ILENE SEGALOVE: AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviewed by Jane Collings

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

CONTENTS

Biographical Summary vi

Interview History xiii

TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (January 29, 2004) 1

Family background—Growing up in Beverly Hills—Early exposure to the arts—Early education and ambitions—Political interests and college—More on growing up—Relationship with family.

TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (January 29, 2004) 21

Attending college in the social and political climate of the 1960s—Segalove's developing interest in pop culture and art—Segalove's time as an art student at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)—Conducts art projects that document popular culture—Starts working with video—Time spent at California Institute for the Arts (CalArts)—The art culture in New York—Women artists in New York.

TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (January 29, 2004) 40

More on time spent in New York—Collaborates with Lowell Darling—Segalove's taste in literature—Television as art—More on time as an art student at UCSB—Evolution of video and television art—Segalove conceives and starts work on *The Mom Tapes*—How *The Mom Tapes* were received—Segalove's other video projects.

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (September 22, 2004) 66

Segalove's hesitance to embrace the language of critical studies for describing her own work—The Museum of Modern Art's upcoming exhibit on CalArts video—Using video to present personal narratives—Segalove's early work with video—Evolution of television and video art in the 1970s—The Woman's Building—Impact of class on the reception of Segalove's work—Receives support from the California Artists Resource Project—More on the evolution of video art—Segalove's work in radio—Segalove's work as an author of self-help books.

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (September 22, 2004) 91

More on Segalove's work as an author of self-help books—Segalove's identity as an artist—The present sociopolitical climate as compared to that of the 1960s and 1970s—Issues of aging for women—Segalove's new work—Changing role of women in video and film—More on issues of aging for women.

Guide to Proper Names 113

ABBREVIATED RESUME
ILENE SEGALOVE

BORN
November 24, 1950
Los Angeles, California

EDUCATION
Loyola University, Los Angeles, M.A. Communication Arts, 1975.
University of California, Santa Barbara, B.F.A. FineArts/Sculpture 1972.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
"New Photographic Stories," Julie Rico Gallery, Santa Monica, June, 1993.
"Why I Got Into TV and Other Stories" Traveling show: Photographic Resource Center, Boston, Ma. 1991.
Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1991
The High Museum, Atlanta, Ga. 1991
The Jewish Museum, New York, 1990
Laguna Museum of Art, Laguna Beach, Ca. 1990
Saxon Lee Gallery, "Text and Images," Los Angeles, Ca. 1987.
"History of the American 20th Century," Arco Center Visual Arts, 1982.
80 Langton Street, San Francisco, "Segalove Sampler," 1980.
"California Casual," Arco Plaza, Los Angeles, Ca. Video installation, 1977.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Video, Radio and Photography)
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y. and Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, "Collage Culture in Post-War America," 2002—2003.
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, Kunstmuseum, Germany, Castello di Rivoli, Italy featuring "Sunshine and Art Noir: Art of Los Angeles 1960—1997," 1997—1999.
Billboard Live, "My Puberty," Driveby screening, 5/97.
Skirball Cultural Center, "Blessings and Beginnings," 9/97.
The Jewish Museum, "Too Jewish?" Traveling show included Armand Hammer Museum, L.A. and Jewish Museum, San Francisco, 5/96.
Caren Golden Fine Art, L.A., "The Human Condition," 2/96.
Pace Wildenstein MacGill, "The 70's" Photography in the Service of Ideas," L.A., 1/96.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "P.L.A.N: Photography Los Angeles,

Now," 6/96.
Video and Electronic Arts Presents, "Early Video Art: Two Comic Masters:

Ilene Segalove and William Wegman," New York, 7/95.
Long Beach Museum of Art, "Women in Video, Pioneers," 6/94.
Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, "Love and Other Fatal Attractions," 2/93.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Solo Young Talent Award Winner Show," 6/92.
Independent Curators Traveling Show, "Good Stories, Well Told," April 1992—March 1994.
Houston Center for Photography, "Icons and Idols: TV Images, " 6/92.
Video Drive-In, Grant Park Musical Festival, Chicago, Video Data Bank presents, 8/92.
Soundprint, Public Radio International, "Life Before the Computer," 1990.(Radio)
California Museum of Photography,"Biennial I," 1990.
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, "About TV," 1989.
Fresh Air, "Mother's Day, Baseball Cards, Museum of Jurassic Technology, Old Records," 1989.(Radio)
Whitney Museum of American Art, "Suburban Home Life," New York, 1989.
Whitney Museum of American Art, "Identity, Representations of Self," New York, 1989.
Laforet Art Museum, Tokyo, "Images of American Pop Culture," 1989.
4eFestival International de Films, Featured artist, Montreal, Canada, 1988.
New Television Workshop, "My Puberty," PBS featured in Boston, New York, L.A., 1988.
Channel 4 Television, London, "Illuminations: My Puberty," 1988.
Contemporary Arts Center, Santa Barbara, Ca, "Home Show," 1988.
Halle Sud Geneva, Switzerland, "Television for Real," 1988.
Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, "Mediated Narratives," 1988
KCET-TV, Los Angeles, "Independent Eye," 1987.
Learning Channel, "The Independents," Dis/Patches, 1987.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, "The Arts for Television," 1987.
Public Radio International, with the Museum of Contemporary Art, L.A. "The Territory of Art II, TV Times," 1987. (Radio)
Minneapolis College of Art and Design, "Lifestories," 1986.
Video Femmes, Quebec, Canada, 1986.
Canadian Broadcasting/National Pubic Radio All Things Considered, "Bodyparts, Appliances, Shopping Malls," 1986.(Radio)
International Center of Photography, New York, "Video Features." 1985
Museum of Modern Art, New York, "Video from Vancouver to San Diego," 1985.
WGBH/WNET/WTTW/Boston, New York, Chicago, "Video Stories," 1985.
National Public Radio, "Hanukkah, Shopping At Mom's, Boys," 1985. (Radio)

L.A. Center for Photographic Studies, "Contemporary Constructs," 1984.
Long Beach Museum of Art,"California Video," 1984.
Worldwide Video Festival, Holland, 1984.
Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, "New Soap Video," 1983.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, "New Narrative," 19983.
Rochester New York Institute of Technology, "Process, Strategy, Revolution," 1983.
American Film Institute, L.A., "TVISOK," 1982.
Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, "Contemporary Portraits," 1982.
Newport Harbor Art Museum, "InsideOut: Self Beyond Likeness," 1981.
Chicago Editing Center, "Ilene Segalove in Residence," 1980.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, "Video Art," 1980.
University of Melbourne, "Videotapes from Women from Los Angeles," 1979.
P.S.1, New York, "The Altered Photograph," 1979.
The Kitchen, "New West," New York, 1979.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, "Out of the House," 1978.
Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, "American Narrative," 1978.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1977, Biennial Exhibition, 1978.
Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, "Autobiographical Fantasies," 1976.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Artists' Choice/Baldessari Selection," 1975.
Long Beach Museum of Art, "Southland Video Anthology," 1975.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, "Video Art," 1975.
Mount San Antonio College,"Word Works," 1974.
California Institute of the Arts, "How To Look Prettier In A Picture," 1973.
Everson Museum, Syracuse, "Circuit, Video Invitational," 1972.
University Art Gallery, "The TV Environment," 1972.

