baldwin. I think these people are all probably all dead by now, I don't know. Carl was really

nice. He was an older guy too, but he was just really nice and good. There's another guy whose name escapes me who was very difficult, who had a real— He was very bright and he resented the fact that— He assumed that people thought that he wasn't bright because he was a movie projectionist, which isn't a correct thing to think anyway.

I've met all kinds of projectionists, some of whom were very conscientious and very bright and very good and some who were really dumb and stupid; you meet all kinds. But he had this feeling that people were looking down on him, which wasn't true, but he was very, very difficult and sensitive and basically had a chip on his shoulder. I'm sorry, I think I'm maybe mentally blocking his name out right now because he's the one I had the most trouble with.

SANETT: So at the AFI Theater, who was the audience, generally?

GITT: That's a good question. It wasn't as big an audience as they hoped for, I'll tell you that. When we first opened the AFI Theater, it was an underground— There was a failed movie house at a place called L'Enfant Plaza in southwest Washington, not too far from the Jefferson Memorial, in a part of town people generally— Not at the Jefferson Memorial, but like behind it, kind of. People just didn't go over there; it wasn't in a particularly good neighborhood or anything. There was this very modernistic, rather staid, cold, futuristic architectural building development there—office buildings with insurance companies in them and banks and things. Underground— No daylight ever penetrated down there; it was like this eerie light. If you were standing in the lobby of the AFI Theater looking out the glass doors in the

front, there was this constant fluorescent, eerie light. Day and night—it always looked the same. It wasn't a very— The theater itself was okay; it had a kind of purple decor and modernistic light bulbs and things. It was a good theater, but the location—and underground and the whole thing, we just— Sometimes we got decent houses—three hundred people, four hundred people—but it was a nine hundred seat house and as a commercial movie house it was a failure. And the AFI tried to make a go of it. So that's when we moved to the [John F.] Kennedy Center [for the Performing Arts] a couple of years later—and into a much smaller theater which was somewhat more successful.

I suppose students from local colleges would come and older people—it's hard to say. In those days there was a great deal more interest in old movies than there is today, particularly on the part of young people.

When I was in college, and afterwards when I worked at Dartmouth, there was a tremendous enthusiasm about movies—or cinema, as it was sometimes called—foreign films, classic American films. It was considered an exciting part of one's education. People flocked to them and they learned about them and they saw them and they talked about them and they were quite passionate about them. Of course, the New Wave was going at that time and a lot of good things coming out of countries all over the world and so on. Today when I go back to Dartmouth—I've been back a couple times recently—the interest just isn't there anymore. It's very sad to see. There are a lot of other wonderful things going on—

SANETT: Is there a film program there now?

GITT: Yes, there is. Bill Pence is doing it, and it's a good film program. In fact, when I was there, Mike Leigh, the director of *Topsy-Turvy* was there with *Topsy-Turvy*.

Did they have a full house? No. Were there very many students there? No.

Were there townspeople and professors? Yes. Faculty and so forth were there and some students, but not a lot. The truth is, the kinds of programs that are presented now, in my day they would have been sell-out crowds, or there certainly would have been hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people there. But today, you know—I did a presentation at Dartmouth, actually, on the history of color, which was pretty interesting.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: And it was the same people who used to come to the Film Society when I was there twenty-five years earlier, it was the same— There's something about New Hampshire that keeps these college professors alive until they're very, very elderly [mutual laughter], because the same people that I used to have classes with [who] I thought were old in 1960, here they were in 1980s and 1990s still going strong. Well, they all came out for it, but except for a couple people there because they had to usher for the Film Society— Even the Film Society people didn't come to it. And when I was there in the sixties, something like this would have gotten at least three hundred or four hundred people to attend, and I got maybe thirty people, forty people, something like that.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: It was very disappointing, yeah. And Mike Leigh, *Topsy-Turvy*, I think they had maybe three hundred people or something in a nine-hundred-seat auditorium. We would have filled the place back in the sixties, because— Particularly [if] somebody as important as Mike Leigh would actually be there, I mean, good heavens. You know, they just don't have the interest anymore. It's because of the Internet, it's because of video games, it's because of just all kinds of changes in what people are interested in today. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but I am a little nostalgic for the way people used to feel about—

SANETT: Of course.

GITT: —the films. I hope it comes back again someday. Perhaps it never will. So many people today just look at films as just something like on TV that you do, and you leave it and go to the kitchen or come back. Or you just look at the sound bites. I think a lot of people just know "Rosebud" from *Citizen Kane* and they think they know *Citizen Kane* because they've seen one little clip and they can quote it at cocktail parties or something. But that doesn't mean anything.

SANETT: No, it's a whole body of work.

GITT: That's right.

SANETT: I have a note that when you were at AFI you worked on *Lost Horizon*?

GITT: Well, yes, that's when I got into— Maybe we should save that—I'm getting a little tired— See, I gravitated—I think is the right word—from the AFI Theater, from

booking the prints, from supervising the projection, putting in the equipment—I helped to put in the equipment behind the Eisenhower Theater, although a lot of what we had to do was not what I wanted to do. We were given a tiny projection booth, like a broom closet. It was impossible to do anything in there—I'll tell you about that—But, anyway, I gravitated, at a certain point, more and more to the archive, to the preservation and restoration of films, which is what I originally wanted to do when they first interviewed me.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: That happened between 1972 and '75, let's say. I had been there about two years, and I began— And the very first thing I that worked on was *Foolish Wives* with Professor Arthur Lennig of the [State] University [of New York] at Albany at that time. He is the person that actually discovered that an Italian print from one the archives in Italy of Erich von Stroheim's film *Foolish Wives*, though short, had some scenes that the American print did not have—the American print at the Museum of Modern Art. And he also discovered that the print that everybody had been seeing at the Museum of Modern Art was not even very authentic in the sense that it was— Apparently in the early days of sound, the studio, Universal, had thought of reissuing the movie with a musical score. And for some reason they had somebody rewrite all of the titles and new title cards. They changed the names of the characters and they changed the order of the scenes around, so it became a different movie.

SANETT: My goodness.

GITT: So Arthur Lennig noticed this. He got the Museum to cooperate and he got the Italian archive to cooperate. They all sent the material down to Washington, and then they asked me, since they knew I could put prints together and things, to work with him. I basically did the editing and just the technical work, really. He did the decision-making, but in a sense I was helping him. And that was the first— And that led directly—we can talk about it next time—into my beginning to work on projects for the archive and finally completely leaving the theater and working just for the archives at the AFI..

SANETT: Then that sounds like this would be a good place—

GITT: I think this is a good place, yes.

SANETT: —to stop. Okay, thank you.

TAPE NUMBER III, SIDE ONE

MAY 16, 2000

SANETT: Last time we spoke about your work at the AFI [American Film Institute], prior to you coming to work at the UCLA Film and [Television] Archive. I want to ask you about the work on the movie *Lost Horizon*, but before we get to that, is there anything that you want me to know, aside from that, about your work at AFI?

GITT: It's hard to get into it since the last time we talked. Let's see— The AFI was certainly a good experience for me to have because it got me to a big city—to Washington, D.C.—and out of New Hampshire and Pennsylvania and so on. It was a stepping stone, certainly, to coming out here, and so I don't regret it at all. And there were a lot of very good people working there and a lot of pleasant experiences. There were some, of course, negative things as well. I mean, no organization is perfect. The AFI— Despite the staff being mostly young and enthusiastic and talented and really good, there was a certain gulf, I'd say, between the staff and the higher level management of the AFI and the board of AFI, which was very, kind of, elitist—film industry leaders and Washington socialites and Washington political leaders and so on.

And I think there was a great deal of bitterness on the part of the staff during the period that I was there, 1970 to '75. There were always budgetary problems and peoples' programs were always being cut back and yet there always seemed to be money to have cocktail parties with Washington socialites and so on. There was a general feeling that the AFI was more concerned with perpetuating itself as an

organization and putting on social events and also that, as I said, the higher levels of management, to a certain degree, did not get along that well with the staff; didn't care to hear what the staff thought and so on. I don't know how fair these assessments were, but I do know that while I was there a lot of people gradually left the AFI, and I finally left the AFI. And Tony [Anthony Slide], whom you've met, who I met at AFI— that's where we first met. That was twenty-eight years ago, so we've been friends ever since. So that's very nice—

SANETT: That's wonderful.

GITT: Something very nice that happened in Washington in 1972, I think it was, when I met Tony. When I first started working there I was working pretty much in the theater with Michael Webb, who was— How can I put it? Michael was a character. Michael was very, very hard-working, very ambitious—but very ambitious for Michael, of course—and rather difficult to work for. He was very, very much centered on what he wanted you to do in the job and so on. Everything else took second place—your health, whether you were working too much, whether you were about to have a nervous breakdown or whatever. It was pretty hectic the first couple of years working for the AFI Theater with the projectionist and booking the prints and trying to get the technical stuff right and so on.

David Shepard, who had gotten me down to AFI initially, supposedly to work in the archive— But then the job fell through and they had budget cutbacks. By the time I actually got into the archives with *Foolish Wives* and then with *Lost Horizon* and

so forth, he had left and Dr. Lawrence [Larry] Karr had taken over. In a sense, David Shepard was very important in my life because he got me out of New Hampshire and got me down to AFI and shared his enthusiasm for film collecting and old movies and so on. Larry Karr was another kind of person altogether. He was also very influential, in a good way, on me, but very different from David Shepard. David was of the earlier, old school of people who kind of play a little fast and loose with things. In the early days of the AFI, films that were acquired by David and by other people for the collection at the Library of Congress— There was a lot of copying going on—let us say—for private collectors and so on.

Now at that time, just to set this in the right context, the movie industry in the early 1970s was showing little or no interest in their old films; they weren't taking care of them, they were not really profiting from them very much. Yes, some of them were being shown on television, but that was about it. They didn't even consider that to be all that big a deal.

I do remember the feeling we had when I first went to the AFI— In the early seventies it was a few private collectors and a few enthusiasts and a few people working here and there in archives and at places like the AFI who really cared about these old movies. If some of the things got copied on the side on 16 millimeter—where negatives were made and went out to collectors, well, that's fine. The people who loved the films and cared about them were getting to see them, were getting to show them and look at them. The studios were kind of like the distant

enemy out there a little bit. Not to the upper management of the AFI—don't get me wrong—they were very much Hollywood-oriented, but to the staff and to a lot of people— In those days there was a gulf between the studios, and at that time the studios began, in some cases— Within a few years they were sending the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] out to seize film collections from private collectors; they were being most unpleasant. There was a suspicion between Hollywood and the archives at that time and vice versa. The archives' feeling was that Hollywood wasn't taking care of its old films, and if we didn't do it and if the private collectors who loved the movies didn't treasure them and take care of them and show them, that nobody would see them, nobody would take care of them and they would all vanish.

Well, that's completely changed—as you know, in recent years, I'm happy to say—for the good. And now, today, the archives and the studios work very closely together. The studios now do see the need to preserve their old film libraries. They're doing it on their own in many cases now, spending a lot of money. There's actually a certain amount of cooperation and trust, even with private collectors today, because in some cases private collectors have come forward with old prints that had stereo soundtracks. When the studio hasn't kept the stereo master soundtrack for a picture like *Rebel Without a Cause* or *East of Eden*, they've actually turned to the private— And they understand that these people love the films and collected them not to make money with them, but just because they wanted to show them to their friends and keep them and have them. So in that sense there's been a wonderful turnaround.

The whole mutual suspicion and some of the questionably unethical things that were going on, on both sides, back in the early seventies have all evolved into a more professional relationship—a good relationship where the archives respect the rights of the studios and the studios respect the archives and even the collectors. I think today the situation is far healthier than it was. But in the early seventies there was a lot of kind of little stuff going on—particularly silent movies and things were getting kind of copied and so on.

When Larry Karr came in he basically put a stop to this. His feeling was, we're professional archivists, we've got to go by the rules. By all means let's get these films in, let's collect the films, but let's collect them for the Library of Congress, for the AFI. When people would say to him, "Aren't you a film collector?", he'd say, "No, I have ten thousand films that we've gotten together. That's my film collection here, at the Library of Congress and AFI." He kind of turned around my thinking on this a little bit. I realized that I had started out as a film collector and enthusiast, partly encouraged by David Shepard when I was back at Dartmouth, but I began realizing that here I was at the AFI and I was still collecting films from film dealers who had gotten them from God knows where, usually from— When films were sent out to be junked, some employee would be bribed with fifty dollars or somebody would cut through the wire fence at night and go in and steal the films out of the barrels or whatever. And I never did anything like that, God knows, and I wouldn't, but I would pay \$50 or a \$100 or whatever to some middleman and collect films. Well, I began realizing that this

really wasn't that ethical or the right thing to do, particularly if you're working in a public archive. And so by the time I had left AFI, I basically had stopped film collecting. And that was largely as a result of Larry instilling that sense of ethics, I think, and that was very good.

Larry I thought very highly of; he was very careful, he was very meticulous. He's the person who got the *Lost Horizon* project started, actually. It's to Larry's credit. I didn't come up with it, he did, and he did a lot of work and he did a lot of the research at archives around the world trying to find what material there was and call it all in. So I'll always be grateful for that, too.

The sad thing about Larry was, he was very bright. He and his wife, Kathy Karr both were. [They] came in together. He was not liked by some of the people higher up. There was one particular person, Richard Carleton, who had been hired as a sort of business manager of the AFI, but actually was called a deputy director—I believe was his title. He and Larry just didn't get along; he did not care for Larry at all. He and I got along all right, but Larry he just didn't like at all and he did everything he could to make it unpleasant as possible and to sort of demean and ultimately get rid of him, which is indeed what happened. Larry finally left and went on to other opportunities and so on. One of the things that Richard Carleton, whom I personally liked okay, but other people found him a bit cold and businesslike—and perhaps he was, I don't know—I liked him all right, but one thing he did do that I don't like—He was brought in to administer the archives department. Instead of

continuing to let Larry Karr do it, who was doing just fine, he brought in, I guess, an old friend of his or something. A guy from, I think, public television by the name of—this is the kind of stuff, by the way, why I want a legal agreement so I don't get in trouble—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —by the name of Dan Rose. I don't know anything about Dan Rose except my working with him for about a year and a half or so. But he is largely the reason that Tony and I quit AFI and I came out here with the idea of getting a job at UCLA, because it was so demoralizing to work for this department with this guy in charge because he knew nothing about film history at all and he couldn't have cared less about it. In addition to all these things he was really not a terribly bright person, not a very cultured person. He was kind of a vulgar person who was just an unpleasant person to work for and not anyone that you could respect.

And the problem—and I'll get off the topic now— But the problem at the AFI at that time— I remember Richard Carleton said to me—and this is an attitude that a lot of places have today, in fact it's much more prevalent now even than it was in the seventies— He had come from Translux Theaters in New York where he was a businessman. He said, "Give me any department, any part of AFI, and I can master it within three months. I don't need to have any background, any training, I can master it." That was his attitude, and he felt comfortable with people like Dan Rose, who knew nothing, to run the archives department. Larry Karr knew a hell of a lot more

than Richard Carleton did and that made him uncomfortable, so he got rid of him and he brought in this jerk—pardon me, which he was—to run the department. So Tony and I left and moved out to California because we just had enough of this. It was just very demoralizing; a lot of other people left.

SANETT: What was Tony's position at AFI?

GITT: Tony actually was in the archives, and I believe he was the associate archivist.

He was under Larry Karr and then, I believe, under Dan Rose—we both were. And I had moved into the archives at that point. I was kind of like a technical person. My title actually was technical officer of the American Film Institute at that time, because I did still supervise the projection, but I was also working on the technical side of the film restoration stuff. So I had a pretty nice job and the salary was pretty good for that time. It doesn't sound like much today, believe me, with inflation being what it is, but I was doing pretty well. I took a big salary cut to move to California, but I had visited—we'll go to *Lost Horizon* in a minute—David Shepard, actually, who was still with AFI in 1972, invited me to come out and do some work for the AFI: go around to the studios and do some research and interview some of the old executives and try to find out what films they had and so on. So I came out here in July, I think it was, of 1972. That was my first visit ever to the West Coast and to California. I immediately liked it a lot. I even liked the smell of eucalyptus trees—even the smog. I mean, everything was so— The palm trees— Everything was so different and I wanted to move out here. I really liked it a lot. At that time the AFI had a West

Coast branch on the Doheny Mansion in Beverly Hills, which was like a big country club and it was beautiful but— And that was even more bureaucratic than the AFI in Washington. If you wanted to use the telephone—it was locked up—you had to go get permission to get a key from somebody. If you wanted to xerox a piece of paper, it was all locked up and behind the locked door. Coming from the Washington [D.C.] office, it was even more bureaucratic and even more of a problem. But, anyway, I did do some research out here, I did interview some people at studios—and go talk about films and stuff.

I stayed here for three weeks and really liked it and I decided that I really wanted to come out here. Of course, AFI didn't have a job for me out here because the theater and the archives were all in Washington, D.C. and so that would be where I would have to stay. Well, Tony had come out too. Actually, he had originally been out here. I think when he first came to America he was doing research on the West Coast and was working with AFI out here, so he had already been to California and he knew that he liked it too. So when these things got so unpleasant at AFI in Washington, we just finally decided that we were just going to move out here.

Fortunately I had a friend that I'd met through David Shepard named Richard Simonton Jr. His father, Richard Simonton Sr., was the president of Muzak of Southern California—very wealthy. He lived in Toluca Lake [California], near Bob Hope and everything. He had a lovely home with theater projectors set up in the basement, a screening room with a screen and organ. He actually had the

Paramount [Pictures] studio Mighty Wurlitzer organ. He was—

SANETT: Could he play it?

GITT: Yes. He was very active in the theater organ society—I think it's called, or the Theater Organ Society of America. I don't know the exact name of it, but he was very interested in music of all kinds—of course, Muzak—and movies. And he had two sons, Robert and Richard, and at least one daughter. But, anyway, I knew Richard Simonton, Jr. the best because he was so interested in old movies that he not only had his father's projector set up where they would run movies all the time, he also bought film printing machinery and put it in his garage—this is at their home in Toluca Lake—and did some work for the AFI—for David Shepard and then for Larry Karr and for me. When I first came to UCLA and we began preserving old movies, I did give some of the work to Richard Simonton because he was very meticulous and very careful, and, at that time, was one of the best places to go to carefully and meticulously print old, shrunken, brittle film—particularly silent film and so on.

SANETT: Excellent.

GITT: So, anyway, I visited Richard Simonton out here. I had been to some of his screenings. He was quite good friends with Bob [Robert F.] Epstein, who was one of the co-founders of the UCLA Archive. Actually, [he] had a deal—which I'll tell you about later—where he and his father could borrow nitrate prints from UCLA's collection and screen them on Saturday nights for their guests. And I actually saw some of the prints from UCLA at these Saturday night screenings.

SANETT: Oh, is that funny.

GITT: They were gorgeous. They were absolutely gorgeous.

SANETT: Yeah.

GITT: Films that I later preserved, actually, and copied, I saw being projected.

They were very careful with them. They never had a fire, they never had a problem, they were professional about it, they were very careful, but the truth is, in theory, you shouldn't have been doing something like that.

SANETT: No.

GITT: This is in the seventies though; things were a little more lax back then—and I'll tell you all about that later. But what I was getting at was, by visiting Richard Simonton and by seeing, without fully realizing it, that these were UCLA nitrate prints and enjoying these wonderful little Paramount films and [20th Century] Fox films from UCLA's collection on the— See, after that initial summer, every summer I made a point to vacation in California, so I went out for two or three or four weeks. So in 1973, '74 and '75 I went back to California each year. Did a little work for the AFI and then—

SANETT: Vacations?

GITT: —went to these screenings and met people and so on.

SANETT: Excellent.

GITT: Well, anyway, one of the people he wanted me to meet was Bob Epstein, who I did know a little bit on the telephone because he had called up from time to time to

borrow things from AFI, but I had never met him. So Richard Simonton took me out to the campus, to room 1438 Melnitz Hall, which is where the archive was located. It was just all in one room at that time. I liked Bob Epstein very much and I liked the feeling that he had film piled floor to ceiling. They were doing the shipping out of the room. Nitrate film everywhere, he didn't worry about it. Just to see his enthusiasm and to see the kind of collection they were amassing and everything, I decided that if I moved to California, it would be nice to work for UCLA. That's sort of what I set my heart on. So after Tony and I decided we had had enough of Dan Rose and enough of the AFI, we decided to move out here. Of course, I immediately wanted to apply for a job at UCLA, but I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: I did not get it immediately, obviously. I had to wait a year and a half, actually, to get my foot in the door finally. I took a huge salary cut to do it, but I was glad I did it.

SANETT: So you moved out here actually with no job?

GITT: I moved out here with only a vague promise of a job by Ralph Sargent of Film Technology Company. Ralph knew David Shepard, he knew Larry Karr, and he knew everybody as well and so on, and probably Rob— Yeah, he knew Richard Simonton's father and Richard Simonton— And he was an organ enthusiast as well. Plus, he had his own film lab that was doing high quality work for the AFI at that time.

Ralph's lab, in the early seventies, was the best lab to go to for careful printing of old

films. They were ahead of everybody else in the early seventies. When I told Ralph I was moving to California, which I had just decided to do, he said, "Come and see me in January and we'll give you a job." Well, he did. I worked there for a year and a half, and I can tell you a little bit about that too. I learned a little bit about film printing and further about editing and restoration and so on. But we're getting ahead because you wanted to talk about when I was back at AFI and starting to work on *Lost Horizon*?

SANETT: Right. And before you were working on *Lost Horizon*, if we could just take a half a step back—

GITT: Oh, okay.

SANETT: —because somebody who may listen to this may not actually know about AFI, that it means American Film Institute and I was wondering— Because you connected it with the Library of Congress—

GITT: Which it was in the early years, in certain ways, yes.

SANETT: Could you talk a little bit about maybe what its mission was—how films were selected for preservation and what its connection was with the Library of Congress?

GITT: Well, the AFI—the American Film Institute—was originally, unless I'm mistaken— Now here, I'm talking sort of as an expert, but I'm doing it from my memory and I may be getting some of this wrong, so it's obvious that anyone listening to this should check into the facts and get it correct.

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: But back before the middle of the 1960s, on the whole, film was not considered a proper subject for academics to spend any time on. Yes, there was a film program at NYU [New York University], yes, USC [University of Southern California] had one, and I guess UCLA had one, but on the whole, most Ivy League schools, most other major schools, and most state schools around the country just didn't have film programs. They had film societies, they had film clubs and so on, but it was not a serious thing. There was a conference at Dartmouth [College], I think around 1965 or '66, of educators from all over the country. At this conference it was proposed that film become recognized as an art form and begin being taught in colleges and even in high schools and that educators begin finding out about film history, about different techniques of making film, about film directors, about different countries though the years that have made films and so on, and to teach this to create an appreciation of film.

SANETT: Did you attend the conference?

GITT: Yes, I did. And, of course, I projected a lot of things because I was a projectionist at Dartmouth, among other things, at that time.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: I think a man named, is it David Stewart, I'm sorry I'm getting it mixed up, but somebody— It was the National Endowment for the Arts or the National— That kind of put this conference on. But George Stevens Jr. was there from the USIA [United States Information Agency]. Pauline Kael came. I remember that. People

from UCLA came. Gary Essert, who later founded Filmex, who was a UCLA student at that time, he came. A lot of people were involved. David Stewart Hull, of course, at that time—I mentioned earlier—[was] at Dartmouth, who did the film programming there, he was involved in it. There were a lot of meetings, a lot of screenings. David Shepard was there and so on. And a lot of enthusiasm was generated. One of the outgrowths of this conference at Dartmouth not only was the beginnings of film courses at colleges all over the country, but at that conference it was proposed that there be an American Film Institute, along the lines of the British Film Institute, which had gone back many years, probably founded fifty years earlier in— I don't know exactly when, either the late twenties or the early thirties, but it's a very old organization. So George Stevens Jr. got the thing organized and got whatever legislation needed to be passed and whatever governmental approvals and so on.

Finally—I think around 1969, unless I'm mistaken—they began the American Film Institute with very high hopes. They had an education department which was supposed to do publications and help with teachers, I guess, and prepare study guides and so on. They had the catalog, which was a wonderful thing, to finally do the research and put down all the information about American films, short subjects, newrseels, feature films. The archive— The idea with that was to gather in—like gathering in the sheep or whatever—gather in all the lost films out there. Find out what films no longer seemed to have survived or that there weren't good copies of, and go out among private collectors and get them in. At that time AFI did work with

the Library of Congress to get them into the National Collection at the Library of Congress. Work with the studios; work with people like Mary Pickford—who was still alive—and the Cecil B. DeMille estate and Harold Lloyd, whatever. Talk to all these people and try to bring these negatives and prints in. And during the first year and a half or so, with Sam Kula and David Shepard working there, they did get an awful lot of stuff in. They signed an agreement with United Artists to bring in a huge amount of Warner Bros. movies, they got a lot of things from Columbia [Pictures], they got all kinds of stuff into the Library of Congress. So that was a very important program.

Then, of course, there was the AFI Theater. The idea was to have a national showcase of great movies of the past and present and have directors talk and that was to be done. And when I first arrived, that had just opened. I was involved in that, in the projection part of it and the film booking part of it.

SANETT: AFI was funded then by the National Endowment for the Arts?

GITT: My recollection is— Now, once again, excuse me if I'm wrong. I believe the funding pretty much came from the National Endowment for the Arts. That's correct. Maybe there was some other money from other parts of the government. It's actually a non-governmental, private organization, but obviously very much associated with the National Endowment and the government and so on.

So it started with very high hopes, and they had some very good people working there, no question about it. And actually, I must say, George Stevens himself was actually a very

talented and very good person. He was a bit of an elitist in a way. He was a nice fellow, but he did like surrounding himself with important people and so on. I don't know whether he is to blame for the fact that the Film Institute became such an unpleasant place to work. I suppose so. I don't want to make him sound all bad. He was a talented person and he brought a lot to the place. I didn't feel bitter about him at all; I liked him okay. You know, he's the head of the whole organization, but he would ask me to work on certain things some times. David Shepard told me one time—I don't know if this is very good or not, I'm not sure what it means exactly—but George Stevens said to David Shepard one time about me, "I like Bob Gitt. He's easy to work with in a difficult sort of way."

SANETT: [laughs].

GITT: Which is probably true; I am easy to work with in a difficult sort of way.

SANETT: Coming from him I would take that as—

GITT: I guess—

SANETT: —a compliment.

GITT: —it was a compliment. I think it was. But there's some truth in it, too. I mean, I probably wasn't always easy to work with, but he did appreciate what I did— And when the AFI Theater was put in, he was very appreciative and I got a raise and all of that. The darned theater was only supposed to be temporary for a year or two and it was not built to last. It finally lasted over 25 years.

SANETT: How were films chosen to be worked on or to be acquired?

GITT: When I first worked there, and even after I joined the archives, I would have

to say I did not participate at that time in deciding what to acquire. That was done by, initially, Sam Kula, then David Shepard, then Larry Karr. And Tony was involved in that somewhat as well, because he was the associate archivist. I was more of a film restorationist, technical sort of editor-type person. So I didn't really decide what to acquire exactly, but I think they were interested in, as I said, getting in huge libraries of film from the different Hollywood studios. It was to be American film, but [including] independent film—newsreels, and experimental films and underground films—I mean, anything that was made in this country. The feeling was it was their mission to try to help get the stuff. Now, naturally, there is some rivalry, of course, when you have a big, new institution. You already had the Museum of Modern Art [Film Library] trying to do the same thing—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —you already had George Eastman House International Museum of Photography [and Film] in Rochester [New York] trying to do the same thing. So there was obviously a little bit of rivalry there, but it all kind of worked out pretty well.

I mean, everybody was working there and so on, on the whole. And that's still true today, I think. There's so much work to be done, there's plenty to go around and nobody needs to feel a real rivalry. Although, of course, there is a little bit of rivalry—

SANETT: Anyway.

GITT: Yeah, there always is, of course.

SANETT: What was the connection with the Library of Congress in terms of perhaps sharing prints or doing work? Was there one?

GITT: You'd have to ask somebody more knowledgeable about it. I do know there were different relationships through the years. There was a period in the early years when the Library did not have its own laboratory and the work had to be done by commercial labs in Washington, D.C. Indeed, some of the early things that I worked on, particularly *Foolish Wives*, but I think to a certain degree even other films leading up to *Lost Horizon*, had to be done at Capitol Film Lab in Washington, which was a professional lab, but a very limited lab. At that time they were set up to print new films, not old ones. They didn't really handle shrinkage very well. If the film was shrunken, you got a blurry image on the screen on your new copy or a slightly unsteady image. If they printed the soundtrack, it might have come out too light or too dark or distorted or hissy or whatever. Those were not ideal. And they tended to have a fixed contrast in all of their prints. The gamma was fixed, which meant no leeway. No matter what you started with, you wound up— They made the prints all at the same gamma, a rather high gamma. So *Foolish Wives*—looking back now, the work that we did at that time—looks pretty awful. It looks like a Xerox actually, some of the early *Foolish Wives* material. It has since been redone better by the Library of Congress, but what we did at that time—

But we were told this is it. "You want these old movies? All right, they're a little unsteady, a little blurry, the contrast is a little high. Well, that's the way these

old movies look. They weren't very well photographed and—" I knew better than that. But as far as getting the labs to do anything better, that was just it. "We don't change our contrast, that's it. You put it in, it's printed, and this is the way it comes out." Well, that was the feeling.

That's why when Ralph Sargent formed Film Technology and began being willing to vary the contrast of the negative, willing to vary the contrast of the prints, step-contact printing a frame at a time, registering to keep the image sharp and steady, you see? It was wonderful; it was like a revelation. That's when we all got excited. That was just happening at the time that I started working in the film preservation part of it—a little after *Foolish Wives*, but before *Lost Horizon*.

SANETT: So the films that you were working on from the Library of Congress, were those copyright prints?

GITT: On the whole, no. The Library of Congress did have a very large collection of copyright prints, but not nearly as large as we all wish it had been. As you probably know, from the 1890s through 1912 they collected paper rolls of vast numbers of films that were submitted for copyright. They were copyrighted as photographs, as though this single roll of frames, if you spread it out, was like a single photograph of a movie being copyrighted. Some of the early film studios literally copied their negatives on paper rolls and deposited them. And as you know, the nitrate negatives and prints in most cases completely deteriorated, so the paper now, thank God, is there. Other studios, unfortunately, saved money or maybe just had a

different policy. They would take just the three or four frames of each shot and then photograph it on paper, and then staple all these pieces of paper together so you'd only have just a few little frames of each shot, unfortunately. So some of the films survived that way.

In 1912, I guess, Congress—or the Library Management or whatever—decided to stop— They were beginning to run out of storage space, I guess.

They decided to stop requiring this. So people could send films in for copyright and the films were then returned. So from 1912 to 1942, the Library collected no films at all apparently—if I understand correctly.

Then during World War II they had a change of heart again. They decided to begin accepting films for copyright once again. But, number one, the people running the Library at that time had kind of—how can I put it—unusual tastes or maybe just very ordinary tastes. For example, a film like the *Magnificent Ambersons* by Orson Welles probably wouldn't have been selected, but the latest Betty Grable musical would be.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: In the early years of the Library, during World War II, the people making the selections liked Betty Grable musicals and big popular glossy pictures, but the artistic kinds of pictures generally weren't collected quite as much. That changed over the years, of course, and eventually they began getting more and more things in, but— So the Library's collection from World War II is kind of spotty. There are some very

good films in copyright prints, but some of them were not necessarily always the ones you'd want them to be. That was not so good. Then, number two, the thing that wasn't good is the film industry always being—what's the word—penny-pinching. [They] refused to give new prints or good prints to the Library of Congress. What they would do is they would submit a print of a movie when it was first copyrighted, a brand new print, then they would pull the print back, send it to theaters until it got beat up and so on— Until all the prints— They would make a hundred or two hundred prints of a movie, send them to theaters all over America, and after it had played out its run and all the prints were getting kind of scratched and spliced and torn, they would basically throw most of them away or burn them up or junk them. They would save one copy for the studio, one or two, maybe. Maybe. And they would give one, without worrying whether it was complete, whether it was spliced, whether it was scratched— This grungy print would be given to the Library of Congress—

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: —to fulfill their requirement that the Library now had that—yes, you must deposit a film with us— Well, they would give these— So a lot of the early prints, some of them are okay, but a lot of them are very poor. And the Library had no money at that time to do any copying or anything, and when they finally did get money, in the fifties, they would copy colored films in black and white only. It just wasn't very good. And they would farm things out to commercial labs, that did a bad job with the old shrunken film and so on. So it was a long time before—

It wasn't really till the 1970s and the founding of the AFI that the AFI worked with the people at the Library of Congress, with Paul Spehr, and with Dr. John Kuiper who was there at that time to help them to get films in that they didn't have, to fill in the gaps, that 1912 to 1942— The idea was to fill in those gaps and, after '42, to get something other than the Betty Grable musicals, and indeed not to just get beat-up old prints, but to get original negatives and fine-grain master positives and get the best stuff in. That was the idea of the Archive at that time and that's indeed what they began to do.

They also helped the Library set up the lab there, and I guess Dr. Kuiper was involved in that, and Paul Spehr and so forth. They finally set up their own laboratory and by the time we did *Lost Horizon*, they were doing their own in-house laboratory work. And once again, by today's standards, the work being done at that time was not as good—at all—as being done today by the Library themselves. No fault of anybody's, it's just that nobody was doing as good work at that time. In the early seventies, as I said, Film Technology Company was a little ahead of everybody else. They were doing the best. The Library of Congress could do optical printing, but once again, they were doing the developing at local labs that had fixed contrasts and so on. Optical printing tends to build contrast up, so a lot of the early work that the Library did does not look very good. It was printed dry, without wet printing, that we have today, so scratches— And when you copy something optically, the scratches really show up if you don't use wet printing. So a lot of the stuff that was

done in the early seventies and the middle seventies by the Library's lab, in retrospect, just were not very good.

SANETT: Can you give an example of a film that—?

GITT: Well, *Foolish Wives* is one of them that we worked on initially. *Lost Horizon* came out okay considering everything, but we've since been able to copy it and get much better results. I'll tell you about that in a minute.

SANETT: How did the work on *Lost Horizon* then come your way? You started to talk about— Was David Shepard involved with getting that?

GITT: No, it was Larry Karr.

SANETT: Larry Karr.

GITT: Yeah, Lawrence. Larry was in contact with the executives of Columbia Pictures, and I think—oh boy, I'm going to embarrass myself here, who was they guy? Oh boy. I'm sorry, I'm a little embarrassed, but there was a nice guy that worked at Columbia on Long Island. I should know his name. I think he now works for the Library of Congress, unless I'm mistaken. I'm very embarrassed I can't think of his name right now— [Irwin Rosenfeld]

SANETT: Well, it may come to you.

GITT: Anyway, he and Larry got to talking. You'd have to ask other people about this. I don't know whether Frank Capra himself chimed in at some point and wrote to the AFI and was worried about his movie—that's possible. I know that Larry talked to Frank Capra and had some correspondence back and forth from him. I later met

him briefly, too, a couple times. He was very nice. But, anyway, Larry got it into his head that this would be a major project for the archive, to restore *Lost Horizon* to its original running time. So he checked with archives all over the world, he sent letters through FIAF—the International Federation of Film Archives. After a while he found some material in England that was very helpful; he found some material through the Columbia Pictures Television division. There was a print in Canada dubbed into French, 16 millimeter, only 75 minutes long, but it had some scenes that were not in anything else. So Larry's the person who kind of called all of this in, but he asked to me to come in and help him go through this material and make quality judgments and edit it all together. And at that time, AFI got a Steenbeck. The Library of Congress had Steenbecks—editing consoles. The AFI got a Steenbeck for me to work with—

SANETT: Oh, very nice.

GITT: —which was very helpful. Yes, very helpful. I began comparing things with a double-headed Steenbeck, with screens side-by-side—an eight-plate Steenbeck it was called. *Lost Horizon* was a big project. I sort of worked on that in 1974 and the first half of 1975, as we got more and more pieces in and so on. And working with the Library of Congress lab to do the copying, but, as I said, the developing was done by commercial labs at that time. It wasn't until after that, I think, that they had their own developing lab. I hasten to add, since I criticized their work in the early years, nobody was really doing perfect work back then—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —except for perhaps Ralph Sargent was doing very good work. And they got better and better and better as the years went on and as they got better printing machinery and more knowledgeable people, and basically it became— And today it is a good laboratory, so I'm not putting them down today.

SANETT: No, of course not.

GITT: No, no.

SANETT: So what did you like about working on *Lost Horizon*?

GITT: Well, I liked working on a number of films. I worked on *The Blot*, by Lois Weber—an important early woman director. And I actually did a little bit on the [Ginger] Rogers, [Fred] Astaire films. I just did a little bit of footage here and there that we put in. But *Lost Horizon* was the first really major, classic old film that I worked on from a restoration point of view, from beginning to end, as it were. It was quite enjoyable to work on it.

The thing was, I left AFI before it was finished really. What happened was, after I left AFI, after a couple of years, Larry called up—when I was at UCLA finally—and said, "You know, nobody here's going to finish this up" and "we found some more film, we found some more scenes, and we'd like to have some more work done. Would you be willing to work on it now at UCLA, if we sent it all out to UCLA?" And I said, "Well, of course, yes." So basically, they eventually sent all the material out to UCLA, and then UCLA got involved in it and I got involved again,

several times. Actually in 1979, I think, I did further work with Larry and with UCLA's help and so forth, and we had a big show at the Grauman's Chinese Theater. I remember that Frank Capra came to it and Jane Wyatt and Sam Jaffe and the cameraman Joseph Walker, and it was a wonderful evening. At that time we did for the first time show the 132-minute long version, but wherever there was footage missing we just had the words "Scene Missing" up on the screen and you heard the soundtrack but you didn't see it. And that was okay.

SANETT: Yeah. It was ethical.

GITT: It was ethical, that's right. Well, I think—I might add—it's ethical to put stills and stuff in, provided you tell the audience in the title at the beginning or you have it in the notes or whatever. I think it's okay if it helps make the film more entertaining. Although I have reservations about the stills in *Lost Horizon* anyway. I'm actually not that fond of— I mean, I did it and I worked very hard on it, but I prefer the version that's a little bit shorter than that with action from beginning to end and just take the parts with the stills out. I think it actually works a little better. The movie's a little too long this way, in my opinion.

SANETT: So you left AFI before it was done; you came out here—

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: —on the promise of a job—

GITT: From Ralph Sargent. I came out in November, around Thanksgiving 1975. Tony and I drove out in my Dodge Demon with all of our belongings and made it over

the Rockies. The engine was beginning to overheat, but we just made it.

SANETT: Oh my goodness.

GITT: And we got out here. Anyway, then I had the month of December just off to kind of get settled and everything. Then in January, I began work with Ralph Sargent at Film Technology Company. They had a very good person working there whom I still work with sometimes, named Felipe Herba. And Felipe was a timer; he was great at timing black-and-white films, grading black and white. And that's what he was doing then; that's what he's still doing today. Today he works at YCM [Laboratories] with Richard Dayton, but at that time he was working for Ralph Sargent. So I got to know Felipe, of course, working, and Ralph was very bright and very knowledgeable technically. Ralph was a very difficult boss to work for, however, very unpleasant to work for. It's funny, I've always liked him personally, and when I haven't worked for him, we get along just fine, but as a person to work for he was very, very difficult, to put it mildly. I had a very unpleasant year and a half. I learned things from him and certainly from Felipe and having the experience of actually running a Bell & Howell Model D printer, and printing color and black-and-white films and doing a little bit of rudimentary timing, not very much. And doing further restoration and assembling films and assembling soundtracks, and I learned a bit more about splicing magnetic film and all that stuff with Ralph, who was a sound specialist. He was an organist who liked music and so forth. He also knew sound recording of all kinds and magnetic recording and so on.

SANETT: What films did you work on? Do you remember?

GITT: There was a group of B westerns that were kind of fun, for a guy named Keith Smith of Modern Sound Pictures, I think. He bought all these old B westerns. There was one—I remember it was very funny—called *Cowboy Commandos*. It was a World War II, anti-Nazi western. It was very funny because it took place in ranch houses and things out in the West. But, like, the villains would have pictures of Adolf Hitler hanging in their offices and the Fascist henchmen would have swastikas hanging in the bunkhouse and stuff. And this movie had a song in it, sung by the hero, "We'll Get the Fuhrer Sure as Shootin'" [mutual laughter]. It was wonderful. It was a World War II anti-Nazi cowboy movie; it was very funny. But we continued to do some work for AFI. *Redskin*, with Richard Dix, which was an early, two-color, Technicolor picture we worked on it—Film Technology—when I was there and that was quite interesting. There were some other Paramount films, *Swing High Swing Low*, directed by Mitchell Leisen, with Carole Lombard. I remember we worked on that one. There were a lot of silent films, silent Paramount [films] from the twenties, Wallace Reid pictures and other things for the AFI. Just a lot of stuff that Larry Karr would be sending out and so on. This had nothing to do with the fact that we knew each other or that he knew Ralph or that I was working at Ralph. It was just the fact that Ralph was doing the best work at that time. And Richard Simonton, on his own in the garage— He had the special printing machinery needed, so some work was being sent to him as well.

SANETT: When you were working on these films and when you completed your work on these films, what happened to them?

GITT: Where are you talking about? At Ralph Sargent's?

SANETT: At Ralph Sargent's.

GITT: Well, don't forget I was only, in effect, a gopher, a helper, a starting-level

employee. Coming from a technical officer of the American Film Institute and working at the [John F.] Kennedy Center [for the Performing Arts] and being involved in numerous restoration projects and helping show movies at the Eisenhower Theater, when we had special shows, with Barbara Streisand appearing— It was funny, all of a sudden going from that to being yelled at by Ralph Sargent, "Empty the waste baskets. Go unload my car." It was a bit of a comedown, but at least it was a job and I kept the wolf from the door out here.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: And, yes, I did do these other things. Yes, I did work on some films, and, yes, I learned how to do this and that, but even so I was treated like a very low-level person. So I don't want to make it sound like I really had a lot to say about what films were done or what happened to the films once they were done, but they were done for studios for archives. I remember one project that was worked on there, and this brings up the question of ethics, and maybe I'll say this, because it's going to be off the record for a while, and that is, you've heard of Josef von Sternberg—?

SANETT: Yes, but you may want to—

GITT: —who discovered Marlene Dietrich, and then made some very— Actually, in their day they were criticized for not being serious, for being frivolous films, like the *Scarlet Empress* and *The Devil is a Woman* and so forth. But as time goes by, a lot of the stolid, serious social problem films of the thirties are practically unwatchable today—or at least nobody wants to sit through them—whereas, these absolutely wonderful, dazzling, visually very exciting films that Josef von Sternberg made are beautiful to watch. The plots may be a little bit silly or whatever, but in terms of just what's put on the screen, the use of imagery and so forth, they are absolutely without parallel. I'm thinking of the *Scarlet Empress* in particular.

But late in his career, he eventually had trouble. He was riding high in the beginning of his career—*The Salvation Hunters* in 1925—for about ten years approximately, and then his career began falling apart. I guess people found him difficult, whatever, and he had some problems. By the 1950s, he was reduced to making one low-budget, final film, pretty much with, I guess, some of his own money and maybe whatever else he was able to scrounge together. I think it was shot in Japan. *The Saga of Anatahan*, that he made in the 1950s. Done on a shoestring. He photographed a beautiful Japanese woman in the jungles there and so on. There was a jungle scene and so on. I don't remember that much about the plot of the film, but those who know his career will know it.

But, anyway, after he died, his widow, Merri von Sternberg, decided that

something should be done to restore the movie, because the prints that were around were beginning to get worn. She had the negative, and it was starting to deteriorate. Some of it was actually shot on nitrate film, I believe, and a lot of it on safety film. And he never had the money to finish it the way he wanted to. The soundtrack wasn't very well recorded. He did a narration and it had birds chirping and dialogue here and there, but on the whole it just wasn't very well done because he didn't have the money to do a proper mix and so on.

So it was brought to Film Technology, and the idea was to just do the best we could with it. Well, I didn't do this, but Ralph decided—and I don't want to totally blame Ralph either, it was probably Merri von Sternberg as well—to just really go all out. She found some footage that he shot of the leading lady nude, that they apparently, in order to make some money at one time, had spliced into the film and [he had] run it in exploitation houses to desperately get some money out of this movie. Well, she decided that this was the way her husband wanted the film to be, that he always wanted to have all these nude scenes in it. Well, I don't know if he did or not, but we put the nude scenes back in. Well, the nude scenes lacked the sound, so if the birds were chirping and so forth, and the woman would be walking through the jungle—and suddenly there would be this scene where she'd throw her whatever off and continue walking into the water or whatever. So we had to put in the sounds of the ocean and we had to put in the birds chirping. So we did that. And then it occurred to everybody—not to me, but I helped work on all this—that the night

scenes— If the birds were chirping during the day, why weren't the crickets chirping at night? And if he'd enough money, he would have— So we put in crickets chirping at night—

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GITT: —then there's a scene maybe with a waterfall, and the original sound effect really wasn't very good, so we would put in a better waterfall sound effect. And, anyway, a whole new mix of the whole movie was done—the narration, and all these new sound effects. We put the nude scenes back in and so on. I say "we," but I was there and we all worked on it. So in a sense, it did— I wondered— Even at the time it didn't strike me as completely the right thing to do or the ethical thing to do. The man who made the movie had now died, and— And it was all done with good intentions and so on, of course, but I don't really feel that that version, which is probably the one that people are still seeing today, is necessarily what Josef von Sternberg would have liked. A lot of it was just embellished and done on speculation about what he might have done had he had the money to make the film the way he wanted to originally.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: So that was actually a good negative experience, if you will, because I sort of felt that really wasn't the right thing to do.

SANETT: Did you say anything? Did the discussion of ethics ever come up—

GITT: No, not—

SANETT: —in connection with this?

GITT: —really. This was a commercial project, because it was to be shown in art

theaters and things. That's still true to this day, by the way, a lot of this kind of stuff goes on. Whenever it's a commercial thing where they want to bring the audience in and— You can rationalize, and do, a lot of things: add stereo sound to a movie that wasn't in stereo because that's what the audience wants today and that kind of thing. And, of course, later, people would use it to justify colorization of old movies on TV and so on. Unfortunately, if you are a commercial distributor, you can convince yourself that this is the right thing to do from a commercial point of view and you just don't worry about the ethical part of it, I guess. But archivists have to worry about the ethical part of it.

SANETT: Exactly. So you worked with Ralph for a bit over a year—

GITT: About a year and a half. From January 1976 through June of 1977. There was one dark day when business had fallen off and there weren't a lot of jobs coming in. I'll say this for Ralph, he did keep me going for a while. And I was getting to the point where I was emptying ashtrays and trying to make projects drag out so it looked like I was doing something. He finally came to me and said, "I'm really sorry, but you see the business has fallen off. We're going to have to lay you off." So I actually got laid off for the first and only time in my life. I felt so miserable. I went to the Hollywood unemployment office and actually stood in line and filled out forms.

But three days later, they got a big order in and Ralph called me back. So I went back. So I was only out of work for, like, three days, but it was a horrible, demoralizing feeling for me. That had never happened before.

SANETT: It's terrible.

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: Do you happen to remember what film they got that order in on?

GITT: No, I don't remember what it was, but a series— Maybe it was the westerns I spoke of. Suddenly this order came in and then I continued working there.

SANETT: So during this time, then, you were keeping an eye on job prospects—

GITT: Yes, I was—

SANETT: —at UCLA?

GITT: —because I knew I wanted to work at UCLA, but they did not have any openings. The Archive was very badly funded at that time because it was kind of founded not completely with the knowledge by the university of exactly what was going on. It was kind of started under their noses without them knowing what was going on, so in a way there was— Bob Epstein was getting a salary, but he was teaching too. I think that was mainly for teaching. Other people were volunteering for nothing, like Charles [S.] Hopkins—who's still there to this day. And Harry Arends was a guy working with Bob Epstein at that time. He was, I think, making some kind of salary. They had finally gotten somebody— A couple of people were now getting paid, and Charles Hopkins was finally getting paid and Harry Arends was getting paid, but that was it; there was no room for anybody else. So when I first came out here, I wanted to work at UCLA but they just didn't have a job, but they kind of told me, "If you'll just be patient, we think something will become available."

Well, I learned that Harry Arends was thinking of leaving. It took him a year to finally make up his mind to leave. It was the fall of 1976 that he decided to leave and it took like eight months for them to finally get their act together to be able to hire a replacement. That was me.

SANETT: And what was his position?

GITT: Nothing very high at all, it was—I started off at a very low position. It was lab assistant, step two—I believe it was.

SANETT: And that was in 1976?

GITT: This is 1977.

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: There's only one thing lower than that. That's lab assistant [step] one, and that's so low I don't even think anyone gets hired in at that. So lab assistant two—I was hired at a salary of \$9300 a year by UCLA; that was my starting salary. But they did have a range adjustment— Right after I started it went to \$9600 dollars, so I got that. For the first two years I worked for the Archive that's what I was making, \$9600 a year. This is apparently what Harry Arends had been making at that time as a lab assistant. I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit, but—

SANETT: So your impression of the Archive was that it was very poorly funded?

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: How was it managed?

GITT: At that time it was managed very eclectically. It was like a club or

something. It was a bunch of students hanging around; it was Bob Epstein talking about film. This pretty much stopped, but just before I joined the Archive they were noted for going to Venice Beach every Friday afternoon. The whole staff would just quit and go to the beach. So every Friday in the summer they would go swimming at Venice Beach. There was films, of course, being run all the time for professors and students in Melnitz Hall. If any member of the Archive staff wanted to just take off and go and watch a movie, that was approved of, that was encouraged. You were supposed to see movies as part of your education. If you wanted to sit in on any courses without paying, you could go sit in the back and audit courses, once again getting your salary, but without paying. After I joined the Archive— It wasn't just because I joined it, but because the Archive evolved pretty rapidly and that sort of thing wasn't being done anymore. But the first year I was there, that was all still happening. It was like a student club almost.

SANETT: Did you audit any courses?

GITT: No, I never did that. I did go to screenings occasionally. We did go to the beach a couple of times—

SANETT: [laughs] I wasn't going to ask about that.

GITT: No, no, we did. We may be getting ahead, maybe this is the next session, talking about the founding of the Archive. There's all kinds of stories I can tell you about—

SANETT: No, that's fine.

GITT: —that. About Howard Suber and Bob Epstein and how the Archive got started under the university's—

SANETT: How did it get started?

GITT: Well, we'll jump around a little bit then if you want to. Some of this is hearsay, some of it I was there for. Part of the Archive is the television collection, and I believe that goes back even further than the film part of it; I think that goes back to 1967. You'll have to check with other people about this, but I believe some arrangement was made between UCLA and the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences to maybe share a collection of old TV programs and so on. There was also the film department, which had gone back, I guess, to the fifties and Colin Young, I believe who founded it, who everybody thought very highly of. I never worked with him because by the time I worked there, I guess he had long since left and gone to England or something. But he was considered a very good person.

The student films were being kept in sort of a semi-cool, big, locker-type vault off one of the sound stages in Melnitz Hall, which is still there to this day as far as I know. So in that vault were the student films—16 millimeter mostly, some of them 8 millimeter I guess, and what was the beginnings of— There were some TV prints and things in there and there was the beginnings of UCLA's film collection—this and that, 16 millimeter prints, a couple of 35 millimeter reels of this and that, just a few things that the professors had gotten in or Bob Epstein, who was teaching at that time, had gotten in.

But what happened around 1972, unless I'm mistaken, is that Paramount studios sold the rights— No, actually this is not quite correct. Years earlier they had sold the rights to their films from 1929 through 1948. There were legal reasons why 1948 was the cutoff point, having to do with the unions and having to pay residuals and things. But 1929 through 1948, Paramount sold their whole library—meaning their negatives and everything—to Universal [Pictures] to distribute to television and so on. And at that point in the early 1960s, a crash program took place—whether by Paramount or Universal, I don't know—but the entire library was hastily copied to safety master positives and then all of the beautiful nitrate were deliberately thrown away. All the Josef von Sternberg movies, all the Ernst Lubitsch movies, all the Preston Sturges movies, all of the great Paramount films were destroyed, having made these quick and dirty copies at a low-bidding lab—Triangle Lab in New Jersey, I believe. And some of the copies were all right, some of them are blurry and unsteady, some of them have flutter in the sound, but that's what they did.

SANETT: Terrible.

GITT: Anyway, Paramount did keep their nitrate studio print library. They had thrown the negatives away— They had made the safety copies and sold those to Universal, but they still had nitrate. And somebody, I guess, decided, "What are we keeping these old nitrate, flammable, dangerous prints for, here on the lot? Why don't we get rid of them?" I think Bob Epstein at UCLA, who was teaching at the time, just— He was an enthusiast, he loved movies, and he was like an assistant

professor or something—

SANETT: Like an adjunct?

GITT: An adjunct professor, that's probably what he was. And Howard Suber, who was a professor who was teaching film courses— They approached Paramount, apparently, and convinced Paramount, rather than throwing the nitrate prints away, give them to UCLA. UCLA would care for them and they would show them in classes to students. The booth in Melnitz Hall at that point was equipped to— I don't know if this was done because of this or they had already done it, but they were actually set up to show nitrate film with the proper fire equipment and so on. The projectors and the special shutters that drop down in case of a fire—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —and the thick walls and the ventilation, everything. So Paramount agreed and donated their entire print library of all the films that they had from 1929 through 1948 to UCLA—the only stipulation being, I think, that Universal, now the owner of the rights, had the right to borrow them any time they wanted to in case they wanted to use them for some purpose, such as perhaps copying some of them to fill in missing reels or whatever from their material. But basically they were donated to UCLA— this was around 1972—and that was the start of the Archive, this wonderful collection of Paramount films. They used to run them in classes all the time, they used to have public showings in the evenings and so on—

SANETT: Of nitrate.