AWARDS HONORS RESIDENCIES COMMISSIONS

First Prize, Westmont College, "About Face," Montecito, Ca., 2003.
Oral History Collection, *Video Pioneers*, U.C.L.A. Research Library, 2003
List Your Self, Listmaking as the Way To Self-Discovery, Bestseller, Andrews McMeel, Kansas City, Missouri, 2001—02.
Temple Emanuel, Los Angeles, Ca., Multi-media commission,1998
National Endowment for the Arts/Media 1994
Art Bulletin, Artists' Billboard, Patrick Media, Los Angeles, 1991
Distinguished Alumni Award, Fine Arts, U.C. Santa Barbara, 1990
BBC Channel 4, London, Video Artist Commission 1987
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Commission for the show *Avant-Garde in the Eighties, Whatever Happened to the Future?*1987.
National Endowment for the Arts, Media/Radio, 1987
Harvard College, School of Journalism, Selected Visiting Artist, 1986-87

Corporation for Public Broadcasting, N.P.R. Radio Grant, 1986
Young Talent Award, L.A. County Museum of Art, 1986
Contemporary Artists' TV Fund 1986
Southern Circuit Choice Artists' Tour, 1985.
James D. Phelan Art Award, Video, 1983
Rocky Mountain Film Center, Video, 1983
American Film Institute, Independent Filmmaker Award, 1981.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1977, Biennial, 1978.
National Endowment for the Arts Photography/Video 76, 79, 83.
Phi Betta Kappa, U.C. Santa Barbara, Fine Arts, 1972
Bank of America Award in Art, 1968

SELECTED PUBLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
The Jewish Museum, New York
Laguna Museum of Art, Laguna Beach, California
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Foresight Investments, Irvine, California
Santa Monica Art Bank, California
Video Data Bank, Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois

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Askey, Ruth, "On Video: Banality, Sex, Cooking," *Artweek* 6, no. 27, 9 August 1975:5.

Askey, Ruth, "Ilene Segalove's Portraits." *Artweek* 8, no. 34, 15 October 1977:15-1-6.

Ballatore, Sandy, "Autobiographical Fantasies," *Artweek* 7, no.7, 14 February 1976:1, 16.

Battcock, Gregory,ed.*New Artists'Video: A Critical Anthology*, New York: E.P.Dutton, 1977.

Campany, David, *Art and Photography, Themes and Movements*, "Phaidon, London, England, 2003. pg. 152.

Curtis, Cathy, "The Search for Signs of Truly Absurd Life," *Los Angeles Times Calendar*, 25 September 1988, 48A.

Curtis, Cathy, "Ilene Segalove Opens Up Her Video Cocoon," *L.A. Times,* 30 April, 1990: F6.

Drohojowska, Hunter, "Too Much TV Never Harmed Ilene Segalove," *L.A. Herald Examiner*, 16 February 1985, B1, B6.

Dubin, Zan, "Awardees:One Paints, the Other Doesn't," *L.A. Times Calendar*, 16 June 1986: 1,8.

Dubin, Zan, "Ilene Segalove Channels TV Addiction Into Accessible Art," *L.A. Times*,

11 June 1990: 1.
Everson Museum of Art, *Collage Culture*, pg. 16.
Frank, Peter, Art Picks of the Week, *L.A. Weekly*, July 2-July 8, 1993, Calendar.
Grundberg, Andy, "A Talent for Making the Ordinary Seem Offbeat," *New York Times*
The Living Arts, 31, August, 1990: 1. Johnstone, Mark, *Contemporary Art in Southern California,* Craftsman House, Australia, 1999, pg. 164.
Kapitanoff, Nancy, "Ilene Segalove's Photographic Stories*,"L.A. Times, Calendar*, 20 June 1993.
Klonarides, Carol Ann, "Television for Real," *Center Quarterly* 10 no.3 1989: 23-25.
Knight, Christopher, "Contemporary Constructs in Photography," *L.A. Herald Examiner Weekend*, 30 March 1984: 31.
Laguna Art Museum, *Proof: Los Angeles Art and the Photograph 1960—1980*, 1992, pg. 94, 95.
Larsen, Susan C., "The Nation—Los Angeles, A Fantasy Life*," Art News* 78, no.5 May 1979: 117—124.
Lewis, Louise, "Where are the Daumiers of Video Art?" *Media Arts* 1, no.10, Fall 1985: 8-9.
Marmer, Nancy, "Los Angeles," *Artforum* 14, no.8, April 1976: 76-77.
Ohland, Gloria, "Segalove's Latest is a Riot," *L.A. Weekly* 6, no. 22, April 1984:4.
Pincus, Robert, "Video Artist Hides a New Message in an Old Formula," *San Diego Union*, 23 June, 1985: E8.
Pincus, Robert, "Exhibit shows contrast of soft and hard edges*," San Diego Union, \ The Arts*, 13, May, 1990: E1.
Podheiser, Linda, "Ilene Segalove, Girl Video Artist," *Boston Review* 9, no.3, May/June 1984: 11-14.
Postman, Bruce, "Video as Art, Art as Video," *L.A. Weekly* 4, no. 8, Cover, January 1982:11-12.
Reidy, Robyn, "TV Stories: The Adventures of Ilene Segalove," *Afterimage* 14, no. 3, October 1986:4-5.
Renov, Michael, "The Subject in History: The New Autobiographical In Film and Video," *Afterimage* 17, no. 1, Summer 1989:4—7.
Schneider, Ira and Beryl Korot, eds. *Video Art: An Anthology,* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1976.