GITT: Nitrate.

SANETT: Where was this stored if—?

GITT: Well, that's the problem; there was no place to store it. See, what happened was Bob Epstein kind of agreed— And I think Howard Suber too, unless I'm mistaken— But certainly Bob Epstein kind of agreed to take this collection without fully informing the university what was happening. The university didn't really quite know what the heck was going on. But Bob Epstein agreed to take the films; he basically squirreled a lot of them away in his garage at home, he squirreled a lot of them away under desks in classrooms that were not in use in the summer time. 1438 Melnitz was piled up to the ceiling with nitrate film, and the viewing room— which they started around that time, which was around the corner near the elevator and near the men's room—actually there in Melnitz Hall, there was a viewing room for the Archives. In there, he had not only the Steenbeck [editing machine] that they bought at that time, but also piled to the ceiling were cans of nitrate film.

Well, in addition to that, they were able to— The university did not have any money to take care of any of this stuff. What they did was, they approached Richard Simonton Jr.'s father, Richard Simonton Sr. They knew this family loved movies; Bob Epstein knew them, I guess. They were wealthy and they agreed to pay the rental on some vaults down on Vermont Avenue. These very old, crumbly vaults, in what used to be the film center of Los Angeles back in the teens and twenties. This was where the film distributors all had offices—they [had] long since moved away—a

crumbled down part of Vermont Avenue. The Simonton family agreed to pay the bills to rent the vaults to put the Paramount films in there and get them out of the classrooms and out of Bob Epstein's garage and everything, put them down there, provided that they had carte blanche, they could borrow any films they wanted to. They had the key and they could borrow films to run for Saturday night screenings. Bob Epstein agreed.

So that's the way UCLA was able to afford to store these films in these vaults downtown, was the Simonton family paid the money and they would borrow the prints.

I saw some of the prints when I first came out here, as I said, on Saturday nights. It was wonderful. They ran Lubitsch films and [Rouben] Mamoulian films and [Josef von] Sternberg films and so on, in beautiful prints off the original negative. They took good care of them, they were very careful, they inspected them. Basically, Bob Epstein's attitude was, well, winding through the films, inspecting them, projecting them, and airing them out is good for them. He was right. It was because you don't want the gases that are being built up to stay in a tight can in a vault for years; it is good to air them out. So it was good for the films.

Number two, the Simontons used to invite George Folsey, the cameraman at Paramount, or Rouben Mamoulian would come over, or in the case of— They knew Harold Lloyd very well too. Those weren't involved with our prints, but Harold— People like that, celebrities and stars and technicians and people who had worked in the studios in the Golden Era would come over as guests and meet people and they'd

show the movies. It was a nice thing, it was a good thing for me to meet them. But the university I'm sure didn't know about this, didn't know what the heck was going on.

But in the meantime they had the use of the Paramount prints and were using them in classes and so on and so forth.

SANETT: So there weren't any nitrate accidents on campus?

GITT: No, there were not at that time. Later, we did have a couple fires, which I'll tell you about, but not at that time. No, there were no nitrate fires, there were no problems. We never had a fire in room 1438 Melnitz, where the shipping was all done out of. We never had a fire in the viewing room, never in the projection booth.

We never had a problem at all, no.

Now at the time that I joined the archive—as I said, it took a year and a half, and it took almost eight months after Harry Arends left for them to finally agree to replace him, and I started at the very bottom starting level—I already knew that I wanted to get into film preservation. They had no preservation or restoration program at that time, not really. It was a film collection. I was hired to do film shipping, winding films on reels tightly and taping them down, inspecting them and splicing them. I was hired to man the viewing room to show people movies on the Steenbeck, I was hired to answer letters that people would write in and so on and so forth. I wasn't really hired to do a film preservation program or do a restoration program—really wasn't. But I was interested in that and they knew that I had done that, of course, at the AFI. I do know that Bob [Robert] Rosen interviewed me for

the job—I'll tell you about that in a minute—who was then involved in the Archive by the time I joined— I joined in July 1977, and there's actually a photograph of me on the first day of work—

SANETT: Really?

GITT: —with Charles Hopkins, who's still there, and myself and a student named Michael Lacoe, who was working there at that time. I think it's July 2, or July 3, 1977, and the photo still exists. I think Charles has it in his office or something. It's my first day at UCLA and there I am in this office, with film cans packed up to the ceiling, carrying nitrate film around.

SANETT: Oh, my gosh.

GITT: Now what happened was, Bob Epstein, in addition to his teaching, he basically became in charge of the Archive. Howard Suber agreed— He and Howard Suber were the co-curators, if you will, of the Archive, but pretty much Howard Suber was very busy teaching, so Bob Epstein really became the day-to-day head of the whole organization. He was a very inspiring person in some ways, and a very aggravating and irritating person in some ways, but he was a very nice guy, ultimately, and very inspiring. He loved movies, he loved introducing movies to people—the love of movies to people. He wanted college kids and high school kids and people in the general public to learn how wonderful these old movies were, and to show them the great old films. If somebody came in and said, "You know, I remember my parents telling me about this wonderful old film with Leslie Howard—"

"Oh, we have that. I'll show it to you." And he would stay late after work, and people would come into the viewing room, and he'd get it and go down to Vermont Avenue and show it to somebody. I mean, he was really a very kind and wonderful person in that way.

SANETT: And an enthusiast?

GITT: A real enthusiast, and extremely knowledgeable about films and about technical things and about film history and about personalities. He knew an awful lot about all that stuff. He was the perfect person with the enthusiasm to get this thing started, to get—

Because after they got the Paramount films in, within a year or so they were able to do a somewhat similar deal with 20th Century Fox. Fox wouldn't donate the films, but they deposited them. They wanted to get them out of the lot; they were a fire hazard. UCLA said, "We'll take them—" [Or] Bob Epstein said— Now by this point, of course, they had the vaults down [on] Vermont Avenue. They had some more room, so they took the Fox collection and then more collections came in.

Just as I joined UCLA, within that first year or so, Bob Epstein and Harry Arends had—just before he left—already negotiated to do this with National Telefilm Associates, NTA, which is today called Republic Pictures, which is just named after the old Republic Pictures, but has no direct connection to them. They had a huge collection, as it turns out, of old Republic negatives—and some prints, but mostly negatives. Original camera negatives of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry and Orson

Welles's *Macbeth* and all kinds of things that were made at Republic studios. A lot of B pictures, but some good pictures too; huge collection. They offered it to the Library of Congress, and the Library at that point was beginning to get kind of saturated. All these films would come in, and now Republic—which is not the top level studio, obviously—it was getting a little bit towards the lower rungs now, so the Library said, "Well, we'll take some of the films, but we want to be able to pick and choose. We won't take the whole collection." So NTA was a little frustrated because they wanted to find, quite frankly, free storage somewhere. That's what all these people want is free storage of dangerous film.

SANETT: Absolutely.

GITT: And UCLA once again stepped in and said, "We'll take it, we'll take it."

Bob Epstein would take anything in those days. Anything at all that came in, Bob Epstein wanted—anything. Silent films, no matter— You know, whatever.

Somebody came in with a big collection of Department of Water and Power footage of dams being built, "We'll take it," you know? We took everything in the early years.

[mutual laughter] So [we] agreed to take this huge NTA collection. And, once again, it went down to the vaults down [on] Vermont Avenue. And I remember—this was the way things were in those days—Bob Epstein and Harry Arends were all excited because of this NTA collection of original camera negatives and soundtrack negatives of all these B pictures and westerns and, yes, and *Macbeth* and other things were coming in. They were so excited about it. I remember they

told the representative of NTA, "We're going to work all weekend, we're going to get it all organized on the shelves, and Monday morning you'll be able to call anything in that you want." Well, they went in and worked maybe a half a day, and kind of goofed off, and got tired, and went home and it was like, I don't know, a couple of years before things really got properly organized. But they were so enthusiastic they actually thought in one weekend they could get all the films unpacked from these boxes, organized on the shelves, labeled and—

SANETT: It was a nice thought.

GITT: It was a nice thought, but it's just typical of the kinds of promises that were made that could not be kept.

SANETT: Just out of curiosity, did that include any of the Chaplin films?

GITT: No, no Chaplin films. Not at that time, no. Oh, there might have been one— Not in these things that came in from Fox or Paramount or anything; from other sources. [Berkeley Art Museum and] Pacific Film Archive, which is part of the University of California at Berkeley, they collected film. They're not a film— It's funny, they're called a film archive; they're really a wonderful exhibition program, but they're not quite so much an archive. They've done a little bit of film copying and presentation, but nothing on the scale that we have. But they used to get films from collectors in San Francisco and they would often send them down to us, particularly if they were American films. They wanted to specialize in Asian films and foreign films up there, so American silent movies and American short subjects and newsreels

and things they would send down to us. So UCLA acquired a lot of miscellaneous—

Including a few Chaplin one-reelers and things, back in those early years.

SANETT: Is there any nitrate film stored in Vermont now?

GITT: No, no. When the NTA collection came in—I remember now what happened, I misspoke a second ago—they did try to put some of it down in Vermont Avenue, but the capacity was full. It had the Fox collection; it had the Paramount collection. The Warner's collection hadn't come in yet at that point, but it was basically full in this old place downtown. They got a little bit of the NTA down there, but the rest of it, once again, some of it went to Bob Epstein's garage, to his living room—

SANETT: Nitrate?

GITT: Nitrate. It was the summertime and I remember across from room 1438 Melnitz was a seminar room where professors and students would sit around a table and have seminars and things. Well, it wasn't used apparently that summer, and so underneath this table where the students and the prof— Were boxes and boxes of—

SANETT: Oh my goodness.

GITT: —thousand foot cans of nitrate films. In the corners, stacked up to the ceiling, all over the place, in the viewing room. Well, apparently what happened was, one day some people from the front office—this was the theater arts department. There was a woman administrator named Joan Graham, who was quite frustrating in her way. She was probably a nice person and everything, but she was very much a

university bureaucrat, if you know what I mean, an administrator. She never wanted to take a stand on anything. For example, when I was hired there, I wanted to join the UCLA gymnasium to go exercise and go swimming. When you went, you were supposed to show some card or something, which I didn't have; they hadn't given me one.

So they said, "Well, we'll just call up your department and just confirm that you are an employee of UCLA." So they call up Joan Graham and they said, "Is Robert Gitt an employee of UCLA?"

And she said, "Who wants to know?"

And they said, "It's the athletic department."

And there was this long pause, and finally— And she wouldn't tell them.

So I finally got on and said, "Joan, please tell them I'm working for you."

So she said, "Umm, yes, he works for us."

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: It was weird. It's like, she went, "Who wants to know?" She was very suspicious. I remember one time I sort of suggested that—when I was making \$9600 dollars a year—I really hoped that perhaps I could get more money the following year.

She said, "Oh, well, you're lucky to have a job at all."

SANETT: Oh my goodness.

GITT: That was sort of the attitude. She knew exactly what to say. She was very good in her job, I'm sure, in her own way, but she apparently discovered— Someone

told her about all these boxes and boxes of highly flammable, highly toxic— And of course, if it burns, not only does it burn, but it produces deadly poisonous fumes—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: Everybody completely freaked out over in the administration building, I guess— I don't remember the name of the building now, but— It was upstairs of the theater, whatever it's called there. They just absolutely freaked out, and they said, "Get that stuff out of here by five o'clock today." So Bob Epstein, who was a very clever person, said, "I have the solution. Technicolor [Motion Picture Corporation] has moved out of the old laboratory in Hollywood. There are all these nitrate vaults just sitting there empty. I'm sure we could rent them at a very reasonable rate, and all these dangerous nitrate films could be—" Well, they said, "Find out about that." And he knew this all along. So Technicolor in 1975-76 had moved to new headquarters near Universal and left their old— Which was now owned by a management team called Television Center, and there were all these nitrate vaults standing empty there. So Bob Epstein negotiated with them and for something like seventy dollars a month or whatever, they got all these nitrate vaults and so we were able to move the things off the campus. So he created this huge crisis, and then, "I know, I've got the solution."

The university came up with the money to rent the vaults. They were kind of forced to because they had all this flammable film all over the place. They suddenly realized, "My God, what are we going to do with this stuff?" And they

couldn't give it back, because it had all been agreed to take—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: So he forced them, in effect, to rent the vaults in Hollywood. And so at that point, a big move occurred from the old vaults down [on] Vermont up to the new vaults in Hollywood. This is around 1979 I would say, approximately. Maybe '78, but I think '78, '79, around in there. I had been there about a year and half at that point. And some exciting things happened at that point, because Michael Friend, who's now the director of the Academy [of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences] [Film] Archives was working as a student at that time as an assistant—just as a student helper—because he was taking courses with Bob Rosen and so forth. He was one of the people that had been assigned to— The idea was to wind through each of the nitrate films before they were moved to the new vault, to air them out, to make sure there was no deterioration and to just sort of get them ready, so to speak. Wind them properly and so on—

SANETT: Check them out.

GITT: Check them out. So in the little room off the vault area in this horrible old building down Vermont was a little inspection bench. Michael Friend and another student were there rapidly winding through nitrate film. He was winding the film very, very fast and he had a cloth—I'm not saying he did anything wrong; I don't think I would have realized this would have been a problem either, but he had the film with a cloth on the edges, feeling for torn holes and maybe getting some of the dirt and

dust off the edges of the film, winding very fast. Apparently, a little puff of smoke came up from the cloth, there was a spark of static electricity, and the film suddenly burst into flames.

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: It was a Fox feature, an early film with John Wayne before he was a star, called *Three Girls Lost*. One of the reels got lost; it burned up. To this day, the film is now incomplete because one of the reels— There was another John Wayne movie on the rewind next, an early one where he just plays a bit part; that got a reel set on fire. So the whole reel got set ablaze, so they called the fire department and so forth.

Well, this is the amazing thing: Stacked all around were tons of nitrate film waiting to be inspected. They had already unloaded the fireproof vaults and the films were right there in the room with them stacked up to the ceiling—a large part of the Fox collection and the Paramount collection. Well, amazingly, there were these certificates on the wall that said the sprinkler system has been checked and approved by the fire department, something like, November 12, 1947, something like that. Well, the sprinklers worked great, they worked like a charm. The sprinklers went off— Water does not put out a nitrate fire—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —but what it does do is it keeps the other cans of film—provided the films are in cans and the flames can't get to them, provided there's water all around

dissipating the heat—it keeps them from bursting into flames just by being heated up so much by the near-by fire. So it completely contained the fire. Basically, we lost two 1000 foot reels of film—

SANETT: Not too bad.

GITT: —out of so many— Not too bad. The flames were still shooting out and everything, it was still very frightening, but we lost those two reels and that was it. The really scary thing was those old vaults were so flimsy that one time Bob Epstein had gone down and decided to clean it up a little bit, because there was chalky dirt all over the floor and grit and rat droppings and horrible things. The walls had graffiti on them and old smudgy fingerprints and things— So he began with soap and water, wiping the wall, and he suddenly realized that the bricks and the mortar were all dissolving, so he stopped, because it was all just literally crumbling.

Well, anyway, to get to the point of what I was about to say, at the time of this fire when we were moving out of there and Michael and the student were winding— There was on the floor above a sweatshop where, I guess, illegal immigrant women were working from South American countries—I guess Mexico—sewing and so forth, so— And here was a nitrate fire going on—

SANETT: Oh my goodness.

GITT: —and UCLA had this place. What an awful situation it would have been.

SANETT: That would have been terrible.

GITT: Thank God the fire didn't get any worse, and thank God nothing ever

happened there, with these poor people working right above nitrate vaults.

SANETT: And also Michael and the student were fine?

GITT: They were fine too. There was no problem at all. And it wasn't really that Michael was doing anything wrong; it was kind of a fluke accident. It was a combination: it was a hot, humid day; he was winding a little fast, maybe; he was putting a little too much friction on the film—in hindsight—and there was a spark, static electricity or whatever, and that's apparently what set the film off. I've never heard of film bursting into flame quite so easily, but it happened, and that's what happened.

SANETT: So the film was moved and—

GITT: So the film all got—

SANETT: —Bob was a hero.

GITT: —moved up to the new vaults. What's that?

SANETT: And Bob was a hero.

GITT: Well, in a way he was hero. There were some problems that were surfacing about that time, unfortunately, and I'll talk about that—within reason. I've said a lot of nice things about him, and I'll continue to say nice things about him, but he had some real problems. This was one of the reasons why, ultimately, Bob had to leave the Archive and, indeed, never became, ultimately, the head of it or the ongoing curator of it, which he had every right to be and to expect to be.

But he had some problems, some personal problems. He had great problems,

I think, with his father, I know that. He hated his father for some reason. His father was a Hollywood publicist, I think, an agent named Dave Epstein who adopted Bob. Bob was actually, he told me, he was actually of French-Canadian descent, but he was adopted by his father and mother. For whatever reason he never liked his father, never got along with his father. His father didn't support what he wanted to do and he just basically couldn't stand his father. Now, I think his father—when I knew Bob—was long dead, but he still had these feelings from his youth. For some reason, he resented being adopted, he resented Dave Epstein, he just hated it. And interestingly enough, I had met other people, veterans in the Hollywood film industry who remembered how unpleasant Dave Epstein was; they didn't like him either. He adopted Bob, that was a nice thing to do, but he apparently wasn't a very nice man or something. That's all I know about Bob's father.

So Bob had these problems from his childhood. To get to the point of it, he had a drinking problem, unfortunately. This was very, very sad, and was something that weighed heavily on all of us when we were at the Archive because—I did not realize this when I first went to work there. He was just very jovial, very friendly, very enthused, as I mentioned. He was wonderful with showing movies to adults and kids and students and he was just wonderful. Very, very nice, okay? No problem at all. But after I had been there a few months or a year, we began noticing things. There were stories about Bob drinking too much and so on, and he would deny it and so on. And it got to the point finally, after a couple of years, we would find whiskey

bottles hidden in the desk drawers, whiskey bottles in the vaults. He finally got into a couple of driving accidents and there was one very, very bad thing when we were doing— This was the ultimate thing really. When we were moving the film, after the fire and after everything else, but during that whole process, he was driving a big van that we had gotten from the university to truck the nitrate film up from the old vaults to the new. Not too far from the new building he turned between two apartment buildings where there was no street. The police found him with a whiskey bottle next to the driver's seat.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: This was very, very bad, and, of course, obviously reflected very badly on everybody and everything and he— Everybody liked him so much they didn't want this to happen, but since this was happening— He, I guess was put on some kind of probation—I don't know what happened exactly—but from that point on, it was only a question of time before he would gradually leave UCLA. That's ultimately what happened after another year or ten months or whatever, he was gradually out.

Now, he did try to— He finally did admit that yes, he had a problem, but "I can take care of it, I can cure myself." He said he could cure himself. Well, I don't know. I don't think he really did, to be honest with you. He maybe went through periods where he got over it, but he always had this problem. It's really such a shame because that is what, more than anything else I would say— Maybe some other personality problems and difficulties with the UCLA administrators and so on, but I

would say it was that drinking thing that really derailed him. And it's really a shame because a nice person, but—

SANETT: It is a shame. Who came in after he left?

GITT: Well, I will tell you. Bob, too, when he drank he became an unpleasant, surly, belligerent sort of person. He was not nice when he drank. Some people become nice and friendly I guess; he did not. He called me up on the phone—that's when I first knew something was a matter—and yelled at me after I had been there about a year and half and I was just starting to preserve films and so on. He said, "I'm sorry we ever hired you. You're just a prima donna, you're not a team player—" I said, "Bob," I said, "I know I get wrapped up in these things" and I told him, "Maybe I am a little bit of a prima donna, come to think of it, but I do care about the Archive and I like you and everything." And he said, "Oh, we only hired you to get your film collection." See, at that time I had still had a film collection, and I had sent it out to UCLA, and that's— They hired me to get— Which wasn't a very nice thing to hear. I don't think it was really true, but—

SANETT: That's an upsetting phone call.

GITT: Yeah, it was an upsetting phone call. He was drunk; it wasn't himself at all. He was acting, you know? And apparently there were times when students would find him—he had been all night at the Archive, drinking all night—and they'd find him in the morning, and he would snarl at some college girl or young girl student. It would be very upsetting and so on. So he had that real problem.

So what had happened was, before any of this came to a head, even in the early stages when he wasn't maybe drinking all that much yet, and people didn't know he had this problem— He hated administration; he hated bureaucracy. He didn't want to do paperwork; he just loved movies, he loved editing. He loved winding through movies, feeling movies, feeling the sprocket holes, showing movies to people, collecting movies, getting movies in. He didn't want to deal with letters, he didn't want to deal with budgets, he didn't want to deal with meetings. So the idea was, let's get somebody to relieve— Bob Epstein wanted somebody to relieve him of all these unpleasant duties, so he would just get an administrator. And so he talked the university into getting somebody from the faculty to kind of help him out with this stuff so he wouldn't have to think about it, and that person was Bob Rosen.

SANETT: Oh, that's—

GITT: So Rosen was hired, and as Epstein used to say, "He works at my pleasure. He takes all the burdens away from me so I can be a good curator. He works at my pleasure; he works for me."

SANETT: Interesting.

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: When did Bob Rosen come in?

GITT: I think he came in before I did, because technically he hired me, as the head of the Archive in 1977, so I'd say about '76 he probably came in. He hadn't been there very long when I joined the Archive.

SANETT: And did you interview with him?

GITT: Yes. I initially interviewed with Bob Epstein, of course, but then the final hiring was technically done by Bob Rosen. Now, it's a little naive of Bob Epstein to think you can bring somebody in to pay the bills, to go the meetings, to deal with the university bureaucracy and to do all that kind of stuff, and you just sort of go off and do your film thing, and this person isn't going to take over.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: Well, obviously— Bob Rosen was a very popular professor. He taught film courses. I guess he taught other courses at that time too—I'm not sure. You know he was very popular. He saw an opportunity here, and he began applying himself, and he began working and doing all the things— He saw all the things Bob Epstein wasn't doing and wasn't handling properly, and he began doing them and began getting more and more powerful, as it were. Bob Epstein and he began having words and things. Epstein would resent— And Epstein would act like, "You know, you're working for me, you do what I say," and then Rosen gradually— Of course, within the context of the university, he wasn't really working for Bob anymore, he was working for the university and keeping Bob in check, kind of. And then Bob began having these drinking problems and so on, so gradually what happened was Bob more and more was out of the picture or in trouble or whatever, and Bob Rosen was more and more kind of taking the thing over. That's kind of how Bob Rosen got into it.

But one thing I will say, people sometimes get the impression that the Archive

was started by Bob Rosen. That's not true at all. It was started very much by Bob Epstein most of all, by Howard Suber definitely as well, but not by Bob Rosen, who came in a little bit later and kind of worked his way into it. And in many ways was very helpful too, needless to say, but still, the truth is it was Bob Epstein, who's been pretty much forgotten today. He's not spoken of very much by the university anymore, probably partly because of people who still remember him and remember the problems. But they don't speak about him because maybe they don't want anybody to remember him anymore, because he's the guy that deserves the credit for getting the whole thing off the ground, even for getting me there, because I was inspired by him.

SANETT: Is he still living?

GITT: No.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: Sadly, he had a heart attack and died in his early fifties, I guess, a few years back.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: It was a very sad thing. His wife and he had two children—one of them named Colin, for Colin Young. Colin and Lisa, who are very bright kids and everything, they're still around today. His wife, however, had cancer and died in her forties. That was very sad, and then Bob later had the drinking problem and then heart problems. And he actually had AIDS as well and that contributed to his death

as well. There were all kinds of things going wrong for him at the very end.

Interestingly enough, after he left UCLA, he began teaching at Loyola Marymount [Univeristy], very successfully apparently. People liked him there and he would show films there. He also had a radio program on, I guess, National Public Radio that was popular throughout the world. He had a huge fan club in the Netherlands of all places. He had Dutch radio listeners. He was a record collector and he had a huge collection of jazz records, and early jazz, going back to the twenties and the thirties and then later jazz. He just had a wonderful 78 and 33 1/3 and whatever record collection in his house, and he would use this on the radio. So at the time of his death, he was actually pretty well known by radio listeners—particularly jazz and pop music listeners—in many countries in the world, interestingly enough.

SANETT: That is interestingly.

GITT: Yeah. But, I'm sorry I had to say these not-so-good things about him, but he was a tragic figure in some ways. A very bright, cheerful—really most of the time—lively, interesting, well-intentioned and fine person.

SANETT: And motivating.

GITT: And motivating—

SANETT: Inspiring.

GITT: —and inspiring, and yet, he had this terrible demon. And I think it had something to do, as I said, with his dislike of this father maybe, but that's psychoanalyzing it or something. I know he told me about that. But he used to

think he could handle it, and he really couldn't. I think most alcoholics probably can't really handle it, perhaps. They think they can, but they can't and he just couldn't.

SANETT: And it also sounds like he had a lot on his plate to deal with.

GITT: Yes he did, yes he did.

SANETT: Some of this sounds like [it] also trickled down to his work environment and the people that people that he worked with—

GITT: Yes, it was—

SANETT: —like these phone calls.

GITT: —unpleasant for us too, because we worried about him. A couple times he came in in the morning and he'd been in a fight obviously. He would say, "You'll never believe what happened to me, oddest thing in the world. I was sitting at a bar, and a guy hit the guy next to me and he missed, and he hit me, and—" And we were supposed to believe this. Well, it wasn't true, he'd just been in some kind of drunken brawl or something. But we didn't know at the time— I actually believed him the first time he told us.

SANETT: Of course, of course.

GITT: But whatever.

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MAY 23, 2000

SANETT: Hi Bob.

GITT: Present and accounted for.

SANETT: And accounted for, right. We want to continue talking about the changeover within the UCLA Film and Television Archive that occurred from Bob [Robert F.] Epstein to Bob [Robert] Rosen—

GITT: Right.

SANETT: So if you want to chat a little bit about that changeover period, and then perhaps we can talk about how you developed the preservation program at the Archive.

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: Well, let's start with the changeover.

GITT: I'll try not to repeat anything, but, of course, it's a little hard to get started again.

SANETT: Absolutely.

GITT: When I joined the Archive back in 1977, it was largely because I was impressed with Bob Epstein, with the fact that he loved film and he had this wonderful collection of old Paramount [Pictures] and [20th Century] Fox films at UCLA. His enthusiasm was very infectious. That's really why I— When I moved out here to California and I determined I wanted to work for UCLA and, as I told you, I worked

for a year and a half working at Film Technology Company waiting for a job to open

up. And Harry Arends, who had been working with Bob Epstein, and Charles [S.] Hopkins and so forth left and then they were able to hire me.

And this is despite my criticisms I said earlier, I did like and respect Bob Epstein a lot, I'm just sorry that he had the problems that he did. But when I first started working there he was the reason I was there and so I kind of was on his team, as it were. I was kind of on his side, and, as I say, when I first started there, his attitude was that Bob Rosen— He used to say to me, "Rosen's working at my pleasure.

He's relieving me of the things that I don't want to do, and I can do what I'm good at, which is getting the films in, taking care of them, showing them to people and so on. I don't have to worry about all this administrative stuff; he takes care of that. But he serves at my pleasure." And as I mentioned before— You know, in hindsight, when you have somebody who basically reports to the university, takes care of the budget, takes care of all the administrative kinds of things, well, that is important. I have to admit, when I was younger, I never realized that people like myself, to a certain degree, and Bob Epstein, who are the hobbyists, the people who are excited and thrilled by these old movies and so forth— I used to think we were the people, because of our knowledge, because of our enthusiasm, because we cared, because we knew about all this stuff, because we worked up through the ranks, that we should be running organizations like this.

Now that I'm older I sort of realize—even though I don't totally like it—that the people who run organizations do have to have certain political skills and social skills and certain other ways of dealing with things. I think it's good if you have these skills and you have the knowledge and the genuine love of the field; I think that's the best thing of all. There's a tendency in America today, unfortunately, for a lot of bright but basically uninvolved, uninterested people to go to Harvard Business School and then come out and run whatever. They make Scotch tape one year and then they make automobiles the next and they run the UCLA Archive the next. That bothers me. I don't like that at all, but the truth is, a lot of administrative stuff—a lot of schmoozing and fund-raising and dealing with the university bureaucrats and so forth—does require certain kinds of skills that aren't necessarily related to loving old movies or knowing film history or whatever—I have to say that.

So in that sense Bob Epstein was the perfect person—and Howard Suber, to the degree that he was involved—to get the Archive started, to bring that enthusiasm and so forth to it. But as things evolved over time and as the Archive got bigger and as we got more professional and more support came from the university, obviously it had to change. And at that point, that's when Bob Rosen became a much more logical person than to run the Archive than Bob Epstein.

SANETT: When you say "obviously it had to change" when the university became more involved, are you referring to anything specific?

GITT: Well, I think at the point where they found that Bob Epstein had all these

flammable nitrate films squirreled away, under desks and in spare rooms out at Melnitz Hall, and started paying the money to rent the vault, because then the university was actually putting more money into the Archive. And the staff was getting a little bit bigger; they had hired me. When I first began there, as I recall, Bob Epstein was the curator. Bob Rosen had not too long ago taken the job as director. Charles Hopkins was there and now had a regular job; he volunteered, apparently. I believe he's been there even longer than I have. He goes way back to his student days when he was a UCLA student. There was a radio archivist, as I recall, Ron Staley, who was blind, interestingly—a perfect job for a blind person to be a radio archivist, which he was. Connie Mayer was the name of the woman who came in about the time I came in, who was the television archivist. Dan [Daniel] Einstein, who I think was maybe still a grad student and who is now the television archivist, was her assistant, kind of. Then we had Michael Lacoe who was like a part-time student worker, kind of, who was a nice fellow and everything. Those were the people working there when I joined.

But Bob Epstein had the attitude that everything was being done in spite of the university. He had a very disdainful attitude towards university bureaucrats, administrators and so on. His feeling was we have a great Archive here because we ignore the university, because we pay no attention to them. We do what we want to do because we know what we're doing. And he used to say, "One thing we will never do is, just because the Museum of Modern Art [Film Library] in New York does

something— We won't do it that way. We'll do it the opposite way." Because his feeling was that big institutions like the Museum of Modern Art were stuffy. They threw up roadblocks, they threw up red tape, they prevented people from seeing films, they were in it for the money, they were in it for the image, for the— Of course, I knew that, having been at the American Film Institute [AFI]. So many of these problems were present at the AFI—that the spirit just wasn't really there because it had all these problems of bureaucracy and red tape and just being in it to perpetuate themselves and so on. So I agreed with Bob Epstein and I was inspired that he felt this way. All of us kind of had this feeling we were scurrying around doing things without the university really quite knowing what we were doing. Now, there's a certain thrill to that I suppose, in the early years.

Well, then Bob Epstein started having these problems as I mentioned and so on. And Bob Rosen—partly because of his own ambitions, but partly because there was a vacuum there— Things weren't being taken care of. Bob Epstein wasn't answering letters. People would write in requesting films or the studio would ask to borrow something back and it would sit at his desk and he'd be too busy running movies for some students or something; he wouldn't notice it. So Bob Rosen had to take over some of this stuff. And then it came time to start writing grant applications and try to get some money for film preservation from the National Endowment for the Arts, which was at that time, I think, making independent grants, although shortly afterwards [we] did the granting process through the American Film Institute. But

initially, I believe it was just the National Endowment for the Arts. So Bob Rosen got more involved in that and actually about year after I got there is when we began the film preservation program—we'll talk about that in a minute.

Let me continue with the Bob Epstein/Bob Rosen thing. As time went on there were more and more little spats and disagreements and so on, and Bob Rosen began trying to take over a little more control of things. Bob Epstein, of course, resented this. There times when there would be disagreements about policies and so on and Bob Epstein used to call us in the office and say, "If push comes to shove, who's got the keys to vaults?," if you can imagine. The idea was that if Bob Rosen makes too much trouble or the university makes too much trouble, we've got the keys, we control the collection.

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: It was like manning the barricades and it was like the sixties—

SANETT: Yeah.

GITT: But this was the seventies, so it wasn't that far removed. It was a bit of a sixties mentality actually, which is sort of funny. There was an incident that happened I remember—I don't know when this was, around 1979-80, probably—that doesn't show me up in a very good light, but I'll mention it because may explain why subsequently, for a while, Bob Rosen and I didn't get along so well— I can partly understand his point of view about this. I don't remember the specifics, but I know that there was a policy that Bob Rosen had set down. Maybe it had to do with

handling nitrate film, perhaps not leaving nitrate film out overnight, always putting it away, something like that.

Just to digress for a moment, Bob Epstein used to talk about people who were "nitrate macho" and "nitrate nellie." He would say, "Rosen's a 'nitrate nellie'." "Nitrate nellie" to him was somebody who was just terrified of nitrate film; that anybody who worked with it knew that it was just fine, so long as you didn't light a cigarette or a match to it, it was no problem. So he was very bold and brave, obviously, putting this nitrate all over the place. But Bob Rosen was never comfortable having nitrate film around or wanting to be near it, so he was a "nitrate nellie".

Anyway, there was some rule that maybe Bob Rosen had formulated about putting nitrate away in the vaults, not leaving it in the hallways down at our new vaults in Hollywood at the old Technicolor [Motion Picture Corporation] plant. I think maybe that's what it was, but I could be wrong. Anyway, this was something I probably shouldn't have done, but I was out on—I was sometimes out in Hollywood, sometimes out on campus. Originally I started working on the campus in room 1438 Melnitz and in the viewing room around the corner there. Later, when we moved into the Hollywood vaults, I spent more and more time in the Hollywood vaults. I would actually do my film editing out— We had a Steenbeck [editing deck] out next to the viewing room near the men's room there in Melnitz Hall, right around the corner from the men's room and the elevator. That's where I did some of my initial

preservation projects for the National Endowment for the Arts, like *Macbeth* with Orson Welles and so forth, right there in the kind of viewing room or the little room off the viewing

room. But more and more, I would be called in to unpack films, help unload things, to label film cans, whatever, because I did everything in those days in Hollywood.

Well, anyway, there was something Bob Epstein was doing that he wasn't supposed to be doing. I don't know how this came up, but I happened to mention this— Maybe I was criticized for something by one of Bob Rosen's student assistants.

There's a fellow named Bob [Robert] Dawson who was one of Bob Rosen's students who was not secretary exactly, but he was sort of assistant—I guess is the word—who used to kind of hang around and hear things. So I mentioned something, that he reported back to Bob Rosen. Bob Rosen was looking, apparently, for ammunition to get Bob Epstein in trouble, and I didn't fully realize this. And I made some little comment about, "Well, Bob Epstein doesn't worry about things like that," or something like that. Anyway, to get to the point of my story, I was down at the vaults a few days or a couple weeks later working on something with Bob Epstein. All of a sudden, Bob Rosen and his assistant Bob Dawson showed up and confronted Bob Epstein about this infraction of whatever rule it was. Then they turned to me and said, "Now you told us that he did this. You told Bob Dawson that he did this, didn't you?"

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: I was just completely— And I thought, "Oh my God, what have I gotten myself into now?" And I still felt a loyalty of sorts to Bob Epstein; I really did, because I liked him. Bob Rosen I wasn't against, but I just didn't, you know, didn't feel the same loyalty. So basically I kind of denied it, which— I was being kind of two-faced about it. It was really too bad. Either way I didn't come out in a very good light. I kind of said, "Well—" Because I was right there with Bob Epstein and they confronted me to say that I criticized Bob Epstein, and I kind of— I don't remember how I waffled out of it, but I wouldn't confirm that I had criticized Bob Epstein, or that I "turned him in," as it were. And of course when they left, Epstein wasn't too happy with me, I wasn't happy with me, they were not happy with me.

From that time on, Bob Rosen, I think, felt I was not loyal to him, I was on the other side as it were. And indeed I kind of was. So for sometime thereafter, he wasn't all that friendly to me. And as Bob Epstein gradually got forced out and Bob Rosen took over more and more— I remember Bob Epstein said to me, "You don't have anything to worry about," he said. "Rosen doesn't care about film preservation, he's just in for himself. He's interested in getting ahead in his own career and he'll leave you alone because film preservation doesn't interest him at all." Well, as it turned out, both for good reasons and bad, whatever, that's not really true. Ultimately, Bob Rosen got very, very interested in film preservation and it became a very important thing and he began meeting lots of people in preservation, raising money for

preservation and so on. So Bob Epstein was wrong about that, but at the time his feeling was, "Don't worry. You don't have anything to worry about. I'm leaving now but Bob Rosen will leave you alone."

He also asked me if I could try to please see to it that the Archive continued in its free-spirited ways, and that we continued to collect nitrate film. He was worried that the people coming into the Archive were antagonistic to nitrate film, didn't care about old movies, etc., etc., etc., and he wanted me to carry the torch and so forth. And I said, well, I would do the best I could. Well, the truth is I have up to a certain degree. He wasn't completely right. There are still people there—and there are new people that have come in—who do care about these things. He needn't have been quite as pessimistic as he was.

On the other hand, in terms of Bob Rosen's policies and so forth, there is some reason for him to be a little bit concerned. The programming department, appointed by Bob Rosen, is far more interested in running films from third world countries, from foreign countries—modern films. Down deep, they don't really particularly care about films in our collection. The staff in the vault part of the preservation department has always felt that we have this wonderful collection of beautiful prints off original camera negatives from Paramount, from Warner Bros., from Fox, etc., etc.

It would be so wonderful to be able to show those and let people see them. We could be the last theater, the last place in the world that people could see these gorgeous prints. Yes, you could make the argument that these things are on

videotape now, now more than ever, on DVD, whatever, yes, of course.

But—particularly twenty years ago I'm talking about—but even today, there's something— If it were promoted properly, and I admit, the campus location with the six-dollar parking, which it is now, and out of the way, and a classroom-type situation is not the ideal place to do this. We would have had to have had a theater in Westwood or West L.A. or something. But I think done properly, the way David [W.] Packard has done it at his [Stanford] Theatre up in Palo Alto— I think we could have built up a big audience for these old movies and, particularly, the unique chance to see them the way they were originally shown, but that's never really happened.

I sound like I'm being critical of the programming department. The truth is they do an excellent job—they do a fine series. And the truth is, to be fair to them, today's college kids and students and so forth, really, for the most part, don't care about the old American movies. They are not that exposed to them, or if they are, they're part of class work, they don't really want to— And, yes, they are interested in what's being shown, so in that sense they're correct for their audience. But I like to think you can build an audience if you program things a little differently. But, anyway, I'm getting off on the wrong track here.

SANETT: Well, maybe that's because you built the audience with your work at Dartmouth [College].

GITT: Yes, that was true, I had had that. But I was at the advantage of being in the sixties when there was a lot of excitement about this. That has changed over the

years, so it's hard to know. But, anyway, I may have gotten off the track a little bit talking about the programming and everything.

Gradually— Bob Epstein finally left and Bob Rosen and I were not getting along all that well and Bob Rosen did some things that I didn't much care for. He would sometimes in public stand up and talk about the film that we were going to show that night—one that I worked many, many hours on, very hard on. He would sort of say, "And it was preserved by Bob Gitt" and would mumble my name [mutual laughter]—I remember that—so that nobody would hear what it was. This has all changed by the way, I hasten to say. He's been very nice in recent years, and I'm about to say some nice things about him too—

SANETT: Oh good.

GITT: —so don't think I'm just going to be critical of him.

SANETT: Can I just ask you when the changeover occurred, more or less?

GITT: To be honest with you, I don't exactly remember, but it was in the early eighties I would say.

SANETT: All right. So now he's saying your name out loud?

GITT: He gradually started saying my name out loud. There's something else that happened. Around '83-85, somewhere in there, I did a— We had preserved a lot of interesting short subjects, screen tests, behind-the-scenes kind of footage, showing the Hollywood studios in action—mostly screen tests and just rarities and interesting things. I put together a little show called *Behind the Scenes in Hollywood*—not that

it was that wonderful, but it was kind of nice and it had some just weird little things in which turn— We kept finding things in our vault, things that Bob Epstein collected over the years from different private collectors, things that [Berkeley Art Museum and] Pacific Film Archive used to send down from San Francisco private collectors. I put together this ninety minute program. It had Katharine Hepburn's first screen test in it.

Oh yes, some really neat stuff.

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: All kinds of interesting stuff. And behind-the-scenes glimpses at Universal Studios, and Uncle Carl Laemmle, the founder of Universal, talking to his salesmen in the midst of the Depression, urging them to "Stop giving our pictures away, charge higher rentals, boys. I want you to bring in more money to the studios." It was a good show. Actually, I presented it as part of Filmex one time. I remember Mel Torme came, who was a big film buff, and people like that, and got a big kick out of it.

Anyway, I did this at UCLA, and Geoff [Geoffrey] Gilmore, who has since gone on to great fame and glory as the head of the Sundance Film Festival, and who was just getting started in programming at UCLA at that time, who was a favorite student of Bob Rosen's, called me on the telephone down at the vaults, and said, "That program that you did a couple months ago, what films did you have in that?" I said, "We did so and so, and did Katharine Hepburn." Well, he said, "Oh, thanks very much." I had heard nothing more, but a few weeks later there was an article in *Variety* from the Venice Film Festival. It seems that Bob Rosen, director of the Archive, and Geoff

Gilmore had gone to the Venice Film Festival and had presented a program called *Behind the Scenes in Hollywood*, and it said the film was a wonderful program of rare film clips lovingly selected by Geoffrey Gilmore and Robert Rosen. I said, "Oh no—"

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: —you know? So I didn't care for that—

SANETT: No.

GITT: —very much.

SANETT: Did you ever say anything?

GITT: No, I didn't say anything about that, but— Now the thing is, when I first met Geoff Gilmore I was very unimpressed with him. He was a top grad student of Bob Rosen's, he was about to take over the programming at UCLA, [but] he didn't seem to know very much about films that I cared about. He seemed to have quite a quick temper, he seemed very unpleasant, he just didn't have much going for him at all. But I must say, very quickly, that over time he learned a hell of a lot. He learned what he had to do, he learned to organize programs. Where originally he didn't know how to put a series together— But he learned it all and he got very, very good at it. Today, he is a leading—the leading, maybe—person in independent film and the Sundance Film Festival. So I'm happy to say, my initial misgivings were wrong about him; he was very, very good.

In fact, the truth is, Bob Rosen's grad students—all of whom I was a bit

suspicious of at the time, being under Bob Epstein's influence—all turned out very well. Greg Lukow and Michael Friend, of course, now the director of the Academy [of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Film] Archive, who used to work in our Archive for a while. Who else am I thinking of? Steve [Steven] Ricci—"richey", I guess he pronounces it—who now works in the Archive— They all turned out fine, but— Anyway, I lost my train of thought again. Where am I?

SANETT: We're talking about the changeover—

GITT: Oh yeah, from one to the other.

SANETT: Yeah.

GITT: I've talked about all these unpleasant things about Bob Rosen. To continue that—before I get to the pleasant and the good things—there was a time right after I worked on *Becky Sharp*, and the Archive had a lot of favorable publicity about that, to our surprise— When we went into *Becky Sharp*, it was just this old, not that well-known film. It wasn't considered to be one of director Rouben Mamoulian's better productions. It didn't have a very terribly good reputation, but it was scientifically important as an early pioneer color film in early Technicolor, in full Technicolor. I got excited about doing it. I did go to Bob Rosen and make sure it was okay because I— Richard Dayton at YCM Lab[oratories,] who was going to be doing the work on it with me, estimated that it would cost \$18,000. This was in 1981.

It was a lot of money. We were usually we were spending \$10,000 and \$12,000 and \$8,000 on features at that time. It's gone way up since then. It's like \$30,000 now,

but at that time it was these lower— So I did go to Bob Rosen to get his approval in advance. Bob Rosen agreed that it was okay to spend \$18,000. Well, to get to one little point of the story, it wasn't \$18,000. By the time we were done—and we're still not done to this day, we're still doing things to improve the film twenty years later— But even at the time, it took three years and we spent over \$40,000 by the time—

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: I know. It went way over budget. It was very complicated, as it turned out, but even so— Anyway, in hindsight, Bob Rosen used to tell people, "Oh, we knew all along this was going to be a tremendous success, that it would create— The New York Film Festival would want to show it, we'd be—" Well, at the time that really wasn't true. I mean, I did it because I was interested in it from a historical and scientific and technical point of view and it was just something I wanted to do. And then to my surprise, the New York Film Festival wanted to run it and the London Film Festival. It got run all over the world, which was very nice for me. And to say something nice about Bob Rosen, he did not stand in my way as far as going on nice trips and going with the film and other films and so forth. By that time, it was beginning to—

SANETT: Snowball.

GITT: —be okay. He left the Archive for a couple of years to take over the American Film Institute's West Coast preservation operation. And interestingly enough, while he was away, the Archive continued to run just fine. Eddie [Edward] Richmond—who is now the curator of course—became the acting director of the

Archive and did a fine job. Eddie did not have, I guess, the public speaking skills. Because Bob Rosen is a very skilled lecturer and has the personality to engage people in things and so forth. Eddie is more of a behind-the-scenes kind of person who is good at making judgements and good at dealing with people and good at making decisions and so forth. He's not a necessarily a person who's comfortable, totally, speaking in public or being a front person in public, so in that one area he wasn't really right. But, otherwise, he did a fine job as the director, and then Bob Rosen came back. While Bob Rosen was away, everybody in the staff started taking the title of director. I don't remember thinking about it, but Geoff Gilmore became the director of programming, Eddie Richmond was the curator, I became I director of preservation, and so forth—

SANETT: Great.

GITT: Yes, it was nice. So I was director of preservation. After Bob Rosen came back he decreed that there would only be one director henceforth, so we all had our titles downgraded, if you will. And I became preservation officer, which was just a silly title, but it's based on a title at the Library of Congress—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. A fellow I used to know and like very much who's now retired, David Parker, had the title "technical officer" of the Library of Congress there, so I took the title preservation officer. So that's what I became. And Geoff Gilmore I guess became head of

programming and so forth and so on. And, actually, in hindsight, Bob Rosen's correct. I think an organization should have—unless it's a gigantic corporation—only one director, and he is correct about that. Anyway, when Bob Rosen became more successful, when he became known, he met Martin Scorsese, he met other leaders in the field—he went to AFI for the two years as I mentioned—When he came back he had more confidence in himself, he was becoming successful in his own right. He wasn't just basking in, quite frankly, my reflected glory a little bit, which he was in the first couple of years, because the preservation that we were doing was what getting UCLA on the map at that time. But he was now becoming a person in his own right. As that happened, to his credit he began, in effect, getting along with me; I got along with him, he got along with me. And so from that point on—I would say from the middle of the eighties, certainly the late eighties through the end of the nineties, as time went on—I began feeling more and more favorable towards him and better towards him and he began treating me much more fairly. He was good. He got me promotions when they were called for, he did approve travel and so forth when it was called for. Not as perks, just when it seemed to be appropriate and so on. So in recent years we've actually got along quite well.

I will say this, just to give an overall thing about him, there is feeling on the part of many people on the staff that he is somebody who didn't do very much for the Archive as director. That he basically was always looking after his own career, that he was looking after getting the chairmanship of the department, that he was looking

after making contacts and connections that would help him and that the Archive was pretty much just sort of shoved aside; he didn't spend much time thinking about it or dealing with it. I think that's maybe a little unfair because there are probably a lot of things he did behind the scenes that we don't know about. Also, there's no question, at a time of deep budget cutting, when the state of California was in bad financial trouble, he kept us going, and we can never forget that. He kept us going within the university. We could have been closed down or severely cut back; we were not. We didn't have the support we needed, no. We still don't to this day; we're very short-handed and short funded. But at a time when fine departments and wholesale departments were being closed down, we were kept open, so I've got to give Bob Rosen credit for that. I will have to say some nice things about him too. He's very good at chairing meetings, he's very good at schmoozing with people, he has political skills and social and diplomatic skills.

People sometimes wondered why I didn't try to become the director of the Archive or some similar thing. I have to admit, and as time has gone on, because of— Yes, I know about a lot about film history; yes, I work very, very hard; and I'm the person who did do an awful lot of these interesting preservation projects that helped to put us on the map. No question about it. But when it comes to those kinds of political skills and being able to work with other people, manipulate other people and so forth, I don't have them, or I don't have them to the degree that's necessary. And as I get older now and a little more mellow or something, I realize

you have to have people like this. This is what President [William J.] Clinton is like.

Bob Rosen is a politician, basically. Mary Lea Bandy of the Museum of Modern Art is a politician. The people that become the heads of organizations, that's part of what they have to be. So I may grumble and criticize and say, well, they don't really know that much about film history, they didn't really come up in the ranks, they didn't really— But the truth is, they knew what they needed to know and they're good at what they do. So I'll have to grant them that. And we've been pretty cordial to each other. I don't like saying the negative things I've said, but I had my run-ins and troubles with him through the years, partly starting, as I did, as Bob Epstein's team and then gradually shifting gears a little bit.

SANETT: Is Bob Rosen the current director of the Archives?

GITT: No, no, he has done very, very well for himself. He has now risen above everybody. He is the dean of the entire School of Theater, Film, [and]

Television—everything—and has gotten to the top. We now have a new director, Tim [Timothy] Kittleson, whom I'm very impressed with so far. He has only been here at this point six months, eight months? Eight months, I guess. He came in a way that I had some concerns about. He's a marketing person, he's a businessman.

He was with the American Film Market for many, many years, which I guess handles sales of all kinds of independent films and so on. This is not the kind of person, offhand, I would find inspiring as a leader. Not a person like Bob Epstein who loves and breathes and is emotional about old movies. But the way he's performed, at least

as far as the staff is concerned, he's spent much more time with all of us than Bob Rosen ever did. He spent more time the first month than Bob Rosen did in twenty years—we saw more of him. He comes to our meetings at the vaults, he makes an effort to take part in things, to be actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the Archive. He seems to me to be a very good leader. I think he's going to be very good. Once again, I think he does have an interest in the arts, and I think he does have an interest in movies—not a deep, deep one, but as I say, overall, he's the right kind of person for this job. We need to raise funds very badly right now; we need to do that. I think he's going to be good at that.

SANETT: What sort of agenda does he have in terms of choosing projects for preservation?

GITT: Well, the truth is, this is something that— I can talk about that. At this point, he doesn't really have agendas for choosing projects for preservation. The truth is, to a large degree—and this is going to sound self-serving, but it's the truth—I have chosen the projects to preserve through the years, for the most part. That has changed in recent years. I now do it less than I used to for reasons of outside factors.

But in the early years of the preservation program, I selected all of the films that we preserved. That's not something maybe they want people to know, but I basically did, and they— Bob Rosen would never agree with that, but that's the truth—I really did. In 1978, '79, '80 and so on, I picked the features we were going to do, I picked the shorts. There wasn't anything controversial about it because we had just gotten in a

lot of negatives from Republic [Pictures] studios, and I went out through and picked the most important ones: Orson Welles's *Macbeth*, obviously, being a case in point. And then *Becky Sharp* and so on. I did not pick the B westerns or the ones that people would be a little less interested in, although those are interesting too, by the way. We've done some of those. But certainly for the first decade or so I made the choices and I was pretty much left alone. Bob Rosen didn't really have any input into it, was not that interested in it. Eddie Richmond for a long time after he became the curator pretty much just let me decide what I wanted to do.

As things evolved, as the Archive got bigger, as the government began cutting back on the National Endowment for the Arts and the AFI and we began losing our grants— In fact, just to give you an idea, the first year that I really started film preservation work around 1978 we got a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]. The second year I think it was increased to \$50,000. Then we got \$75,000 the third year. By the early 1980s, we were getting \$100, 000; \$125,000; and \$150,000 a year. Then Ronald [W.] Reagan was elected and the budget was slashed to \$125,000, and then virtually nothing. The NEA to a very limited degree still has specialized sort of grants, but it's nothing like it used to be. In the early years the money was given virtually with no strings attached; I could just write down the things I wanted to do.

Now, before I sound like it's me, me, me, I did it all— Did I listen to other people? Of course. People on the faculty, professors, students, other members of

the staff— Charles Hopkins, very knowledgeable about our collection, he would come with suggestions. And of course in the early years, Bob Epstein, obviously, and so on. But as far as the preservation program, I really took it over, that was kind of like my thing. That's what I'd been doing at AFI, and after the first year and a half of just rewinding films and shipping films and manning the viewing room and moving films into the vaults, I began spending more and more of my time on the preservation program—deciding what to do, working on it, working with the labs and so on and going on from there. So that was the way it was.

As I said though, in recent years, because the money now comes mostly from private individuals like Hugh Hefner and David Packard or from private foundations like the David and Lucille Packard Foundation or the Mary Pickford Foundation or the Cecil B. DeMille Trust and so on, all of these organizations and individuals quite rightfully and quite understandably— If they're going to give money to something like this, a lot of money, they want to have it go to projects that they care about and they believe in.

I must say, immediately, before anyone misunderstands here, there's good things and bad things about this. The bad thing is, when we had the virtually unrestricted money from the NEA—the National Endowment for the Arts—I could in many cases, with help from other people in the staff, determine which films were deteriorating and were in trouble, that we better get to right away and try to save. [We could] figure out which early silent films were really very interesting because

they showed American cities the way they looked in 1912 or whatever or because they were important in the early days of film history—new techniques were being evolved in some of these films and so on. Or they maybe featured an actor or director who later became very important. We had this flexibility.