RELATED ARTS EMPLOYMENT

TEACHING

I have been a university professor and guest artist/lecturer teaching multi-media, photography, video, and radio production; including but not limited to:
University of California, Santa Barbara, Art Department and College of Creative Studies, 1989--1991
California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, 1990.
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. , 1987.
Otis Parsons School of Art and Design, Los Angeles, 1976—1981
University of California, Irvine, 1978.
University of California, San Diego, 1976.

RADIO/AUDIO PRODUCTION

I have produced numerous public radio commentaries with a niche as a "modern artist growing up in modern America" for Canadian Broadcasting, Public Radio International, and National Public Radio as well as special commissions for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Featured over 3 dozen pieces on Fresh Air, All Things Considered, Morning Edition, Soundprint, and Weekend Edition from 1985 through 1997 alone and co-produced with Stephen Proffitt and Connie Goldman.

BOOKS (Commercial products)

Snap Out Of It, 2004, Red Wheel Conari Press.
40 Days and 40 Nights, 2004, Andrews McMeel.
The following titles all published by Andrews McMeel from 1994—1999:
Risk Your Self
List Your Creative Self
List Your Self For Kids
List Your Self for Parents
List Your Self for Pregnancy
List Your Self
More List Your Self
Woman's Book of Changes

Titles by Ilene Segalove: (1973--1987)

Collection of Early Works (This is Cal Arts years...)
Five True Stories (Late Cal Arts years)
I Remember Beverly Hills
The Mom Tapes (Some from Cal Arts years)
California Casual
The Cauliflower Alley Tapes
What is Business?
The Riot Tapes
Why I Got Into TV and Other Stories
More TV Stories
Whatever Happened to the Future
My Puberty

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Jane Collings, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Communications, Antioch College; M.A., Communications, University of Iowa; Ph.D. Critical Studies in Film and Television, UCLA..

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: The Smith Room, Special Collections, Young Research Library, UCLA (January 29, 2004); The UCLA Oral History Program office, UCLA (September 22, 2004).

Total number of recorded hours: 3.5

Persons present during interview: Segalove and Collings.

CONDUCT AND PROCESSING OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one of a series of interviews dealing with feminist media and art of the seventies in Los Angeles.

Collings prepared for the interviews by viewing Segalove's work and reading selected articles on Segalove's work and its context.

The interviewer compiled the table of contents and interview history and supplied the spellings of proper nouns and the complete names entered in brackets in the text. Segalove reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names, made a number of corrections and additions, and provided the biographical material at the front of the transcript. Michelle Weis, editorial assistant, assembled the guide to proper names.

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

January 29, 2004

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Ilene Segalove, January 29th, 2004, in the Smith Room of Special Collections at the Young Research Library on the UCLA campus. This is tape one, side one.