Today, a lot of things in our vaults are rotting away, slowly but surely. There's a lot of interesting projects we could be working on, but we don't have the money to support them anymore. What we do have is money for the big famous titles, the films with Marlene Dietrich, the films with Claudette Colbert, the films directed by Billy Wilder—that kind of thing. Now, let me say however, the people who give us our funds, I must say, have very good taste. We've gotten a lot of support for some very wonderful films, particularly from David Packard, and from Hugh Hefner too. Hugh Hefner loves musicals, particularly Bing Crosby musicals and anything involving jazz. He loves murder mysteries and detective films. And I think that's great, so we've done a lot of Sherlock Holmes films with his support, we've done a couple of Bing Crosby musicals and short subjects and things with his support.

That's neat. David Packard loves the great directors like Ernst Lubitsch, and Josef von Sternberg and Rouben Mamoulian. He loves beautiful actresses—Marlene Dietrich and the glamorous people. We hadn't done any [Greta] Garbo films, but that kind of thing. And he likes quality films, particularly the civilized, sophisticated films that Paramount made in the 1930s, and that's wonderful. And to be completely fair to David Packard, from time to time he does allow us to do a project that I'm

excited about or some of the rest of us are excited about, even though he himself isn't all that thrilled about it. Or once he sees the film, he sort of says, "Well, I didn't really like it very much, but all right," you know? He does support some things, and he's been very good about that. He does support films that he doesn't necessarily like himself. But for the most part, obviously, we want him to be happy and so on.

So more and more of the preservation decisions, in a sense, are now being heavily influenced by outside people. So I don't, in that sense, have as much control over it—by any means—as I used to. We're a much bigger organization now. I used to write all the grant applications myself in the early years; I don't do that anymore. Now Donna Ross, Eddie Richmond, and Charles Hopkins write them, and they have their own ideas and input. To be totally fair, they consult with me, they tell me, you know—I give them ideas, they give me their ideas, and I say, "Oh, that's great," and I pretty much go along with everything. I don't really have veto power—I wouldn't say—any more. In that sense I don't have the same amount of power that I used to have at one time—not that I vetoed things—but, when I just pretty much had—We were smaller and I just kind of did it all. I used to take care of all the aspects in the early years, but it was much smaller then.

SANETT: As a preservationist, I have to ask you, the film that's lying in cans rotting, is it at least being copied to safety [film]?

GITT: No, what we are doing—In the early years of the Archive, the staff was small and I kind of stood out because doing these exciting preservation projects and so forth.

But as we've gotten bigger and as new people have joined, there's some wonderful people in different areas, like the commercial services people—Howard Hays and the people who work with him—who bring us in money which is very helpful, particularly when these lean years when the budget was being cut and so on. I mean, they do a great job. The cataloging people— I mean, it's wonderful what we have—and too bad ORION2 has turned out to be such a disaster— But basically the stuff that they do and the research they do and the fact that I can now find all this information and my staff in preservation can now find what we have, which we never used to know in the Bob Epstein days— It was all in his head, or written down on scraps of paper in drawers and things. Well, now it's wonderful. And basically, in every area we have very good people working there now, and a lot of people with good ideas and so forth, so we get preservation suggestions from all over. It's good, I'm glad that's the way it is.

SANETT: When you arrived at the Archive, was there a preservation program in place?

GITT: No, not really. Before we answer that question, I didn't answer your last question. You asked about films rotting away and are we copying them. We try to do some of them if we can, but it's hard to raise the money for some of the more obscure ones now. Even some that aren't so obscure, if they're not really big famous films it's hard to get that money. But what we do have, and this is why I was going to say, where other people in the staff have done incredible stuff that I have not

stepped up to the plate to do very much or was not interested in doing that's important—

The preservation staff and the vault staff through the years have an ongoing— This is something Eddie Richmond has been very good about promoting—and he's very right, too—is safety and the care of the collection. In other words, going through the whole collection every two years— We do the entire newsreel library one year—the Hearst [Metrotone] News [Collection], which I didn't talk about, we got millions of feet of old nitrate newsreels. Something Bob Rosen can take credit for, something that I had nothing to do with it at all. And the fiction film part of the collection— In alternate years the staff goes into every single vault that we have—and we have close to sixty nitrate vaults with a million feet in each vault— They open every can and look for signs of film deterioration—the frothing and bubbling and powdering on the edges of the film. And when they find it, we then sit down and determine which films we should try to save as best we can. There are some things that are already very incomplete or very deteriorated that we might as well just throw more of it away, but there are other films that even though it may not be complete, it's an important film, or it's a film that we believe may be worth trying to copy some day.

The same people then wind through the films. It's like cancer. If you cut out the part that's deteriorating, you can save the rest of the reel. So we have saved a lot of films that way, and every year— This is a very hard job, it smells, it has unpleasant fumes, it's probably not healthy; we try to do it outside in the open where there's a lot

of air, but even so it's not a pleasant task. It has to be done every single year and nobody wants to do it, but it's important.

The truth is there have been a number of pictures that I later worked on, like *Louisiana Story* by Robert Flaherty, where we had lost parts of that negative, but because of this program of going through and cutting just the minimum amount necessary to keep it from spreading we were able to save— When I did *Louisiana Story* with Eric Aijala about two years ago we were able to use— We still had about eighty percent, roughly, of the original camera negative. Had we not taken care of it, had it just [been] allowed to fester in the vaults and bubble and froth and foam and so on, we probably would have had to throw the whole thing away, and the quality on the screen wouldn't have been as beautiful as it is today.

SANETT: That would have been quite a loss.

GITT: Yes, it would have been quite a loss, so—

SANETT: What films have you saved that way?

GITT: Well, it's hard to remember off the top of my head, but there have been an awful lot of films that— I mean, we got to a lot of films before they began deteriorating. I will say this, one of the disconcerting things now that I've been at UCLA for twenty-three years is that some of the films that I worked on in the later seventies—and I'll get to that question in a minute—and the early eighties, the nitrate has now begun to deteriorate. I'm glad that we made fine-grain master positives and we made prints when we did. The really scary thing is that some of the early prints

that we made in 1978 are now getting vinegar syndrome, yes, because enough time has gone by, because our storage conditions used to be very poor. When we first moved into Television Center, the nitrate—in fact, it's true to this day—is stored in un-air conditioned, non-temperature controlled vaults.

SANETT: Now?

GITT: Now, yes. The nitrate is not stored properly; it's all we can afford, it's the best we have. It's the vaults that Technicolor used for many, many years to store their negatives and matrices and so forth, but it is not state of the art at all.

SANETT: That's a little scary.

GITT: Yeah. And in the summertime, the vaults near the roof, the temperature goes up, sometimes in the low eighties. Now, nitrate film normally does not ignite at anything like that temperature, it has to be much, much hotter. But under certain conditions, if the film is deteriorating inside a can and is producing gases that are building up and if the temperature is in the eighties and should there be any kind of spark or anything— Or even without a spark, sometimes films can spontaneously ignite even when the temperature is high, but not as high as it would normally be because it's deteriorating. That's one very important reason why we have to inspect the collection every year. Until just a few years ago our safety film was stored under similar conditions at Television Center—in the big room where Technicolor used to have their dye-transfer printing machinery. By the time we moved in in 1978 all that had been cleared out and they closed it down. In this gigantic room we had metal

shelves and we stored our entire acetate film collection. When I first started in this field I had no idea, and most people had no idea, that acetate wasn't going to last very long.

SANETT: They didn't know it.

GITT: We thought it was going to last for hundreds of years, we didn't know it, and [Eastman] Kodak [Company] didn't tell us; nobody told us.

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MAY 23, 2000

GITT: You have to understand that as years go on, the standards are being raised everywhere—at UCLA, at all the other archives around the world. The quality of the preservation work that I did in the early years, in the late seventies— Certainly back in the early seventies at AFI , then in the late seventies and early eighties at UCLA, I could do much better work today. I am better today than I was then. The laboratories that we go to are much better today, the equipment is much better today, the technology— We have wonderful new tools like digital restoration of sound and the picture now too—

SANETT: Amazing.

GITT: —that are marvelous that we didn't have back then. The truth is when people in the future look back on some of the early things that I worked on, they're going to wonder why I had any reputation at all because, of the early stuff that I did—I would love to do it all over again—I could do a better job now. Not only am I better and more skilled at doing the editing work and the assembly work and recreating the titles and doing all that kind of stuff, but the technology is so much better now, with the wet—

In the early years when I first started, we didn't have wet printing. It wasn't unheard of, but in terms of the labs that we went to, they did not have wet printing which, of course, takes the scratches out quite beautifully. We didn't have any of the

digital technology, we didn't have a lot of stuff that they now have. Film stocks have improved; grain is much finer now. It's just all kinds of—

And the people at the labs have all learned all the little tricks to print shrunken film and to prevent flare in the printer. People don't know about things like that, but if you get light scattering when a film is printed, or either a negative is being printed or a positive print is being printed, it actually degrades the image. You can't quite put your finger on why it's a little disappointing when you see it projected or see it even on television, but everything kind of has a smudgy, muddy, grayed-in sort of feeling. It's because light is flaring around and filling in areas. Like you have a black object next to a white object, and the black is kind of smearing into the white object—maybe over the whole object. So instead of being sparkling white, it's a bit gray now, or that kind of thing. That's something that today is happening far less because of improvements in printing machinery and optics and lenses and so forth.

Louisiana Story is a case in point. Our new prints of *Louisiana Story* where we had the original camera negative edited by Helen Van Dongen and Robert Flaherty back in 1948, our new prints are sharper and actually look better and less—I don't know what the word is—less muddy looking than the prints that were made in 1948 when the film was brand-new. We have a couple of those, we had—or on loan—and also we have one in our collection. There was flare going on in the printing at that time that we don't have today, and so the film actually looks better than it did originally. It's hard to say that to people—

SANETT: It's amazing.

GITT: —but it's true. People sometimes talk about the beauty of nitrate film and what's called the nitrate look. Kevin Brownlow, for example, goes on and on about nitrate and how wonderful it is. Well, he's right, but he's missing something too; he's missing the point a little bit. Yes, there's no question—in the twenties and the thirties and the forties, there was absolutely gorgeous black-and-white cinematography being done, beautiful prints being made on nitrate film and being projected beautifully in theaters and it was great. But what makes these things look so good isn't that nitrate film is inherently superior to acetate film or polyester film. It certainly isn't that the transparent base is in any way superior. Transparent film is transparent film; you coat an emulsion on it, it doesn't matter whether it's nitrate, acetate or polyester, okay?

The idea that there's something about nitrate—the flammable film per se— It's not true, there's nothing special about nitrate.

What's special was, first of all, the talent of the cinematographers in those days.

Black and white is today, for the most part, somewhat of a lost art. There aren't too many people who know how to photograph black and white anymore. There aren't too many laboratories that know how to print black and white anymore, and an awful lot of people don't have a clue as to what black and white should look like. They make it looked very washed out, with gray and white, if you will, or they make it look like a xerox—all black and all white. They don't know that beautiful point where the image comes to life and sparkles the way it should. So people don't know how to

photograph black and white anymore—and of course, I'm generalizing here.

Obviously there's some Woody Allen films and some other films that have been done in black and white that look beautiful, but on the whole, most people don't know how to photograph black and white anymore. Most labs don't know how to develop it or print it anymore. That's number one—the stuff was just beautifully made.

Number two, the films and the prints that went to movie theaters in the thirties and forties were, almost always in this country, made directly from the camera negative; they did not have good duplicating film at that time. When we find old master positives from the 1930s—they were called 'lavenders' quite often, because they were on an early kind of master positive stock that actually has a faint blueish tinge, but for some reason people call them lavenders as though they have a slight lavender tinge, it's really more of a blue-ish tinge— Anyway, the quality of the lavender master positive stock, the quality of the duplicate negative stock in the thirties—certainly the early thirties, even as late as the late thirties—was terrible by today's standards. Very grainy, very milky, not very sharp, flare— Everything gets degraded about the image and the sound when it goes through these duplication processes. So for that reason—they knew it at the time that the stock wasn't very good— All the theaters in America for the most part saw beautiful prints right off the camera negative. So they would take a production that they spent a lot of money on, like, say, *Citizen Kane*, whatever—of course, that had a lot of optical work, so it's not all original camera negatives, but even so—and they would churn out three

hundred prints of it, obviously with great care, and then put the negative on the shelf. So this is the reason that when you do find old nitrate prints, they sparkle and they're so beautiful. That's something you have to take into account: it's just the fact that they were off the camera.

When we have, today, an original negative like *Louisiana Story* or like *The Smiling Lieutenant* by Ernst Lubitsch from 1931, it really looks gorgeous. And this is on modern safety film, which in some ways is better than the nitrate film because the grain is much finer; it's not adding additional grain that the old nitrates had. So we can actually—by going to a good laboratory like YCM, or Cinetech, or Triage [Motion Picture Services] or John E. Allen today—make new prints on polyester film that really look absolutely magnificent, if we have something good to work with. So often what people see today are films that are many generations down that have been duplicated badly in the past and then have a lot of flaws built into them which you can't get rid of. And the truth is, no matter how good you are, no matter how good I might be or how good the laboratories we go to are, if we start with something that's grossly inferior, we're going to come up with a bad look on the screen. You can't perform miracles. Maybe in the future with the digital electronic technology, when the cost comes down—as you know it's astronomical at the moment—maybe some miracles can be performed at that point where you can put some life back into badly copied film, but the costs will still be very high I suspect, so you want to get it done right the first time if you possibly can.

SANETT: I suspect the cost is going to remain high for—

GITT: Probably remain high—

SANETT: —a while.

GITT: —yeah.

SANETT: Let me go back to asking you about when you came into the UCLA Archive, there was not preservation program—

GITT: Almost no preservation program. Let's be completely truthful about this.

Bob Epstein, the year before I got there—I think in 1976, '77—he did do two films, maybe three. There was a Fox film called *The Man Who Came Back*, a silent film that he determined was a one of a kind, unique copy. Somehow he raised some funds.

I don't know where he got them from, but a negative was made of that movie, which has since deteriorated. I'm sorry to say the negative was dreadful. In fact, the negative is almost unusable today. It was done at the wrong contrast, it was done at the wrong exposure, and it's practically black basically. We still have this negative, but it is really, really bad.

SANETT: Yeah.

GITT: So in a sense, it didn't get preserved it was so bad. I think there was another film called *Goldie* with Jean Harlow and another film called *Soup to Nuts* with the Three Stooges from 1931—around in there. I believe Bob Epstein was able to raise some money, and he went to Film Technology Company, where I was actually

working—

SANETT: For Ralph [Sargent].

GITT: —at that time, and got them to make composite dupe negatives of picture and sound from these old Fox Studio prints. So those three pictures—this is to the best of my knowledge, now—were done before I got there. But after I got there, that's when we started getting the regular grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and that's when I started doing a lot of the early Fox pictures, and *Macbeth* and a lot of the Republic pictures and so on.

SANETT: How did you segue from lab assistant to preservationist? And did they call it "preservation"?

GITT: Well, I had been doing— There was the archive at American Film Institute and I was doing film preservation there, so we did call it film preservation at that time—and restoration, I guess, we called it as well. I knew that's what I wanted to do, but that wasn't really my title as it were. I gradually got promoted through the years.

I do know at the time of *Becky Sharp*, when that came out and it was selected to be shown at the New York Film Festival— Doesn't seem like anything today, but at the time it was a nice milestone for the Archives because we were finally being recognized, in a sense the way that, in the past, the Museum of Modern Art or the George Eastman House [International Museum of Photography and Film] or whatever would have a big show at the New York Film Festival. Well, now we had a show at the New York Film Festival. Well, that was at the time that I got promoted. That's

when I got the title director of preservation [mutual laughter], later changed to preservation officer, so I guess it's about '84, '85, around in there.

SANETT: Which is when preservation came in as a title and became more official?

GITT: Yeah, yeah, pretty much.

SANETT: What sort of projects have you worked on, preservation-wise? What are the names of the films?

GITT: Of course, preservation-wise, there were a lot of films from the early years from the Republic collection, like *[The] Specter of the Rose* and *Macbeth*, and *The Quiet Man* and *Rio Grande* by John Ford and so forth. I lost my train of thought here, but—

SANETT: I'm asking—

GITT: Personally, I'm interested in film preservation—definitely. That is, basically, getting good copies made by the laboratories and making sure they're good and putting them on the shelf and taking straightforward projects and just doing them. But I always find it much more exciting and interesting, personally, to be involved in restoration projects where you have a film that's in trouble, that's been censored, or is incomplete or is missing a reel or is missing a scene, or the quality is bad, and we found a better element [so] we can bring it back and make it look beautiful again. Either in terms of the color, of the sound, of the black-and-white picture, those are the things that I really do get more excited by.

I'm not very good off the top of my head remembering all the films we worked

on. And of course, they're listed in the [UCLA Film and Television Archive] Festival [of] Preservation brochures each year. But through the years, it's sometimes the films that are most interesting to work on from an editing point of view and a discovery point of view and a finding-things-and-putting-it-back-together point of view are not necessarily always the greatest films or the films that bring the big audiences out. I've worked just as hard as a lot of the obscurer B pictures as I have on the famous ones. And some of the famous ones that I've worked on that it's very nice to know in my mind I worked on these films, or to have it on my resume or whatever, or to show it in the preservation— But even so, they weren't terribly interesting. You know, *Double Indemnity*, a wonderful— I love *Double Indemnity*, it's a wonderful film—the Billy Wilder film. But that was pretty much a preservation thing. We got a nitrate fine-grain from Universal; the lab, YCM, made a dupe negative from it. I did rerecord the sound from the fine-grain. I sat in and spent several hours and did that, but— We put leaders on it, we made a new track negative, and the lab printed it. I'm glad we did it, it's wonderful, but it wasn't an exciting restoration project, you know? Whereas—

SANETT: What was—

GITT: —Sorry, go ahead.

SANETT: —what was an exciting restoration project?

GITT: Well, some pretty obscure films were very interesting. *Legong: Dance of the Virgins*, which is one of the last films ever made in the old red and green two-color

Technicolor process around 1935. It was shot by [Constance] Bennet's husband—who was also Gloria Swanson's husband at one time—the Marquis [Henri] de la Falaise or whatever. Anyway, I think he just wanted to go to Bali to look at the naked native women or something, that's why he made this movie, but it's got a lot of nudity and stuff. Anyway, that we put together three different prints, one from Canada, one from England and one from our exploitation Sunny Amusement Company collection at UCLA. We have a lot of old exploitation—sex movies, if you will—although they're called exploitation films. They're very tame by today's standards, but this was one of them. It's because it's an all-native cast— It's a bit like F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*. Have you ever seen *Tabu*? Well, *Legong* is like a color version of *Tabu*, but not directed by F.W. Murnau. It's like a poor man's version of *Tabu*. Anyway, it has a lot of, basically, female nudity in it, naked breasts and so on.

And these were censored; the American version had virtually all of the nudity— All the close-ups were removed right in the camera negative. They actually did a different print with long shots or with bushes just in the way.

SANETT: Strategically.

GITT: Strategically. The British print had all the nudity in it, but the American print had a cockfight— I'm for animal rights; I don't like animals being mistreated, but the American print had a cockfight in it—some violence. Blood, and chickens pecking each other; that was removed from the British print. So in other words, each of these prints had different scenes removed and different scenes censored and so forth.

That was fun to put it back together again.

Oddly enough, it's a film that, at the time I was working on it, nobody thought it was very important or interesting, but we ran it at the Pordenone [Silent] Film Festival [Italy]. In a sense, it is a silent movie, even though it was made in 1935. It just has a musical score, a native cast and titles. It doesn't have any talking, so it is a silent film. It's one of the last silent films, up there with [Charlie] Chaplin's *Modern Times* actually. It's one of the very last silent films ever made and a lot of people have found it very interesting. The Netherlands [Audiovisual] Archive purchased a print of it. There's a group of Balinese—if I'm saying correctly—musicians who apparently have been appearing live and playing along with it—the native music and so on. So it's kind of had a life of its own after that, I never would have thought.

Another film I enjoyed working on was film called *The Divine Lady* from 1929.

Not *The Divine Woman* with Greta Garbo, which is a famous lost Garbo film, but this is a film directed by Frank Lloyd for which he won an Academy Award, along with some other films he made that year. He won an award for directing three different movies, and I preserved two out of the three of them, I think, *Weary River* and *Divine Lady*. *Divine Lady* is a story of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. It's the same story as the Laurence Olivier/Vivien Leigh version, *The Hamilton Woman*.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: Or known as *The Lady Hamilton* also. That was an interesting one because we had to print—It was done in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art, but

the work was done here. That was one where we had a print that came through the Museum of Modern Art from the Czech Republic, or the Czechoslovakian Film Archive I guess it was just called back at that time. And this was an American film that had a Vitaphone score—sound on disk. Well, we found the disks at Warner Bros., so we had the soundtrack—all sound effects and music, no talking—There's a song at one point. We found a continuity that listed the title cards and what they were supposed to say in English. There were two slightly different versions using alternate takes that both came from the Czech Archive by way of the Museum of Modern Art. Both of them full of titles in Czech that all had to be replaced with new title cards shot in English. There were fade-outs and fade-ins missing that we had to put in. There were inserts of letters that we had to recreate and write letters in handwriting and so on to match the original. That's the kind of thing I really enjoy and I got a big kick out of working that. When we showed it at Melnitz Hall, maybe ninety people came to see it. Nobody got that excited.

Noah's Ark was another one I worked very hard on—a Michael Curtiz spectacle from 1928, a late silent, early part-talking picture. *The Power and the Glory* that I've been working on right now, which I worked on originally at AFI twenty-five years ago, now revisited again and we've made it a lot better. That's an interesting one from a restoration standpoint—

SANETT: How is it interesting?

GITT: Well, to get the quality of it as good as possible, we copied as much as we could from UCLA's— It's actually the Fox Studio print deposit at UCLA, which is literally flaking apart and falling to pieces—the splices are all drying out; the sprocket holes are all cracking. Every time we put it through the printer, more of it would break up. But we got enough of it through that we were to improve the picture quality tremendously over the material that 20th Century Fox had on the film, which was very poor from one of these grainy, old duped negatives and terrible master positives that I spoke about earlier that was made back in the thirties. What they had at 20th Century Fox was a duped negative from the thirties that had been sent to France to be used to make prints with a French-dubbed soundtrack. So the soundtrack that they had at times it lapses into French, at times it's in English. There are words missing; there are scenes that are completely silent. The picture quality is grainy, the picture shakes and moves around on the screen and there are streaks and muddles— We still have to use some of this material of course, because the nitrate print, unfortunately, was run to death by the studio. They didn't keep the original negative; they didn't keep a series of good prints of this important movie in their history. They took the one print they did have and ran it for directors and people through the years and wore it out. So by the time we got it at UCLA the beginning and end of every reel was trash—was thrown away. So by combining the best of that print with the material that 20th Century Fox had, blowing up some parts, enlarging some parts from a 16mm print that Darryl F. Zanuck had made for Preston Sturges in

the forties when he was directing for Fox, when he made *Unfaithfully Yours* with Rex Harrison— I guess he got his own print of this movie that was a favorite of his because it was very important in his career, *The Power and the Glory*. That was made from that same terrible, duped negative with scenes dubbed into French, but through the years Fox had lost additional scenes, had tried to do their own restorations and cobbled things together and had thrown pieces away, so we wound up— There are actually some shots that today only exist in the 16mm print, so we had to enlarge those. The soundtrack was a forest of crackles and pops and clicks and noises. The print got scratched through the years. The quality of the photographic copying of the track that Fox had was very poor, so it was distorted and noisy. The work that had been done by sound studios in the early nineties to try to restore the soundtrack was dreadful. Anyway, we went back to all the elements and put it through digital processing and got it to be much, much better than it was before. We also did keep a copy of it the way it was, too, because that's important for the future because technology is always advancing and twenty or thirty years from now people will go back to the one that we did and say that they could do better than that. That's why we try to keep all of the different stages of these restorations so when the technology improves, they can go and do them again. That's why I would like to now do all the things I did over again.

SANETT: Right, revisit them.

GITT: Revisit them. But one of the things I was getting at, we had some fun things.

There's a scene in the film in which one of the characters is writing. Spencer Tracy plays the lead, and his best friend is played by Ralph Morgan. Ralph Morgan, in the movie, is going to business college and is writing a letter to his friend Tom, played by Spencer Tracy—this is an important plot point which I won't go into. But anyway, in all the material— First of all, that whole bit of the film is completely missing from our nitrate print. It had been destroyed through bad, careless projection years ago. The material from France and the material that Preston Sturges had, at that point— They put a French insert in, so it has a hand—not Ralph Morgan's hand, some other hand—writing in French, "My Dear Friend" whatever, in French. We couldn't figure out how to fix this, so what did we do we decided to shoot— We had Preston Sturges' screenplay and we know what the letter is supposed to say. Part of the letter is quoted later on in the film, so we knew what it was supposed to say.

So what we did was, on eBay, we bought— Nancy Mysel, who has now joined the preservation staff, found on eBay an old inkwell which is like the one in the scene where— Before we cut to the close-up of the letter, there's a medium shot showing Ralph Morgan at an old writing desk in the year 1900 or 1895 with an old fountain pen writing this letter. Well, we found an old fountain pen, we got the original type of inkwell, we got a piece of wood, we got paper that looks kind of old— Schawn Belston at 20th Century Fox, who was my co-restorationist, if you will, because he was really very actively involved in this and, indeed, helped to raise the funds from his bosses at 20th Century Fox to do this project. He was able to get us a costume used

in the film *Titanic*—that was purported to be 1912. It was an old jacket that had a certain pattern that was like the one Ralph Morgan was wearing. And the writer of the movie, *The Power and the Glory*, Preston Sturges, later a great director, his son, Tom Sturges, who was born in the fifties not long before Preston Sturges died actually, is now himself still a relatively young man. He expressed an interest in filling in the shot, being the person who writes the letter in lieu— Or not having the correct shot, because, it turns out, that his own father— His father, Preston Sturges— When he became a director, whenever there was a letter in any of his movies, it was in his handwriting. Whenever a hand is seen writing a check, being cashed in the bank, it is Preston Sturges' own hand and his own handwriting.

SANETT: Oh, I didn't know that.

GITT: Yes, so Tom Sturges, imitating this old-fashioned lettering style of the year 1900, but has written in his hand in honor of his father. And he is wearing this *Titanic* costume jacket and we have this close-up and it fits in pretty well. And the other neat thing is the sound was missing; there was a musical score that's missing bits and pieces in all of this material. Once again, I'm happy to say, Schawn Belston, who works on the lot at 20th Century Fox, went to the music department. They still had the original orchestra parts—

SANETT: Amazing.

GITT: —for the sheet music from 1933. And it was arranged through Tom Sturges and Schawn Belston to get some musicians—some of it's done with a synthesizer,

some of it's done with actual musicians. We were able to fill in the missing background music. See, that's the kind of stuff that I enjoy doing.