Good morning, Ilene.

SEGALOVE: Hello.

COLLINGS: Why don't we just start off with very basic information, such as when and where you were born.

SEGALOVE: I was born on November 24th, a post-Thanksgiving dinner baby, in 1950, in Los Angeles at the Cedar-Sinai Hospital, which actually is where the Scientology Building is now in Hollywood. So I was born in the Scientology Building.

COLLINGS: My gosh, that's a claim to fame.

SEGALOVE: Yes.

COLLINGS: What about a little bit about your family. You have siblings, I understand.

SEGALOVE: I have a younger brother [Harvey Segalove], who is a psychiatrist and the director of a private psychiatric hospital in Oakland, California; and my sister is married, with two children. She's the older sibling. My mom is alive. My dad died in '99. They came out, my parents, from Chicago in the early forties, and who they

are did and does influence so much of my world view, whether I like it or not.

COLLINGS: How much older than you is your sister?

SEGALOVE: She's five and a half years older. It seems like another generation. My brother's four years younger. I am the middle child, the one who still fights to be heard at family gatherings.

COLLINGS: What are your brother's and sister's names, just for the record?

SEGALOVE: My brother is Harvey; Dr. Segalove. My sister is Cheryl Priven.

COLLINGS: What are your parents' names?

SEGALOVE: My mother is Elaine. Her name was Isachowitch and they changed it to Izner. And my father was Dr. Milton Segalove. His name was Sigaloffsky, and they changed that to Segalove. Their families are all from Eastern Europe.

COLLINGS: Were they born in the United States?

SEGALOVE: They were; first generation.

COLLINGS: But their parents were not?

SEGALOVE: Were not.

COLLINGS: What area was your father— Your father was a doctor.

SEGALOVE: He was actually a Ph.D. in biochemistry and bacteriology. His Ph.D. piece was on the effects of staphylococcus on penicillin. I grew up in a household where I was told your home is your laboratory. I was real close to my father. He was also very artistic. He was one of those people who had been originally left-handed, forced to become right-handed, so had this kind of interesting blend of music, art, and science.

My mother was a psychiatric social worker, almost got her master's, was one of those gals who slid out before they finished. So they were both college-educated. My father's parents were not; they were peasants from Russia. My mother's father, though, was a very well-respected OB/GYN in Chicago, who was also a rabbi and also kind of a well-known man about town way back.

COLLINGS: So, educated grandparents.

SEGALOVE: One side. The other peasants. But my parents were both educated. They met in Chicago.

COLLINGS: They met in Chicago and they got married in Chicago?

SEGALOVE: Yes. They're very midwestern in the sense they were the salt-of-the-earth type of people, unpretentious, worked hard. My mother's father died when she was quite young. She was wealthy growing up and then this shift happened, and so she was suddenly without her father. Met my dad a year and a half later. Lucky her. They struggled and moved west and began a laboratory. My father started the first real large laboratory in this country, and so he was mainly— He became a businessman more than a scientist.

COLLINGS: Why did they come out to Los Angeles?

SEGALOVE: My mother always dreamed of coming to California, always a dream, and my father, as well, coming west, starting something new, finding a seed, getting out of the weather, leaving their families. And then my father's family came out. Then Dad started a tiny laboratory, and then a little bigger, and then eventually created a large lab that was in Van Nuys, California.

COLLINGS: So this was like a pharmaceutical lab?

SEGALOVE: They did testing. They invented the first thyroid panels.

COLLINGS: The first what?

SEGALOVE: Thyroid panels. It was sort of a big deal for a lab to actually do this kind of level of testing.

They moved originally to Culver City, where the schools were apparently good, and then they moved to Beverly Hills for the school system, probably in '55 or '56. I grew up in Culver City and my mother used to walk me around MGM and used to see Zsa Zsa Gabor and other stars. Hollywood always had a big shadow on my growing up, and I grew up in Beverly Hills before it was 90210, pre-zip. But it's a strange legacy, a place I tend not to tell people I'm from, or else, here we go.