SANETT: And it sounds exciting.

GITT: Yeah, it is, yeah.

SANETT: Is that project done now?

GITT: In effect it's done, we got it all done— There was a showing of some Preston Sturges films at the National Film Theatre in London about two or three weeks ago and we were kind of aiming for that. The next show is going to be at our preservation festival this summer; it's on the opening weekend of the festival. We did get it done, but in effect what we got was the first answer-print done. We're now going back. There's a few places in the film where the image still jitters slightly, and we're going to go back and try to print those again. There's a couple places where the contrast could be just a little better. We're going to fix those and so forth. But other than that, it's done. I mean, my part in it is basically done.

SANETT: Could you talk a little bit about the Festival of Preservation?

GITT: Yes. Once again, to say something nice about Bob Rosen—

SANETT: [laughs].

GITT: —that was his concept, I believe, unless he got it from somebody else. He may have, but as far as I know, he came up with that idea. Charles Hopkins and Bob Epstein back in the seventies had put together a program called, I think, "Treasures

from the UCLA Film Archive." It had been shown at the Pacific Film Archive and shown here in Los Angeles. That was kind of the beginning, but that wasn't the preservation program, it was just wonderful films from our collection, it was called 'Treasures'. That was the Josef von Sternberg and Ernst Lubitsch movies and Preston Sturges movies and so on. Then, after I had begun doing film preservation, about that time that I worked on *Macbeth*, around 1980, and then around 1982 or '83, we began getting the idea— This was Charles Hopkins's idea, let's do another "Treasures," but this time let's just emphasize films that we preserved. So I think in 1985, unless I'm mistaken, we did another program called "Treasures of the UCLA Film and Television Archive," but it was a tribute to the preservation program that at that point was about seven or eight years old. We did a lot of films and made it— And that in a sense was the beginning, but it wasn't called the Festival of Preservation, it wasn't a yearly event. It was Bob Rosen, to the best of my knowledge unless someone contradicts me, who came up with the concept of just as there's a Venice Film Festival and a New York Film Festival and a Santa Barbara Film Festival and a Palm Springs Film Festival, the London Film [Festival]—festivals in Italy, festivals all over the world— Why not have a festival whose sole focus is on film preservation and restoration; new projects that are being generated by the archives, the laboratories and so forth—and later, of course, the studios, too. Because when we first got into this, studios weren't doing much in the way of film restoration. Today, they're doing a lot of course, a lot of wonderful work. But it was a great idea to focus people's attention,

and the press and the public on film preservation. And it caught on. And so we did our Festival of Film Preservation, I think 1988 was when it's started, unless I'm mistaken. And many of the films played other places around the world. There was a repeat of it—in a sense—in London a couple years later. You know, just all over. And it was a very good idea and other people have done similar things. In the early years of the festival, it was mainly designed to showcase things that we had worked on as we were very proud of what we were doing at UCLA. But it was also designed to showcase what other people were doing, too. So we had tributes to George Eastman House and the Library of Congress and the Museum of Modern Art and indeed the British Film Institute—the National Film [and Television] Archive at that time—and so forth, the Cinemateque Francaise, etc.

SANETT: How often are these festivals held?

GITT: We were doing them once a year, and we could still do them once a year if they were still showing films from other archives and indeed studios, as well now. But for whatever reason, I guess the decision was made in recent years to concentrate pretty much solely on the films preserved by UCLA. And with the size of the staff that we have, with the problems of getting films through the laboratories that we've had in the last few years, because now that the studios have learned—

Partly because many of the executives, I think, did go to college and film school and have learned that these are important culturally. But I think more importantly, they've learned they can make money with them, of course through DVD

and cable TV and so forth. But they now know that their libraries—they call them assets, the asset management program is what they call them— are valuable and that these are worth doing. So there are huge programs of film preservation and in some cases restoration that are going through the few labs that are available to do this kind of work today. We used to be one of the big customers to go to one of these places. Now we're just small potatoes in comparison to, say, Universal or Fox or Warner Bros. or Paramount or whatever. They're doing these big programs. The labs are still nice to us, they let us come in and to do our stuff, but we can't always get things done as quickly as we want to. So between our staff being smaller than it should be, compared to say, an organization like the British Film Institute where they literally have like, fifteen people in a room preparing and inspecting and repairing and inspecting films to go to the lab, and we have like one person or maybe two. So, anyway, for those reasons we can't really do a full-blown festival every year, so we're doing them every two years now.

SANETT: When's the next one?

GITT: It is this summer. Actually, it's in about two months from now. That's why if I seem— I know I've been talking very fast and I'm kind of agitated and excited and everything. It's partly because I'm right now getting ready for the festival that's coming up in August. And as always, I want to put on a good show. I'm a bit of a theatrical type in that sense. So I'm always trying to get several films done that probably would have been done in the fall or in the winter, but now I'm trying to get

them done in the summer so we can add them to the festival and have a really nice festival. So I'm under a lot of pressure to finish these up. I work well under pressure; in a way it's good to kind of have a goal and get these things moved along. But even so, it's a bit of a strain.

SANETT: If it's not a top-secret—

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: —can you say what films are going to be shown this summer?

GITT: Well, when you talk about an oral history for the future, I mean, who cares really? We've done a lot of good festivals; some years are better than others. We're excited—I've been talking about myself, myself, myself in all this. I do need to point out that there's some interesting things that have been happening. I mentioned that we got the newsreels some years ago—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: Blaine Bartell, who ostensibly works under me, but the truth is Blaine, he does his thing. Every now and then he'll ask me a question or something, but you know, it's not like he's under my thumb or something. Blaine and his assistant Jeff [Jeffrey] Bickel do a fine job on newsreels. Well, we've had this huge newsreel preservation program since the early eighties when Bob Rosen and initially Michael Friend was very interested in it, when he was working here originally. Anyway, that's been ongoing.

Now we have a new kind of focus, too. The Ahmanson Foundation and

Sundance, partly through Geoff Gilmore and so forth, are supporting us in preserving independent films—independent feature films, independent documentary films, and so on. We did get some money from that program to do *Louisiana Story*, but to give an idea of more of the kind of thing that we're doing with it, *Killer of Sheep* is being done this year, a Chicano film that was made in Texas on a very low budget called *Chicano Love is Forever*—It is not a very good film, but apparently it's very significant because there have been very few films specifically for this audience and the filmmaker who made it did make a couple of other films that were significant, including one called *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*, which apparently is his best film. That we're also planning to preserve soon, if we can find good material on it. And then *The Times of Harvey Milk*, which of course won an Academy Award for I guess Rob Epstein—no relation to Bob Epstein—about fifteen or sixteen years ago.

So we're actually opening the festival this year with *The Times of Harvey Milk*; it's a whole new direction that we're going into. So we're not just doing the great old Hollywood movies and the silent obscure films and the short subjects and the cartoons and the newsreels. Now we're doing independent films and documentaries as well, which I think is great. Ross Lipman, whom we've hired recently, is very knowledgeable in this area and he— And once again, he works for me, but when it comes to these particular films, sure, if he has a question I help out or I answer or whatever, but he's really the person who's excited about— I think it's always good to have people who are excited about some one aspect of it and let them just go ahead

and do it. That's what he does.

SANETT: What else is going to be shown this summer?

GITT: Well, we're going to be showing *Seven Men from Now*, by Budd Boetticher, and I did work on *Bullfighter and the Lady*. That was a restoration project I was very— I really liked that film a lot. People who haven't seen it don't know how good

it is; it's a very good film actually. Doesn't sound like much, *Bullfighter and the Lady* with Robert Stack and Gilbert Roland, but it's very well made. And he [Stack] is still very much with us, he's in his late eighties I think. And he's going to be there, and Burt Kennedy who wrote the screenplay—

SANETT: Excellent.

GITT: —and so that will be nice. We're showing *The Bullfighter and the Lady* again. *The Power and the Glory*, of course. *When A Man Loves*, which is a very early Vitaphone program. [tape recorder off]

SANETT: So we were talking about what is being shown at the Festival of Preservation this summer—2000.

GITT: As you know, I like early sound films and I love the early Vitaphone sound on dis—it's just such a crazy process and so cumbersome and so interesting and going back to those early years and everything. So we're doing *When A Man Loves* with John Barrymore and some Vitaphone shorts. That's another major restoration

project involving multiple materials and recreating titles and material that came from what was Yugoslavia and so forth. I won't go into all the details, but it's very interesting. It's entertaining, too. It's a film most people haven't particularly seen. John Barrymore is a lot of fun; he's young, he's youthful, he's like a Douglas Fairbanks—swordplay, sword fights and all that sort of stuff. It's a fun film.

Speaking of that kind of film, we're also doing *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which is one of David Packard's favorite movies. I must say I'm quite fond of it too—the David O. Selznick version with Ronald Colman. That's a film that hasn't survived very well, I'm sorry to say. We've done our best to make it just as good as we possibly can. The original negative is long gone. The material that was at Turner Entertainment that had been copied back in the fifties and sixties was of quite variable quality. A lot of it very, very poor—just plain defective. When some of the reels were copied on an optical printer, the shutter in the mechanism was not in time correctly, so there are streaks in the picture. The picture is literally smearing and streaking on certain parts of it. Every reel of the film, every ten minutes or so, it has a different look. Some of it's light, some of it's dark, some of it's gray, some of it's stark; it's just all over the place.

So as far as we can tell, the best surviving material is an acetate safety print made in the fifties for David O. Selznick himself from the original camera negative. This is now part of the Selznick material at the University of Texas at Austin, and they

very kindly loaned the print to us. Normally, duping a projection print does not give you the very best result. You want to have a fine-grain master positive or an original camera negative. But for many parts of the film, duping that print very carefully, we get a better, a sharper, and a nicer looking image than the official preservation of it that had been done in the sixties very badly, as I said, that we got from now Warner—Turner is now part of Warner Bros. So Warner—very kindly and very nice about it—turned over everything they had to us. They called the stuff out of the salt mine in Kansas. I'm a little shocked to tell you that everything that came out of the salt mine in Kansas, where the film industry keeps a lot of their stuff, has vinegar syndrome.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: But what do you expect? Acetate film gets vinegar syndrome.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: When it gets thirty years old, that's—

SANETT: It is what happens.

GITT: It starts to go. So that's a bit unnerving. We've never solved the nitrate problem, we've never had the money to do that, and now the acetate's all deteriorating.

Even the studios are losing their acetate.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: Anyway, so we put the best stuff together once again, cleaned up the soundtrack and so on. It's going to sound considerably better and it will look

somewhat better. It's not going to have the beauty and the sparkle of an old nitrate print. But to the best that we've determined, there don't seem to be any old nitrate prints of this film and there's no nitrate negative. So this is a movie that looks okay, but doesn't sparkle the way it really should, and maybe someday— Perhaps, once again, maybe through some digital miracle, maybe something can be done to— But even then, you'll still be recreating something and guessing what it should have looked like without really knowing for sure. It's too bad, it's a wonderful film, but—

SANETT: It's a real shame—

GITT: Yeah, it is a shame.

SANETT: —but it is going to be good to see it at the festival.

GITT: But it'll look better than it has and it'll sound better than it has.

SANETT: Well, that will be something to look forward to. I wanted to ask you how you would compare the UCLA Film and TV Archive to other archives.

GITT: Yes, that's a good question. The older archives— In America you're talking about?

SANETT: Well, anything you want to relate—

GITT: Yeah, they go back quite a ways. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library and film department I think was founded roughly around 1935. The George Eastman House goes back to roughly World War II or just after the war, when James Card, I guess, had his personal film collection and began getting things in to Eastman House in Rochester. The Library of Congress, of course they were making copyright

paper prints in the 1890s and through 1912. Then they began copyright prints again in 1942 after many years of not taking films. They kind of began collecting in a more organized fashion in the fifties and indeed began copying films in the sixties to a sporadic degree. The 1970s is when the Museum of Modern Art, when the Library of Congress, when Eastman House began getting grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and raising funds themselves. That's when preservation really became a big thing.

Like anything, in the early years of any of these things, people still had a lot to learn. When I first went to work for the American Film Institute film archive, we were told by the local commercial laboratories— When we would print something up—an old movie—we would send it in to be copied and make a new print, the picture would be shaking in the screen. It would be blurry or unsteady or moving around or it wouldn't look very good. And they said, "Oh well, these old pictures, that's the best we can do. You can't do any better than that. It's shrunken. That's the best—" And we took what they said pretty much at face value. It was only gradually that we learned that that's not true; that if you have the right kind of machinery and the right kind of technicians and take the right care and do it slower and don't do it so quickly and take the time to figure out what pin fits this perforation correctly or what sprockets to use, you can get much better results. That's gradually what began to dawn on people as the years went by. So as each year went by, the quality of the work being done by everybody got— Different degrees got better and

better and better.

Because UCLA came into this whole thing pretty late in comparison, the quality of our work was better right from the start than the earlier work than had been done by other people. And our work has gotten better even since then. So we have a reputation we're doing very good work, but part of it's because—I mean, I guess in a way I do try to be careful, I want things to look good and sound good if possible, although I must admit, some of the early stuff I did, today I cringe at when I see it because I could do it much better now.

But we did choose good laboratories. I was very lucky to meet Richard Dayton at YCM and lucky to have worked with Ralph Sargent some years earlier at Film Technology Company. And then I met other great people since then too. Sean [M.] Coughlin, and Tony Munroe and Paul Rutan and lots of other people—and John E. Allen and so on. We've gone to good labs, we have a good reputation, but as far as how do we differ from other archives? Every archive has its own sort of collecting policies and it's own flavor. Because, for example, George Eastman House has always been very heavily influenced by James Card's interest in German film, they have a lot of wonderful German titles there. They have a lot of French films, they have a lot of foreign, European—They're very European- and silent film-oriented. Do they have other things too? Absolutely. They have a lot of MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer] pictures that we don't have; they have a lot of great stuff. But the core of their collection is that kind of great, artistic silent films and artistic

masterpieces from European countries.

Museum of Modern Art, because of what it is, it's an art museum, they collected classic films from all over the world—masterpieces and so on. Both Eastman House and the Museum have a relatively small collection. I don't know what it is today but maybe—I may be completely wrong here—ten thousand titles, eight thousand titles, something like that.

SANETT: And how many does UCLA have?

GITT: I'll get to that.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: The Library of Congress is a massive thing, particularly when David Shepard and Sam Kula began getting in all kinds of films in the seventies to start filling in the gaps—the Warner Bros. collection, the Columbia [Pictures] materials, and RKO [Pictures], all this stuff. I don't even know the size of their collection. They're the biggest archive in America. They have thousands and thousands—fifty thousand, eighty thousand, one hundred thousand. A huge amount of television programs, radio broadcasts, and motion pictures—

UCLA also has, because of Bob Epstein's enthusiasm and the early collecting days that we had— He would [accept] just practically anything in those days. We have the second largest collection in the United States after the Library of Congress. I don't know the official figures right now, but we had something like forty thousand TV shows and thirty thousand movies and forty thousand radio—something like that.

It's a very big collection with a much smaller staff than the Library of Congress.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: They have far more support than we do, of course. So out of necessity, we've had to specialize. Instead of doing a large-scale, massive program like the Library of Congress where they had their own in-house laboratory and they do millions of feet of film preservation every year; millions and millions of feet— We don't have our own. We're about to get a lab, thanks to David Packard, and indeed we have one right now that's beginning to come up to speed and do some really great things. Until recently, we have never— We have not had the money; we have not had the support to have our own laboratory. We have a small staff and it was smaller the further back you went. So we had to decide— I don't know if this was a conscious decision on anybody's part, it's just where we sort of fell into it. Basically, we began specializing in restorations. It is kind of what I enjoy doing. You see, when you have a massive program like the Library of Congress, when you're doing millions of feet, and you're keeping your laboratory going, you've got to keep churning all that stuff through, you're doing very valuable work. You're preserving and getting all these films off of flammable nitrate or off of early safety film and putting them on modern film. That's wonderful and it's very important to do that work. But you often don't have time to go in and nitpick and try to decide, well, is this copy better than that copy? Maybe for this reel we should use that particular source and maybe that scene's missing there. What if we called up London and see if they have it there?

They do that definitely. They've done it in recent years and they've done some fine restoration projects, like *All Quiet on the Western Front* and other films. But for the most part they're more oriented towards the important work of just preserving these films.

What UCLA has done is— We preserve films too, yeah, absolutely. We do simple projects sometimes that just require getting it off the shelf and sending it to the lab. But we specialize in restoring movies—restoring early color, early sound, censored films, incomplete films, silent films that are missing parts and so on. And so that's kind of where we like to shine, as it were, and that's good too. I think you have to have—I think they complement each other. I'm very glad for the Library of Congress and I'm very glad for us. And all the archives do a bit of both, of course. The Museum of Modern Art has done a lot of restoration work, and Eastman House now does as well, everybody does. Even the studios are now doing it, too. At one time, not too many years ago, the Hollywood studios couldn't care less about these old films and they certainly didn't spend money taking care of them and they sure didn't do any film restoration. Well, that's all changed now; they certainly do now.

SANETT: One last question, because we're almost out of tape—

GITT: Oh yeah, sure.

SANETT: Did the specialization of the Film and TV Archive evolve or was it a conscious, strategic plan?

GITT: Well, as far as I can see, and I'm maybe not a conscious, strategic sort of

person—that's what Bob Rosen would probably say—but I don't think it was originally a conscious plan. No, I think it just sort of evolved. Because you can only do so much— Originally the restoration program employed one person—me. I mean, I was the only employee working in film restoration and preservation, in let's say 1978, '79, '80, '81. Around in there, we didn't have anybody else. So it was whatever I could do and obviously I couldn't do millions of feet of preservation a year.

SANETT: Exactly, exactly. So it just happened. Just real quick because we have a minute, how many people are on your staff now for preservation?

GITT: At the moment, we're down one person actually, but we have working in fiction film preservation: of course there's myself; Ross Lipman, who specializes in the independent films but helps out with all kind of things. Nancy Mysel, who works with both Ross and myself, who's just starting and who's very, very good. She's helping with splicing and she is going to do some editing work and all kinds of stuff just to help us out. She's very good. Jere Guldin, who was the vault manager for many years but is now working in preservation; his specialty is animated cartoons. He's very knowledgeable about the history of animation and all the animators and so forth. And silent films, he's a real silent film enthusiast, so he tends to specialize in silents. And then of course, Blaine Bartell and Jeff Bickel who work in the newsreel area. And I mentioned that David Packard is now in the process of helping to set a laboratory in our building upstairs in Television Center one floor up from us. Dave Reynolds is the lab manager, and Amy Witcher works with him. She has just joined

our staff. They ostensibly report to me. The truth is Dave's in charge of the lab, and once again, I am there if—

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

JUNE 1, 2000

SANETT: Hi Bob.

GITT: Hello.

SANETT: You mentioned that you wanted to talk a little bit about David W. Packard.

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: Do you want to talk a little bit about his connection to the [UCLA Film and Television] Archive?

GITT: Yes, particularly how he got interested in the first place in the Archive.

David Woodley Packard is the son of David Packard, who was the co-founder of the Hewlett-Packard Company. He and his partner, Martin Hewlett, began in a garage, I think, making electronic devices around 1938 -39. Just through a lot of hard work and intelligent effort [they] built their company up into the Hewlett-Packard Company, which today, as you know, is a huge, huge successful company making computers and electronic devices.

Anyway, David W. Packard is today one of the most important benefactors of the Archive. He himself has supported many of our film preservation projects. He has paid recently to start buying laboratory printing equipment and projectors and printers and editing equipment and so forth as a means of helping us in the future to do more and more in-house laboratory printing and work so that we can do more projects

and save money in the future. His parents' foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation—Lucile is his mother's name—for many years, under David's urging, has supported our newsreel preservation program. They've supported many preservation and restoration activities that we've done of classic Hollywood films, particularly films that David himself has grown to love—a lot of the early Ernst Lubitsch films and Josef von Sternberg films and Billy Wilder films and so on. So David, over the past—I frankly don't remember when it was that we first began working with him, but I think it was in the late eighties or early nineties. It's been at least a decade or maybe more.

The more I think about it, I think it goes back to the early eighties—maybe around '84, '85, somewhere in there. But he's really been wonderful to us and his enthusiasm for these old movies is contagious.

And, as you know— Well, the people who'll be hearing this tape might not know it, but he not only has supported our preservation of these old films, he also presents them to the public at a wonderful theater that he's refurbished in Palo Alto [California] called the Stanford Theatre. He took over this old theater and restored it to its original architectural splendor, the way it first opened in 1925. He runs very successful revivals of classic movies—both American and foreign. He doesn't particularly care for movies after 1960 [laughs]—

SANETT: Interesting.

GITT: —so he runs much older things. And the thing is that's wonderful is he brings in huge audiences—thousands of people. Films that we preserve and show at

UCLA in our own little one-hundred-and-seventy-five-seat auditorium on the campus, where we get fifty people attending or ninety people or maybe one hundred and fifty, David can get one thousand, two thousand, and fifteen hundred and eight hundred. It's really marvelous. Anyway, to get to the point of my story, all of this sort of began because of a sort of a lapse of policy—or at least a stretching of a policy—by Bob [Robert F.] Epstein once again. This was at a time when Bob Epstein was still pretty much in charge. Bob [Robert] Rosen was there but had just really started. What happened was the UCLA projection room in Melnitz Hall was being remodeled. It was decided to put in a moveable wall to be able to run nitrate film with a fire wall down, with portholes cut in it. But when nitrate wasn't being run, the wall would rise up out of the way leaving a big picture window, which is frankly—just as a little aside—very nice for the projectionist in the booth, but does not particularly benefit the audience down in the theater. The truth is, there should have been a permanent—in my opinion, I'll have to say—thick wall with the proper portholes and fire equipment all the time and you could run all kinds of films. But because the auditorium had already been built with a huge picture window and everybody who worked in the projection room just loved being able—No matter where they were they could look out and see the picture and make sure it was in focus. Yes, it has some advantages. Anyway, they wanted to have a moveable wall.

Anyway, to finally get to the point, they closed down one summer to put in this moveable wall. Well, you'll have to interview other people about this scandal, but

there were all kinds of terrible things that transpired. The university hired an outside construction company that promptly— The projectors were crated up to avoid damage while this work was being done, but I think part of the roof fell down and partly fell in and crushed one of the boxes with the projectors in it.

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: Just all kinds of things went wrong. Anyway, it went years beyond schedule and way over budget. It cost a lot of money, one screwup after another, so the entire auditorium was unavailable to run 35 millimeter movies for something like three years—you'll have to check that, but I think it was like three years. They could run 16 millimeter projectors from the floor of the— So all the students that went through the UCLA film school for about a three year period never got to see any of the films in our collection or any other films in 35 millimeter. They just made do with 16 millimeter prints. It was really terrible.

SANETT: That's something.

GITT: But during this period, Bob Epstein decided that this was a scandal, that it was a shame. We have these wonderful old Paramount [Pictures] films at that time, and [20th Century] Fox films. People should be able to see them, these are great films that people should be exposed to, so he basically— Pretty much on his own—I think on his own, once again—just decided to make a deal with the Tiffany Theatre and the Vagabond Theatre— The Vagabond Theatre is the main one, that Tom Cooper, who was a young entrepreneur who loved old movies, started this thing called the

Vagabond Theatre— So Bob Epstein, with permission from Universal [Pictures], the owner of the rights to these movies—they owned the Paramount library at this point, pre-'48— They agreed, they collected the rental, UCLA got nothing out of it. Basically, we loaned our prints on a regular basis and so Josef von Sternberg's *The Scarlet Empress*, *The Devil Is A Woman*, *Morocco*, *Dishonored* and so on; Ernst Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* and *One Hour with You* and all kinds of wonderful pictures were playing on a regular basis at the Vagabond Theatre.

And here's where something very good happened: normally an archive— particularly today when we go by all the rules and we follow the example of the Library of Congress and the Museum of Modern Art [Film Library] and the British Film Institute—they would never in a million years let nitrate prints made off the camera negatives out to a commercial theater. Whether the distributor who owned the rights agreed or not, it certainly wouldn't be done. And they certainly wouldn't want anyone making money with the prints and not collect any money back, but this was Bob Epstein. He just loved people to see wonderful prints of wonderful movies. So this happened, and lo and behold, a person began going to see these movies at the Vagabond—that was David W. Packard. And he absolutely fell in love with these wonderful, classic Hollywood movies. He found them so sophisticated, so beautifully written, the musical numbers were so charming. He really like Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald and Claudette Colbert and Marlene Dietrich and so on that he just became very enthusiastic.

Up until that time, he had mainly— He had actually taught at UCLA. He was a classics professor, I believe, because he was very knowledgeable about ancient Greece, I believe, and other ancient cultures. I know David Packard has worked out some kind of computer program that compares fragments in different— Like old fragments of papyrus and the Rosetta Stone and whatever things archaeologists have been able to find through the years. And, actually, it helps scientists and archaeologists to decipher old languages. David has done that, he's done a lot of very worthwhile things. So his field was really classical history and literature and architecture and so on. He's very fond of Italy and the architecture and the history of Italy and so forth.

But all of a sudden he fell in love with Hollywood movies of the 1930s and '40s by seeing the collection of UCLA at the Vagabond Theatre. As a result of that, he got very enthused about these old movies. Well, it just so happens around that same time, we were just starting to work on *Becky Sharp*, the first full Technicolor feature film. I was looking for funding because we knew that it was going to cost— We thought \$18,000. As I told you, it wound up costing over \$40,000 and still going today; we're still doing more things.

SANETT: The movie that will never end.

GITT: Movie that will never end. But anyway, I had a friend who was a film collector named Michael Yakaitis. And Michael was a friend of David Packard's because they happened— David Packard had a home— He had multiple homes. I

think he had a home in Princeton, New Jersey; he had a home in Palo Alto, of course. I think he had other homes around the world and he had a place— I think it was just off of Benedict Canyon. When he would come to Los Angeles, and maybe while he was teaching at UCLA, he and his wife lived there. Well, he would come to town from time to time.

Anyway, Michael Yakaitis at that time was staying with a family or something across the street, or renting a room or something like that. He was a film collector and a film enthusiast. He befriended David Packard and actually used to help David Packard in some cases get 16 millimeter prints that David would collect and so on, because David was beginning to collect some of these movies on 16 millimeter. And he heard that we were going to do *Becky Sharp* and he said, "You know, you really must meet David Packard. He likes Rouben Mamoulian because he's seen films like *Applause* and *Love Me Tonight*, which he absolutely adores, at the Vagabond Theatre."

So Michael Yakaitis arranged for me to go meet David Packard and I met David. As I said, this is around 1981 I would say, and I ran a little test reel that we had done actually in 16 millimeter—the very first test was in 16 millimeter rather than 35—of just one little sequence from *Becky Sharp*. And David looked at it and said, "Well, the color looks very good." He said, "I do like Rouben Mamoulian a lot, but, you know, I don't really think this is one of his better films. I think his other films— Why don't you do *Love Me Tonight*? Why are you doing this one?" I said, "Well,

David—"—Mr. Packard at that time—"You know, it's already been— As far as we know, it's already safe and sound, whereas this film you can't see at all properly."

And

he said, "Well, I know, I'm glad that you're doing it," but he said, "But I don't really think I want to support it at this time." So I said, "Oh, all right." So I'd thought we'd never hear from him again.

Well, two or three years went by, as I say, around 1984, '85, and all of a sudden he kept seeing these movies at the Vagabond. And he called up one time when I was at the office and he said, "Are you still preserving films? Why aren't you doing more? These are wonderful films and I would like to support it" and so forth. So he came by and met everybody at the Archive and, of course, saw me again. He agreed through his parents' foundation to start supporting film preservation at UCLA. That's when it all began. And actually he came to this very room— In fact, his mother and members of the board of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation came here and saw some early test clips of Maurice Chevalier movies. His mother loved Maurice Chevalier movies, which is great. So that was the beginning of it and we've had a very wonderful relationship ever since.

Can David be a little bit of a problem sometimes? Yes, of course, quite understandably. He's been so supportive, but he expects, at times, when he wants something for his theater, he kind of— He has a wonderful idea at the last minute, he

wants everybody to scramble and get together— He had Eva Marie Saint, the actress, appear a couple of months ago with *North By Northwest*. And he learned that we had an old episode of *What's My Line*, the old television program in which Eva Marie Saint appeared and talked about *North By Northwest*.

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: So we arranged to make a print of this episode for him. The only thing was it was, like, five days before he wanted it for the show, so we really had to scramble to print it up and get it developed. But it got on the screen. And there have been many instances like that. While we are extremely grateful for David's wonderful support, there are times when he can be a little bit of a handful in terms of keeping us all scurrying a little. But can you blame him, really? He's been so good to us. And, plus, it's for a good cause, he loves— He's like Bob Epstein; he loves putting on a wonderful show for people, and you've got to respond to that, you know? So on balance, we're very, very glad and very lucky that we've known him. So that was my little story about—

I will say this: Bob Rosen, as he gradually took over the Archive, began stopping all of these policies, and he was technically correct. I remember when Bob Epstein was kind of forced out and Bob Rosen gradually took over, Bob Rosen used to come to meetings and would say, "From now on," he said, "we're going to ask what's the quid pro quo? What's in it for us? We're giving our films away; we're going to stop it. We're going to get something. If people want to borrow our films, we've

got to get a rental— Or if we can't do that legally—of course we can't in many cases—then they got to do a favor for us or we got to get publicity out of it. We're not doing this anymore; we're not giving our stuff away."

That was the beginning of the whole change in policy and today that is our policy. Like all big organizations, we're very helpful. Anybody who works in the UCLA Archives would immediately defend us and they would be right. We send our films all over the world, they are widely available, we bend over backwards to help people, but in a much more administrative, bureaucratic, big organizational kind of way. We don't just give things away. We really do want our name publicized. We're worried about the image of the university, we're worried about money coming in and we're worried about the bottom line. And it is true, quite frankly, we do have trouble raising enough money for film preservation—sometimes even having enough money to keep the place running properly. We do have to think about money. In that sense, Bob Rosen was absolutely right, and the current people are absolutely right.

You can't keep doing things the way Bob Epstein did, but I must say I'm a little nostalgic for that wonderful, "Hey gang, let's let people see some movies" atmosphere that he used to have. Anyway, I said that I would just relate all that and then turn it over to you to ask the things that you want to know about.

SANETT: Well, before we get to the other things I want to know about, this is a fascinating story and I think is going to continue to evolve because of his continued association with—

GITT: Yes, yes, we certainly hope so.

SANETT: Yes. I have a note here that one evening we were talking about the members of your staff—

GITT: Oh yes. There's some wonderful people through the years who have worked there and who are working there now, and I don't want to— That's one thing I feel— This whole interview, of course, has been an interview with me about my life and my career and all sorts of stuff, but we certainly don't want to leave out the other people. I don't want to give the impression that it's a one-man show or that I'm not very conscious and very aware of all the wonderful people there and the people that have helped me through the years. Some of them have worked in preservation, like Eric Aijala, John Tirpak—going way back. Or Eric, in particular, who's gone on to a very successful career at YCM Lab and I think is going to be more and more successful because he's extremely talented. We were very lucky to have him for eleven years.

SANETT: You were talking about Rita Belda, that you wanted to—

GITT: Yes, Rita Belda joined the staff and I forgot to mention her in the our last interview—I'm very embarrassed about that. I mentioned the other people who just started in preservation, but Rita we're very pleased to have as well because she, I believe, won an award from AMIA [American Moving Image Association] as maybe the most promising young film student of that particular year. I know she's made a lot of sacrifices to get into film preservation. She interned at George Eastman House [International Museum of Photography and Film] for quite a while and turned down jobs

and had to pay money so that she could do that because she really is interested in this field.

That's the kind of people we have working there now. It's just wonderful to see younger people coming along who have taken the trouble to get the training that they can and who are really enthusiastic and who are knowledgeable and so on. Because on our own staff, as I mentioned, we have now Ross Lipman, who's very talented in the field of independent film and that's one of the reasons why we hired him. But he's just enthusiastic and very intelligent in general about all of these things.

And Jere Guldin, who loves animated films and is very knowledgeable about them—and silent films. He's heavily involved in the Silent [Film] Society here in town, and Jere's very good at that. And of course Blaine Bartell and Jeff Bickel, who have been mainstays of the newsreel program for the past fifteen or twenty years—Blaine and Jeff then too. And they worked very, very hard and are very, very competent and knowledgeable about newsreels. And now we have Amy Witcher helping Dave [David] Reynolds upstairs; Dave joined our staff. Dave is in the— When I say 'upstairs', he's in the laboratory that David Packard has funded and he's wonderful. And now Rita. So we've just been very, very fortunate to have people of this caliber working today. The quality of our staff used to be extremely good when I first joined, then there was a period when the budgets were cut back when we had to kind of take, at very low salaries, anybody that we could get. There were some nice people working there, but their hearts were not always in it. But now I

think we're back again with the first-rate people that we need for the future.

SANETT: That's good to know. So when you're hiring someone, in general, what sort of credentials do you look for?

GITT: Well, the truth is I myself have never took a single film course. I have no degree in film, whatever, but, of course, in my day that wasn't completely a respectable academic subject. You could do it if you went to USC [University of Southern California] or NYU [New York University] or maybe UCLA even, but normally people did not get that kind of training at that time. But today we do look for people who have taken film courses in college, who have maybe gone to the George Eastman House program, or gone to the program in East Anglia in England, or [have] shown a particular interest and have had some background, so I think— And the people who have gone to UCLA's own school—the film critical studies and film production and so on. So we look for those kinds. And we just look for people who are bright and interested and knowledgeable, I guess like everybody else. [laughs]

GITT: Are you requiring an academic degree?

SANETT: I don't think— This is the interesting thing. Of course, I'm involved in hiring people for my own department, not for the Archive as a whole—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —but Eddie [Edward] Richmond, the curator, is very much involved. I should say some very nice things about Eddie in a few minutes because he's one of the hardest working people we've ever had. He's absolutely magnificent and he's a

fantastic administrator and a great bedrock of competence that keeps the Archive going. He's really marvelous. He likes films, too, and he knows a lot about them, which is wonderful too. But, anyway, maybe I'll talk more about him later.

But he's involved, of course, in the hiring as well and, ultimately, Tim [Timothy Kittleston] now—the director—too. Bob Rosen was in the old days. I don't know, maybe for certain parts of the Archive— In preservation, I don't think we require, at this point, a degree, but the most recent people we've hired do have a lot of training in film and have received awards and things, like Rita and so forth and so on. I don't know, it's probably evolving. I suspect in the not too distant future they probably will require—

SANETT: It sounds like it.

GITT: —an academic background in that area, yeah.

SANETT: What contribution has the UCLA Film and TV Archive, do you think, made to the field?

GITT: Well, I think partly because of the early policies of Bob Epstein where we shared films with the world and showed that you could be friendly and not be aloof like some of the older archives—like the Museum of Modern Art, wonderful though they are. That was very good, and frankly, even though I've been maybe sounding like I've been grouching about the change in the policies through the years and becoming bigger and more cold and everything and more professional, but, still, even to this day, we are one of the most open archives in the world. We do still have a very

good reputation for making our films available and accessible, for responding to people, for trying to help people and the public and so on. Eddie Richmond does believe very strongly in that and he pushed very hard for, for example, having our cataloging holdings—the list of all the films we have and what the copies are and so forth—available on the Internet to anybody, available to the whole world. It wasn't too many years ago that the other archives, like the Museum of Modern Art and certainly some of the European archives were very, very close to the vest and tightfisted about it. They didn't share with anybody what they had in their collection and they were very tight-lipped and very uncooperative. Only if you knew friends there or they trusted you would they dole out information a little bit at a time.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: That was the old way of doing things. Well, UCLA has completely changed that. Something else we've given to the world, and I guess it's good, is the notion that an archive can, as a side activity, make money with its collection without compromising its preservation and restoration efforts. I'm referring to the Hearst [Metrotone] Newsreel Collection that we have at UCLA, which we are able to sell for TV documentaries, newsreels excerpts, feature films and so forth and thereby accomplish two things: Get this wonderful collection of newsreels out and in use where the public can see them, which is great, and also raise money to keep the Archive going and to help preserve the newsreels.

Now, I will say this, to temper that just a little bit, and it's the truth: when this

first started we all told ourselves and Bob Rosen I think too [said] that the money brought in from licensing the newsreels to TV producers and movie producers would be used to preserve the newsreels. What, of course, happened, very rapidly when the state got into economic difficulty, when the university's budget was slashed, when the Archive budget was slashed, of course what's happened instead is that the money raised from the sale of newsreels now goes into our general operating budget. It does not specifically go to preserve any newsreels as far as laboratory work goes, but it does go to help keep the doors open, to keep the staff working, to keep the vaults rented, and in general way it is helping all kinds of film preservation. But specifically, the original intention was to earmark the money to— You sell a newsreel and you save it by making new copies on videotape and on ester-based film and so on. Well, that direct linkage is not there anymore.

That often happens in organizations that have funding problems. With the best of intentions you wind up— And then what happens is the higher-up people at the university, then, begin to expect you to incorporate that money every year in your budget and they don't give you that money back when they do get more money. You still are expected to raise more money every year. This has happened to a lot of arts organizations. I know the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art]— At one time they were getting a lot of audiences in for their film programs. I believe the people at the museum— I know the film department felt— And this is true at [Berkeley Art Museum and] Pacific Film Archive as well, I know the people running the film

programs have felt a certain amount of pressure from the administrators to bring in money for the museum as a whole, and, in some cases, to run more popular programs to bring in more money.

There was a time when I was in college—maybe I was just an idealist in those days—when just having a film museum, just having a film archive, just running movies or having an art exhibit or anything else, in and of itself, was considered—as I recall, anyways—a worthwhile activity, something worth spending the university or the college's or whatever money on. It did not need to justify itself and it didn't need to break even. Nobody worried about bottom lines and "this exhibit costs so much, so we have to make the money back this way." The money was just simply provided because it was a service by the university to the public or by Dartmouth College to the public. I remember that used to be the attitude in the old days. I'm remembering through rose-colored glasses, but that all changed through the eighties and the Ronald Regan years and so on, with the government being slashed and the bottom line and the business mentality.

Today, of course, everything kind of has to pay its way. Even the idea that the Archive has to pay money to UCLA to rent the auditorium to run our films— My feeling is, running our films is beneficial to the students, to the faculty, to the public. Why do we have to pay? It's because every part of the university has to pay every other part now to use the facilities. When I was in Dartmouth College we didn't pay to do the Dartmouth Film Society in the auditorium. Of course it was made free.

That was what the auditorium was built for, was that kind of activity. See, it was designed for the students, for the public. It wasn't that kind of thing.

SANETT: Well, so it's a large—

GITT: It has changed.

SANETT: —bureaucracy.

GITT: It has changed.

SANETT: And it's changed. I suspect there will always be a bit of a tension between expanding and preserving holdings and accruing funding and trying to make decisions on the best way to allocate it. I think there's always going to be a bit of a tension there.

GITT: Yes. But one thing that is very good is that all of us believe that our collection should be seen. When we preserve films, we want people to see them. There's absolutely no point in having a dead, dusty bunch of film cans on a shelf locked away where nobody can see them. We want people to see them and enjoy them. That's really important. And learn from them.

SANETT: Yes. I think the fact, also, that the Archive has the second largest collection of film in the country—

GITT: And perhaps television too. We have a huge television collection, that Dan Einstein who does a fantastic job can tell you about.

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: It takes an Einstein to run our television program. [laughs]

SANETT: I like that.

GITT: He is related, I think, distantly to Albert [Einstein]—

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yeah, he is part of the family.

SANETT: Oh, that's interesting. I wanted to ask you how you think the UCLA Film and TV Archive are viewed by other archives?

GITT: Well, I hope they really, on the whole— I think people know that we do good work and that we try to— Of course, as I've said earlier, when I look back at the early work that I did and the early work that the laboratories did, it's far inferior to what we're able to do today, but this is true of everybody in the field. And it's going to keep— I might add, as the new technology becomes affordable in this coming century, an awful lot of stuff that we did the best we could with with the old tech— It will have to be done over again because the standards will be raised. The specks and dirt particles that go by in the picture that we don't think anything of now will be completely unacceptable twenty or thirty years from now. They'll go in and take them out. That's great.

SANETT: But that's comparable to the level that other archives were working—

GITT: Right.

SANETT: —at at the time.

GITT: When we got into this whole thing, I do think— I was involved in this too, Bob Epstein was as well, but I do think working with some of the very best lab people

in town—I'm referring to Richard Dayton in particular at YCM Lab, who was very, very knowledgeable and really cared about doing these things properly, and Ralph Sargent at Film Technology Company. And then later, people that we know now: Sean [M.] Coughlin of Cinetech and his staff; Joe Olivier and David Cetra, who's very good there, a young fellow who does timing and really is dedicated. Joe Olivier is in charge of their special projects [and] is really dedicated. Tony Munroe, who helped to set up the Stanford Theatre preservation lab, and who had worked with Sean and then he had a little bit of a disagreement and Tony left. Tony then, unfortunately, didn't get along so well with David Packard, and there was— They're both intelligent, they both have strong feelings about things, and, having worked with David Packard, I know there were things that were irritating to Tony. And then, having worked with Tony, I know there were things that were irritating to David Packard. [laughs] So they are not too friendly today, but as a result, Tony left the lab and Dave Reynolds—whom he hired—is now in charge. Dave is wonderful. Tony has now got his own lab with Paul Rutan—is another extremely good person. So they have a Triage [Motion Picture Services] lab that we go to as well.

So there's a number of good labs and good people that we work with. I've been very lucky through the years to work with them, but because of these people, and particularly Richard Dayton more than anybody else I think, that I got to know and got to learn from and got to work with— And because my own wanting to make things better and better, we did get a reputation early on for doing quality work and for

setting the barriers higher and raising the standards. That was very good.

I think everybody has come a long ways since then, so whether we still have that reputation— I don't know, because the truth is, today I'm a little older now; I don't quite have the youthful energy that I used to have. The technology is suddenly changing very rapidly, a little more rapidly perhaps than an older person like myself—I'm keeping up with it with in reason, but I'm not on the cutting edge anymore, the way I was at one time twenty years ago. Now I'm not anymore. I would say today, the [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Film Archive] that Michael Friend is running, who used to work with us and was one of Bob Rosen's grad students, and then worked with me, actually, in preservation— Michael, who's younger at this point, his enthusiasm for digital technology and that sort of thing is great and that's good. So in the sense of being in with the cutting edge kind of stuff, I would say that maybe he now is more in that position, and perhaps other people out there are more than I am.

I was at one time. I'm not so much anymore, but this is inevitable. I think new people that we have on our staff, as they get a little older and get a little more into it, are going to get into these things too, so I think that's going to be okay. I guess just in general, that's what I'd say about or—

Now, there may be some slight feelings among all the archives of rivalry or envy or jealousy or whatever from time to time, but I don't think it's too serious.

Down deep, we all like everybody else. I mean, I like the people at the Museum of Modern Art that I've worked with through the years: Peter Williamson, and of course,

Eileen Bowser and Mary Lea Bandy and others—Steven Higgins and so forth. And at Eastman House: Ed Stratmann and so on. There [have been] a lot of people in charge of that through the years. And the people at the Library of Congress: David Francis, [who] I think the world of, is in charge of the Library. He's a very inspiring person. And Ken Weisman at the lab there and James Cozart at the lab, and you know, so we— I mean, obviously everybody's competing sometimes for money, competing for projects and things, but there's so much to do and there's enough to go around to give everybody plenty to do.

SANETT: Yeah, it doesn't sound like you're going to be running out of work in the future.

GITT: Over at the Academy, there are a number of people: Fritz Herzog who used to work with us and Ed Carter who used to work with us. We're pleased that they're there. There's a couple of other people— And with Michael Friend is a very talented—I'll say young fellow because he's about twenty-five years younger than I am—named Michael Pogo, everybody calls him. Maybe I should stop there because his last name's a little hard to say. Pogorzelsky I think it is. Anyway, I'm very impressed with him. He makes me think of myself, you know? He's already as good as I am now and he's twenty-five years younger than I am, so he's going have a great future, I think, doing film restoration.

SANETT: Well, the future combined with the technology that's available is going to be exciting to watch.

GITT: Yeah, yeah.

SANETT: Talking about the future, I wanted to ask you what are the future plans for the UCLA Film and [Television] Archive?

GITT: One of the things that Eddie Richmond has been very concerned about— We used to have, as you know, a very successful program of restoring films, preserving films, spending money at laboratories and transferring films from nitrate to safety film or from early safety to polyester film and so on. But our storage of film was very inferior. As Eddie often says, we have one of the best reputations of any archive in the world overall and people think very highly of us, but if you actually see our facilities, we actually have among the worst facilities of any archive in the world. We almost are like a third world country.

The old Technicolor [Motion Picture Corporation] plant in Hollywood where we have our offices, which are basically— It's warehouse space, it is not office space; it's been turned into offices. We do not have heat, we do not have air-conditioning, we don't even have air circulation. It's extremely stuffy in there and very unpleasant.

Through Eddie's efforts, we do have some air-conditioned nitrate work rooms now where we can do film editing, thank God. I often go over there deliberately and get away from my desk and I do work on films because it's so much more comfortable in the summertime. But for many years our safety film collection and nitrate was all stored in this building. In the summertime on the top floors the vaults would go up to 85 degrees sometimes—

SANETT: Oh.

GITT: —and that's not with nitrate film. The safety film is being stored at 80 and 90 degrees in August and September. In the winter, of course, it would rain and the roof would leak. The Technicolor plant, the old plant—it's called Television Center today—the roof leaks, the vaults leak. They get flooded, water comes in, etc. Of course, the big earthquake that we had back in 1994, I guess it was, the shelving fell down and the films all flew around. Fortunately, we had very little damage.

Ultimately once it was all picked up we only lost a couple of films. But, anyway, the storage was very primitive and very bad and as more became known through the years— See, in the early years when I first got into this field, nobody had ever heard of vinegar syndrome. It was not known to exist.

SANETT: Right.

GITT: People may now think they always knew about it, but they didn't; it just wasn't known about. Everybody thought safety was going to last hundreds of years even at room temperature. Nobody really knew. Well, now we all know you have to keep film cool, you have to keep it dry—much cooler and drier than we were keeping it. So Eddie really pressed hard to get better storage, first of all, for our safety collection. As a result of that, for a few years now we've had a not perfect, but, basically, a very good cool and dry temperature- and humidity-controlled storage in what's called the Southern— Well, it's nicknamed "sslurff." It's actually SRLF [Southern Regional Library Facility], but everybody calls it "sslurff." This is the

nickname, but you're not supposed to call it that. That's where our film is stored, and it's far superior to anything we've had before. By the way, we were always storing our preservation negatives and some of our videotapes and preservation fine-grains in better storage. We used to rent storage in Hollywood at a place called, I think, Hollywood Film Archive? I don't know. Anyway, it was archival-type storage that we actually rented. But the main body of our projection prints and show prints and color prints and things were not cared for properly. Well, today everything's being stored very well. That's through Eddie's efforts. Of course, the whole staff pitched in and packed up the films and moved them out and re-shelved them and, of course, cataloged them and so on. So that's been a wonderful— And that was going on during the earthquake and after the earthquake.

SANETT: Oh my.

GITT: Well, now the big goal is to do the same thing for our nitrate films. The nitrate vaults are heavily insulated and the vaults on the lower floors aren't too bad even in the summer. They're not great, but they're not too bad. But even so you have room temperature or slightly cooler than room temperature at best. Everybody today, once again, has learned that if nitrate film is stored not too much above freezing—40 degrees, 35 degrees, 45 degrees—and if you keep the humidity low, once again in the 30 percent range or so, that nitrate too will last a very much longer time than it will the way we're storing it.

So it's our goal to try to build new nitrate vaults—state of the art—finally, and

store all our collection under the proper temperature and humidity controls. This is something that David Packard is interested in because, once again, he loves these movies. And everybody today realizes, yes, you want to copy them to modern ester film, you want restore them, and in some cases you have to restore them now because you have to call in all the different things while they still exist.

Of course, there are films like the Sherlock Holmes— These are like little B pictures Universal made during World War II, but they're charming. Basil Rathmore, Nigel Bruce doing Sherlock Holmes— There were twelve of them. Well, everything on those pictures was deteriorating. Everybody thinks they're around because they've been on TV and everything. Well, the truth is all the safety elements made by the TV [broadcast] owner back in the sixties have all got vinegar syndrome now, all the nitrate is beginning to deteriorate. So we just got in in the nick of time. We were able to save all twelve of them by a mixture of nitrate and safety copying to modern polyester film. Well, you could say, if we have proper storage, we wouldn't have to do— But that's not really true. The film is already going. Just because you keep it cooler, it might slow it down a little bit, but—

SANETT: It's not going to stop it.

GITT: —you can't come back thirty years later and do the work; you have to do it now. So that's our next goal, and David Packard is very keenly interested. We also need very badly proper work rooms. We're just bursting at the seams. We have no room to store the films we're working on. We have no room to inventory and catalog

the films properly. We're working under very primitive conditions, as I said, extremely uncomfortable for the staff and so on. So we need working facilities and offices and better film storage for the nitrate film. So this is something that Eddie Richmond is working very hard on.

There was a brief period where we thought we might be going in as partners with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences—the film archive where Michael Friend, of course, is now the director. But that ultimately didn't work out and the Academy is going to go on their own and I think build a smaller facility. It was probably a little unyielding and cumbersome to try to do that, and maybe just as well. So now we're going ahead on our own and trying to build this facility and, once again, David Packard is very interested and we hope he will support this. Maybe by the time this tape is heard—if we're lucky—there will [be] such a facility rather than none, we hope. So that we think is the future.

SANETT: Well, it's a very exciting future. Are you attracting other benefactors?

GITT: David Packard I would have to say is the largest, but, yes, we've had very generous support from Hugh Hefner; he loves certain kinds of old movies. He is very similar to David Packard in some ways in terms of really liking these films. We've had some support too, from, of course, the Cecil B. DeMille [Trust]—I believe that's what it's called—and the Mary Pickford Foundation. Sony Pictures [Entertainment] has supported some of our projects, Universal Pictures, Warner Bros. and Turner Entertainment has supported a lot of projects. These are film

preservation projects. The Film Foundation, Martin Scorsese has been very helpful and has raised, I think, hundreds of thousands of dollars—perhaps a million dollars at this point—that we've obtained to do film projects. The new National Film Preservation [Foundation] is a major undertaking that Eddie worked very hard on, once again, with the [Library of] Congress and so on and so we're trying to get this thing off the ground. And they are beginning to give us money for silent films and certain other kinds of films. And that's very good. And the National Endowment for the Arts, even though it's a shell of its former self, is still occasionally giving us small grants to do films.

SANETT: So it's coming in slowly and—

GITT: Yeah, from all different sources, yes.

SANETT: That's excellent.

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SANETT: I'd like to turn now to some of your thoughts on professionalization and the future of the moving image preservation field. And I'd like to start that by asking what has been your greatest frustration or challenge in this particular field?

GITT: [laughs] I don't know. This is the sort of more philosophical question I have a little more trouble talking about, I think.

SANETT: Well, you can answer the next question first, if you want, which is what do you think is your greatest accomplishment?

GITT: Oh God, that's a hard one too. That's a hard one, too. I suppose a problem that we've had is we have a wonderful collection of film, including some less-than-famous ones that are still important, that we're just totally incapable [of keeping] up with. They're gradually deteriorating and no matter how hard we work— And not just preserving the films— I think in everything that we're doing— We are understaffed and outgunned by just the sheer immensity of the task that we have at hand. But the truth is it's all up to society, I guess. Is this considered important or isn't it? I mean, some of us think it's important to preserve the arts and to preserve the important art forms of the twentieth century and so forth, but other people would say we were lucky to have gotten the support that we have. I mean, the University of California puts more money into our Archive, apparently, than any university in the world. Nobody else does what they do, so who am I to complain

that we need still more? But I think that's probably true throughout the whole university, isn't it? Every department could do a better job if they had more money and more support and more people. It's true isn't it?

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: So that's very frustrating. There are days when you go home at the end of the day and you've been working very hard all day long and you still have this sinking feeling that you didn't accomplish as much as needed to be done in that day and you never will. And that's a little disturbing. I mean, I wish I had the time and the money to go back redo the things that I could do better now, but I can just barely keep up with the new things I'm trying to do. Those are some of the things I'm concerned about.

SANETT: What are the things you're proud about?

GITT: I suppose bringing back lost facets of film history that people had forgotten about or weren't so familiar with, like some of the early sound films and early color films and the pioneers in those areas and their work—and improving the image and sound quality of all kinds of films from the past. I think just so the people can really appreciate the high quality work that was being done in the twenties, thirties, and forties and so on, in terms of cinematography, sound and artistry— When you see an old film in a poor print with noisy sound and a blurry and unsteady picture or just poor quality or whatever, whether it's on television or in a film society or something, it doesn't really do justice to the original filmmakers. I think particularly for silent

films, where you have to see good image quality because it's mostly a visual experience—image and camera movement and so on, its composition. So I think trying to make the quality of the films that people see better is something I'm proud that I was able to do. But as I said, with all the good works that I and the lab people and others in the field have been able to do, what we've done will pale in comparison to what can be done in the future. And that's good; I'm glad that that's the case. I just hope that people in the future will use a certain amount of good taste and restraint and good judgment in terms of making these "improvements" to the past films and don't overdo it and in a different way make them artificial and not representative of what they were.

SANETT: I agree. I wanted to ask you, in the moving image preservation field, what sort of professional or ethical issues would you like to see addressed?

GITT: Well, that's a difficult one. There are all kinds of issues raised by new technology and the way people see old movies and old television shows and so forth today. The Internet and hearing music over the Internet, seeing movies—at the present time—in a sort of postage-stamp-size picture on the Internet and thinking you've seen the movie I think is kind of disturbing. Seeing movies on television with commercial interruptions, with large chunks of the action cut out to make room for more commercials, seeing black-and-white movies colorized, seeing movies that have perfectly good monaural sound stereoized, which is being done more and more— This all bothers me and I think this is unethical. But what some people would say is this

maybe will keep people in today's audience—younger people—interested. I don't know that that's really true. I think if people are not already kind of interested in these, the fact that you slap some color on them or make the sound come from various loudspeakers isn't going to change their minds. And I think you should learn to like black and white, you should learn to like mono sound if that's what it was, because there's nothing wrong with those things; at their best they're quite wonderful. So I've forgotten, what was your question? Oh, about ethical issues—I can tell you something I am concerned about that I'll mention involving my own work. An awful lot of amazing things have happened in the past decade or so with the digital techniques and what you can now do that we never dreamed you could do fifteen years ago, twenty years—Nobody would ever dream in a million years. One of the little techniques not often talked about, but one of the little weapons in the restorationist's arsenal to restore a film and bring it back and make it look good and glossy and pretty and beautiful and flowing on the screen, in some cases, is to actually cut parts of it out. I do this a lot; everybody in the field does this a lot. We don't talk about it because academics and purists and critics and other people, perhaps, could get up on their soap boxes and be very appalled by this—and they might be right.

But the truth, is in a lot of old films there's often— Let's just say a film of the thirties or forties or fifties, Hollywood films, there will be damage on splices because the negatives have gone, have been printed several hundred times, and by the end of the run their splices are beginning to separate slightly and maybe you're snagging on a

roller and the film gets torn— So on a shot change—from a close-up to a medium shot to a long shot, whatever—as the splice goes through, it gets torn; you get a tear into the picture. So sometimes the first frame of a shot will have a big ugly tear and a big messy Scotch tape repair or a cement repair, and what we used to do— We found, in not all, but almost every case, you can remove that frame, remake the splice, cut the sound one frame very nearby—perhaps right at that same place, but perhaps just very nearby. You can do it— If you use magnetic film or you do it digitally— Of course now you can make it totally imperceptible. Nobody's aware, you'll hear no noise, it goes through very smoothly. The film now flows smoothly, these blemishes are gone and it looks like a new film. This has been done quite a lot; I have done it quite a lot.

The bad side about this is: It is altering the original.

Now, I've always rationalized this—if that's the word—by telling myself, I'm not just going into a perfectly good film and just arbitrarily cutting out frames and being wanton and saying, "I think I'll take this frame out." No, I'm dealing with a film that has been badly treated by the film industry, by whoever owned it, just by fate.

I didn't cause this damage; it's not my fault. I'm doing my best to bring the film back and make it enjoyable, entertaining, educational, whatever, again today and trying to recreate the original experience as much as possible.

Well, what we've discovered is, frankly, if you take one frame out at the start of the shot, in most cases nobody—even the director of the movie, even the person who edited the movie—would never notice it or be able to— That's 1/24 of a second,

nobody notices it at all. You can do it and it greatly improves the film if you take these blemishes out. Sometimes in the middle of a scene, there will be a huge scratch right in the middle of Greta Garbo's forehead or Melvyn Douglas's forehead. If at that particular moment in the action they are not moving, their lips are not moving, their heads are not moving—let's say they happen to be pausing and they're staring at one another—you can take that frame out and nearby cut the sound and nobody will ever know and it's fine.

Would I do this with [Sergei] Eisenstein? No. Eisenstein, [*The Battleship Potemkin* or *October* or any of those great films, every single frame counts and has a rhythm. No, you would never do that. And certain other experimental and filmmakers who obviously where every frame is part of a rhythm and so forth. No, you wouldn't do anything like that there at all. But a typical Hollywood movie which is, as Alfred Hitchcock says, photographs of people talking, there's nothing wrong with taking a frame out here and there if it is not noticeable.

Now, here's where the ethical thing arises: I always felt that was a perfectly okay thing to do. In fact, there were pictures I worked on—*My Man Godfrey* is one of them—where in some cases, two and three frames have been removed on shot changes because there was extensive damage in the original camera negative. But people have been seeing these horrible, grainy, fuzzy, "dupe-y" prints of *My Man Godfrey* with terrible sound for years. We were able to bring it back with crystal-clear sound and a beautiful image. Yes, there are some frames missing here

and there, but it really was wonderful and so I'm really glad that I did that.

But now here's the problem. Who would have guessed that today there is high definition electronic scanning of films? You can put the film through a computer, you can take the frames that have a tear in them and you can paint the tear out, you can get information from the next frame and so on. Who would have thought this? So now, all those frames I threw away in *My Man Godfrey*, which will never be in the film again, unless of course, somebody goes to one of these horrible "dupe-y" things and blows it up to 35 millimeter from 16 millimeter and then tries with the computer to sharpen it up—remove the grain and make it look the same—and then recreate the missing little bit of sound— But no one's going to that, probably. It costs too much money and effort, whatever. So in that sense, that does raise all kinds of ethical issues that nobody thought and I never thought would ever happen.

And yet, with the changing technology, now you can do things you couldn't do before. So some of the things we did, maybe we shouldn't have done. I even have the problem today: Do I take out a frame and make the film showable now to an audience and have it flow and look beautiful and nobody misses it at all and it seems to be fine? Or do I leave it in, knowing that twenty years from now when the costs come down they'll be able to fix this electronically, but in the meantime we've got to suffer with it? That's a very interesting dilemma and I don't know what to do about it.

SANETT: What do you generally do when it's not a filmmaker like Eisenstein?

GITT: When it isn't a filmmaker like Eisenstein, to be honest with you, I generally do remove them, even now. Because once again, at the present time, it is prohibitively expensive even to retouch and remove blemishes from just a few frames of films; the cost right now is horrendous.

SANETT: What is the cost like?

GITT: To fix up a couple of minutes of film it could be \$12,000 or \$15,000 or \$20,000. To do a whole hundred-minute feature film might cost a million dollars to put the whole thing through—remove all the specks and dirt and take out all the— Now, just to take out a few tears here and there, no. But you're still talking very large sums of money that are larger than our whole preservation budget for the year. Is the cost going to come down? Of course, it's got to come down.

What shows the way, and I talked a little bit about this before, is with normal, low-definition, 525 line NTSC video, there is currently available technology to remove specks and dirt particles from film. It costs virtually nothing, and that's great.

But the minute that you go from 525 lines to 1050 lines or 2000 lines or 4000 lines, the cost, instead of being a few thousand dollars, becomes a few million dollars. I mean, there's this huge discrepancy. So something's got to give. I'm sure that is going to become a lot more affordable, and when it does— We're now doing the equivalent of this with sound. We're taking pops and clicks and crackles that I never was able to remove before— We can now get them out, hopefully without affecting the audio adversely. There's still sometimes a little bit of a trade-off. Particularly

when you take noise out, you have to be very careful and the hiss is hard to take out without affecting the audio, still. Maybe they'll be able to do that better in the future; right now it isn't so wonderful as it should be. But taking out pops and clicks and cracks—

SANETT: Is doable.

GITT: —is extremely good now. We'll be able to do the same equivalent in the picture at an affordable price I'm sure within the next decade. That's going to be magnificent.

SANETT: And who knew that there would be a computerized film washing—

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: —application available, that's has just been so helpful as well?

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: Knowing what you do now, and having an eye to the future, when you're removing those frames, are you saving them?

GITT: No, in most cases. Although maybe yes and maybe no. We do try— Let's go to the sound for a minute. We do try to have, in almost all cases anyway, a magnetic recording and in some cases a photographic record too, because we often print the original soundtrack alongside the picture on a picture dupe negative. So we do have the old track—warts and all—preserved, so that if in the future somebody wants to hear it, they can. If in the future better technology comes along, they can fix it. Have I done this in every single case? Well, no, I wish I had. But in many

cases, yes, we have done that.

In the case of the picture, sometimes we do have multiple elements on a film and it will only be, say, the original camera negative which has been damaged with occasional frame or occasional blemish that I will cut out. But we may have a fine-grain made some years earlier before the damaged occurred, we may have a print made a long time ago. As long as they continue to exist, at least for the foreseeable future, and particularly if we get better storage, people will be able, if they really worry about this occasional—I am talking about maybe three or four frames in a whole film in some cases. Or maybe twenty frames or maybe one frame. I mean, it's not very much. Then they are still there.

The thing is, you have to make trade-offs sometimes. For example, I might keep the original— Let's say I have a whole reel of beautiful, original camera negatives that creates a sparkling image when it's printed and creates duplicating materials that themselves will create sparkling images down the line, but every now and then there's a damaged frame. Alright, I can cut the frame out and make the whole thing look like new. I can leave the frame in and hope that someday they'll fix it. But they may not, or they may, and in the meantime people have to suffer seeing this thing. I can dupe the whole shot from this earlier copy made years ago, but in almost every case, particularly the further back you go, the poorer the quality of these master positives are, particularly if you back to the thirties. They're grainy, they're milky, they're lacking in all kinds of sparkle and detail. So the question is, do you

make the whole shot in a movie look suddenly— You have this gorgeous photography, and all of a sudden the whole thing looks bad for thirty seconds just because you fixed that one frame. The other alternatives, what about fixing the one frame and having it look bad? People do that sometimes. And I've been forced to do that sometimes, to have a short piece of a scene look not-so-good and then the rest of it looks better. I hate doing that, but sometimes you have to because both available parts of the movie are both cut in different places and you have to put the two together.

SANETT: Which movie did that happen on?

GITT: Oh, all kinds of movies. *The Power and the Glory* with Spencer Tracy, which I worked on. There are some scenes that are a grainy, unsteady, awful, old fine-grain made from an awful nitrate duped negative made from an awful lavender master positive by [20th Century] Fox. And then there's a print made off the original camera negative that is the best thing that survives on the movie, because the original negative is long gone. So we had to— In some cases though, there's splices in both of them. And because the Fox material—the grainy, unsteady, dupe-y looking one—was actually used in France for a foreign, dubbed version and they cut the film and put little jumps and jerks in it in order to make it match the French language when they dubbed the soundtrack, there are words and bits missing. So in order to get certain scenes complete with Spencer Tracy, I had to take part of one and part of the other and change and switch it in the middle of the scene. Now, once again, this is a very cumbersome thing to do today with analog—mechanical, optical, whatever you

want to call it—film technology, to get the films lined up the same in the printer and to get the contrast to match perfectly. You try as hard as you can to match the contrast, to match the position; it's still very hard. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes the image jumps a little bit, sometimes the contrast changes. I hate it; I want it to be perfect.

In the future— It's so much easier with video—and ultimately digital technology and so forth—to blend one into the other so that it's a little more imperceptible when one goes into the other. You might be able to dissolve one into the other. Or, you may be able to retouch the Fox grainy material; maybe you can retouch to grain out of it, reduce the grain in that. It's going to be wonderful in the future to be able to do— The things we do today look kind of clunky sometimes, and in the future people will wonder why. Well, it's because we have to deal with these mechanical problems of line-up. The thing is, you don't see the results instantly. You have to wait until the following day and wait until the film has been developed and printed and then you see and say, "Oh my God, the contrast doesn't quite match, but we really don't have the money to go back and do it again." That's the problem—

SANETT: It's a compromise.

GITT: —whereas on video, you just turn a knob and it's fixed.

SANETT: So some of this is working with a compromise?

GITT: Some of this is being done with a compromise, that's right.

SANETT: Does UCLA Film and TV Archive acquire film from collectors?

GITT: Sometimes, yes. We depend upon people being generous and public-spirited and donating things to us, which happens fairly often actually. Collectors in San Francisco, and sometimes in the Middle West—and so forth—have sent nitrate films and safety films to us. In many cases, we've had big deposits—sometimes donations like Paramount, sometimes deposits like some of the other studios and sometimes Hollywood luminaries. Preston Sturges' family gave us his own collection of personal prints, the Cecil B. DeMille estate deposited DeMille's personal prints of a lot of his movies with us—a lot of them are at Eastman House as well—and so on. So we depend upon people's generosity and they have been very generous.

We don't buy films from collectors. There have been a few gray areas where we really, really wanted something and we bent the rules a little bit and did pay— We didn't buy a film, but we would give the collector a finder's fee or a transportation allowance or something. Because they were being difficult, frankly, and we wanted to preserve a rare silent film.

There was a film called *The Bat* that we worked on that was— It turned out to be not as good as, I think, everybody hoped it would be, but it was considered— It was a lost horror film from the twenties and it was legendary for being this great— Well, it wasn't as good as it was cracked up to be, although it had its moments. It had very good art direction in it by— I think it was William Cameron Menzies who worked on it, who was a great—

SANETT: Heather Menzies'—

GITT: —art director, and did all kinds of movies, *Gone With the Wind* including. I hope I'm not wrong; I think it was.

Anyway, we had to deal with a collector, a man by the name of Dr. [Raymond] Bungard in Boise, Idaho who years earlier at some kind of auction or something had bought this old nitrate print of *The Bat*. It turned out to be the only surviving print of *The Bat*, directed by Roland West in 1926 and everything. He was missing the first reel and he had the rest of it. So we acquired the rest of it from him, we gave him the videotape, we agreed not to make any money with it without sharing it with him, whatever, and with Boise State University. Well, of course, the minute they got the tape, they made it available and it started getting sold everywhere. We never get anything out of it. But we preserved the movie—it was missing the first reel.

I'm glad I did this because this is what always happens when you do something like this. I recreated the first reel, because the same director who directed the silent made a talkie remake called *The Bat Whispers*—which we also preserved with the help of the Mary Pickford Company that owned the rights—in two different versions: a wide-screen version and a standard version. This is a very interesting movie; this guy made the movie three times. He made *The Bat*, he made *The Bat Whispers* in regular 1.33:1, then he made it in 65-millimeter-wide film in 1930.

SANETT: Really?

GITT: Yes, and—

SANETT: I didn't know that.

GITT: —we got to preserve all of them. But anyway, I took the first reel of *The Bat Whispers* and I recreated what I thought would be the correct silent titles. I created inserts and things of people writing notes, the bat writing notes and things, and filmed this thing and put it onto the beginning to make *The Bat* a showable movie.

Well, of course what happened was, then suddenly we get another call from Dr. Bungard. He says, "Oh, I guess I found the first reel." This is after a year, about. Well, good, I'm glad he found it. And he was very difficult. I think we had to pay some money, we had to make all kinds of promises in giving the tape, in giving the 16 millimeter print; it was just very unpleasant. But we got the first reel and it turned out to be the best reel in the whole movie.

SANETT: Excellent.

GITT: It was wonderful. So I'm glad we did it, but it was not a very pleasant experience.

SANETT: No—

GITT: No.

SANETT: No. So generally you don't buy from—

GITT: Generally—

SANETT: —collectors—

GITT: —we don't, no.

SANETT: —but you'll accept donations?

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: Is there a part of the Film and TV Archive that researches or ascertains anything about legal ownership?

GITT: Well, we have to when we show films, of course. More and more, as the years have gone on, we have taken the stance—and I think other archives have—that films in our collection, we feel— As a public archive, and with a reputation that people know that we're doing this for the good of the culture, if you will—to sound a little pretentious for a minute—that we have the right— And I believe this maybe even the feeling of the courts and the [United States] Congress now, too. I think we have the right to preserve films. If we can raise the money to make a new copy, we have the right to preserve the film; we don't have to get anybody's permission. Now, some people might dispute that statement, but I think we do not need to get anybody's permission. In the early years when I first started working, we always asked permission of Fox, or Warner Bros. or whoever, or Republic [Pictures], before we preserved anything. Now I think the feeling is we don't need to ask permission. If we have it—if they've let us have it, they know we have it—and we can raise money, we can do it.

But that doesn't mean we can show it to anybody; it doesn't mean we can show it in our auditorium on campus. You might make the point you could show it in class to film students—I don't know, that's more debatable. Maybe—

SANETT: For educational—

GITT: —they wouldn't agree. Or educational use, perhaps. But certainly we can

preserve it. But can we show it? Can we distribute it to anybody else? Certainly, can we make money with it? Absolutely not, unless it's a public domain film or a film that we literally own, like in some cases the Hearst newsreels. Actually, many of them are public domain, but we do at least own the physical materials and we have the right to make money with them. But most of the Hollywood films we preserve are owned by others and we cannot exploit them and we cannot make money with them. They can, but we cannot.

SANETT: That's very interesting.

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: What sorts of things have you been able to accomplish at UCLA that you might not have been able to accomplish elsewhere?

GITT: Well, I guess I was able to work on just a lot of interesting early silent films and early talking films and early color films that perhaps at a more—what's the word?—organized and regimented sort of place, I might not have been able to get excited about [them] and work on [them]. I think there's a lot of freedom, particularly under Bob Epstein, but to be honest, under Bob Rosen too. Partly because Bob Rosen had his finger in so many different pies and was so involved in academic things on the campus that he basically left us all alone most of the time and did not— In that sense, it was a benign influence, that you might say, if that's the right word. A benign neglect that was very helpful so we could do our thing, and I think that was very good.

And even today, I think there's a general climate of tolerance and just letting people do what they're good at and so on. I'm trying to carry that on. That's why I have Jere Guldin working on animated cartoons, which he loves and knows about, and silent movies, and why Ross Lipman is now working on independent films and so on. We let people have their own areas of specialty and just— I said I used to decide what we preserved. Well, now more and more these other people are deciding and that's great. I'm glad that they're coming up with these ideas and I support that. I think it's terrific.

SANETT: Do you have anybody working on my personal favorite, science fiction?

GITT: Well, I love science fiction, too. But it's funny, I don't know why it is but the great age of science fiction I suppose was the fifties and maybe today too. Most of UCLA's collection, at least until recent years, has been films of the earlier era—the nitrate era—that the studios didn't want to store anymore because they were a fire hazard. So they dumped them on us, quite frankly, and that's why we've been concentrating on those. Plus, there was the fact that nitrate deteriorates and everybody knew that—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —and all the archives were stressing nitrate. Now we know that safety film, too, deteriorates. But now the studios have learned that these old films can make money for them and so they have their own in-house preservation programs. At one time, it looked like we were going to have to undertake all of their safety films as well,

because they didn't care. Well, now they do care—thank God—and they're right and they're good. But they now have their own programs. So as a result, sometimes we collaborate with them on things, but on the whole we're still doing mostly older nitrate films or, from 1950 onward, we're doing mainly public domain films, independent films, documentaries, newsreels, that kind of thing. I kind of lost my train of thought.

What was your question again?

SANETT: Well, my question was whether anybody was working on science fiction.

GITT: Oh, science fiction. What I was going to say, as you know, the science fiction films are from the early safety era—

SANETT: Right.

GITT: —and those are films that studios— Like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: —a wonderful film—

SANETT: A classic.

GITT: —etc., etc. Those are the films that the studios themselves, in-house, are now preserving—

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: —because they're still commercial and so forth. So we don't usually get a chance—[except] every now and then—to work on those so much.

SANETT: Let me follow up on the cooperative projects. I assume that one of the reasons UCLA would go in on a cooperative project with a studio would be a

combination of facilities and cost-effectiveness. Would there be other reasons?

GITT: Well, often the studios, quite frankly, can do things just on their own with the labs; they don't need us. In other cases, because we have contacts among collectors, among other archives, maybe just because we're particularly enthusiastic about and knowledgeable about a particular film that we can bring something extra special to it without extra cost to them. See, the thing is, in some cases in order to get the level of commitment and excitement and maybe knowledge about a certain particular film project— They could hire somebody to do that, but it would cost them a lot of money.

If we do it, they don't have to pay any of that money. We do it, in effect, as part of our job. And then they help us out by paying for the lab work and so on. That's happened a number of times and it's worked very well. So I guess that's the answer to that.

SANETT: Can you give me an example of a movie or a film project that you've worked on that's been a collaborative project?

GITT: Well, yes. *Lost Horizon*, obviously, with Sony. A lot of pictures: *A Man for All Seasons* and *Gilda* and all kinds of things. And with Warner Bros. we've done a number of things—*Noah's Ark* and *When A Man Loves*, etc. And Universal, we've done some collaborative projects on Paramount titles and so on, like *To Each His Own* with Olivia de Havilland. Universal had material that was full of deterioration and we had an old nitrate studio print from Paramount that was full of splices, but by putting it all together we were able to almost bring the film back to its original state.

That was one that I particularly worked very hard on and so forth. So that was one where we benefitted them and they benefitted us and so on, and by making their material available.

Right now, *The Prisoner of Zenda*— Warner Bros. has very kindly turned over everything they have on the film, some of which has got vinegar syndrome, some of which is not very good, technically speaking. And the University of Texas, where David O. Selznick's personal prints and papers have gone, they've very kindly turned over his own personal print of the movie. And by working with all this, right now—

In fact, we're showing it later this summer. It's not perfect, but we're able to get the picture and sound better than they had been in a very long time. It isn't as good as it was back in 1937, but it's better than it has been.

SANETT: That's wonderful. I'm going to look forward to seeing that.

GITT: Yeah.

SANETT: In terms of the way the moving image preservation field is evolving, what are your thoughts about whether there's a need or maybe not a need for a more formalized preservation training program for future professionals?

GITT: Yeah, I think it's good to have people— I have trouble about these philosophical and academic questions sometimes, but one thing I will say, if I can frame my thoughts here—I think it's important for people who do film restoration anyway, and film archival work, to have a kind of general knowledge, both artistically speaking and technically speaking. I think they [should] have a bit of both, a bit of

everything. I think if you specialize too much and become too narrow, particularly if you were just like a technician, I think that doesn't lead to the very best results. Nor do you want to be just totally an administrator, or just totally an aesthetic sort of person who just theorizes about things but can't actually work on the film, or in the future work in a video-editing suite or— I think you need to have a combination of artistic and technical knowledge and as genuine talent for it—that's the word. So in the one sense, I think just turning out people with degrees who just take a program because they know they can get a job isn't very inspiring somehow, and in that sense I'm not for that. But if you get the people who really care and who also make sure that they do get a lot of different kinds of training—

And I think it's good to know about the arts in general, about the drama and theater too, about radio— See, I grew up with network radio. I think knowing about radio is very important, and today it's neglected horribly. Nobody teaches radio or is interested, yet that's an art form in and of itself, just as silent movies are a special art form where drama is communicated through pantomime. I think radio—where you can't see, you can only hear—is a wonderful medium as well, and had a great influence on the movies and on a lot of directors like Orson Welles and Joseph Losey and other people whose sound was very important and the things they learned in radio.

So I don't understand at all— To me, it's a sign that a lot of the so-called film education is based more on what people perceive as stepping-stones in careers and

what is sexy at the moment and what gets people better jobs, and not what's really worthwhile doing. Because I really think that part of the whole history of television and the movies and everything else is radio and it should not be neglected, but it is.

SANETT: Do you—

GITT: We used to be called, by the way, the UCLA Film, Radio and Television Archive. Bob Epstein strongly believed in radio and we had a huge radio collection—we still kind of do—but the decision was made by Bob Rosen and Eddie Richmond some years ago to stop even trying to have a radio archive, to give away parts of our collection—de-accessioning as it's called—to other worthwhile institutions, to be very fair, who will take better care of it than we will. They made the decision based on logic and rational thought that we don't have the money to do what we're trying to do now, so why are we taking on radio as well? But the truth is, it's because of the lack of interest on the part of the professors and the students at UCLA that radio isn't being taught. Radio isn't sexy; nobody cares about it anymore.

To me it's an important part of the history of the twentieth century, and it should be taught and it should be part of history courses, sociology courses, and film courses. I really believe that. But as a result, we're no longer a radio archive, even though we still have a large collection of radio discs that are just kept in dead storage. Almost all of Jack Benny's radio programs we have—

SANETT: Really?

GITT: —and most of his television shows, too, I believe.

SANETT: Oh, that's amazing.

GITT: Yeah, it is, it is.

SANETT: And I agree with you, I think that radio was a precursor—

GITT: Yes.

SANETT: —to what we have now.

GITT: Of course it is. And in and of its own right, radio drama was its own—

And other kinds of radio programs— I'm not talking about quiz shows and things,
but it was its own art form—

SANETT: Yes.

GITT: It was a very important art form. Oh well.

SANETT: *The Shadow*.

GITT: Enough of all that. Well, better things than *The Shadow*. Think of Norman
Corwin and people like that who wrote wonderful radio dramas—and Orson Welles
and so on.

SANETT: For my last question, is there anything else you want to cover that we
haven't covered?

GITT: No [laughs]. I must have talked your head off.

SANETT: No.

GITT: I'm sure there are all kinds of things I forgot to say and left out, but I think
we've covered most everything.

SANETT: Where do you see yourself in five years, six years?

GITT: I hope I'm still alive. [laughter]

SANETT: Let's assume that your being alive is a given.

GITT: Well, I hope we'll be in our new building, with much better storage facilities and that we'll have a good ongoing film preservation and restoration program going, and that by that time I suppose there will be people being trained to be archivists and so on. We are talking about having a training program along the lines of Eastman House, but perhaps even a little more elaborate we hope. So those are the things I hope will be happening five years from now. But five years from now, let's see, how old will I be? I'll be thinking about retiring too, I suspect. I may. I don't know that I would want to totally retire. I really do like working on the films. Although the technology is changing so rapidly, I hope I can keep up to the extent that I'm not totally obsolete five years from now. I may be. I hope not, but I may be.

SANETT: I find that hard to believe.

GITT: I think they need people who know the way things should look anyway, even if it's a new technology that you're using to preserve them. I'll say that.

SANETT: And people who I think have developed along with the history of the field.

GITT: Yeah, yeah. And have a knowledge of the films and so forth. Certainly as long as the Archive is dealing with old films that we have, we're going to be continuing to use film for some time into the future, of course.

SANETT: Do you see yourself teaching? Or perhaps guest lecturing?

GITT: Well, my father [Harry Newman Gitt II] was a teacher for a while; he taught history in high school. And my brother [William Carleton Gitt] teaches, actually; electronics and sound recording and things like that in Boston. Perhaps. At the moment, I don't really like to think about that. I'd rather work on the films and so on and just teach people informally, but perhaps. Maybe.

SANETT: Well, I've gone beyond my last question. Is there anything you'd like to say to close?

GITT: Probably not. I—

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: —should say something really exciting and wonderful—

SANETT: Well, I don't know about that.

GITT: —but I don't think I can at this point. No, I think that's— I'm sure things will occur to me later after you've left and you've turned the tape recorder off, but I— No. I'm glad that you did this and I don't know if anyone will find it interesting or not, but at least it's all down there and—

SANETT: Okay.

GITT: —that's that, I guess.

SANETT: Well, it's been a real pleasure.

GITT: Okay.

SANETT: Thank you very much.

GITT: Well, thank you very much.

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