COLLINGS: Was it "Beverly Hills" when you lived there?

SEGALOVE: No. It was a small town. It was provincial. The schools were good. They were public. They did not want to have to send me to a private school to get a good education. Beverly Hills had a good school system. I graduated high school in '68.

COLLINGS: So that was sort of before your time, after your time.

SEGALOVE: Yes. I missed all of the Rodeo Drive gold-and-glitter stuff. That came later.

COLLINGS: So you didn't have sort of a sense that this was Beverly Hills when you were growing up?

SEGALOVE: No such problem. Well, a little. When I went to camp in the Valley,

which seemed very far away, yeah, I'd say I was from L.A. And then they'd say, "Where?" and I'd say, "West L.A." There's a video about that. And then I'd finally cop it, and then I had to deal with some onslaught of questions and assumptions. Now I realize it was a really weird place to grow up.

COLLINGS: What kind of exposure to the arts did you have when you were growing up?

SEGALOVE: My mother and father were real into music, so they would take us to see plays and concerts. I don't remember going with my family ever to any art museums. My school, though, was really big on taking us around, and I do recall the first time ever seeing art, big art, and it was big. It was at the Huntington Library, where "Pinkie" and "Blue Boy" were hanging, and I wrote a story about it. I remember the awe that the teacher conveyed about these paintings that I thought were really stupid. It's a girl and boy overdressed. I didn't understand why they were so important. But that struck me.

I was the girl artist, always. I was in charge of filling the glass cases in the school halls with holiday art. You probably remember that.

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: They were thematic. I didn't realize no one wanted to do it. It seemed like an honor.

So my first exposure to art, "Pinkie" and "Blue Boy." I did grow up, though, with some girls, whose parents had serious art collections. My best friend, her father and mother had a collection of Picassos and Modiglianis that were just lining the

hallway at their house. I was impressed by their scale; they were little. I didn't know how a little piece, a little Picasso, big deal, would be such an important thing. Again, I really questioned what made it great art and what made it not. Her dad also owned a lot of [Ed] Kienholz pieces, so he owned Barney's Beanery [*The Beanery*]. That was in the back yard. So there's Barney's Beanery and Picasso in somebody's house. That was my exposure.

I do remember seeing a show of art at the local Jewish temple, and there were some Andy Warhol pieces. I think it was an auction, you know, poorly hung art in a small space. And I remember thinking I liked the "Campbell Soup Can." And I thought: "How do you paint a can of soup and show it in a museum? I don't know how that happens." But that was impressive to me.

So that was it. I really wasn't exposed much to art. I watched TV. I liked TV, loved it, and my parents never really talked about art. My uncle, Aaron Bohrod, who you may know, he was a well-known artist in Wisconsin. He was the artist, and he painted very realistic, wonderful Surrealist paintings of objects he collected. So, to me, if you were really a successful artist, you painted reality. So that was my other kind of link.

COLLINGS: Did you ever talk about these questions of what made work good work? Because it sounds like these were popping into your mind.

SEGALOVE: I kept it to myself. I think my household was a bit chaotic. So it was sort of brewing and stewing, and I never realized that until later. I think the good news was that I felt that I could, as my individual self, address those questions without

feeling insecure or like I'd better talk to the authorities. I came from a household that questioned authority, so I think the support was, if you don't like it, tell them. If you don't like the test question, tell them you don't like it. My mother's really irreverent.

COLLINGS: She's really irreverent?

SEGALOVE: Irreverent, yes. But it promoted a kind of confidence that I've always had. I just have always thought, "Well, I'm going to do that." I'll make art out of something that I think it should be made out of. I don't care if it's an issue.

COLLINGS: What were you planning to be when you were a kid of this age?

SEGALOVE: An astronaut.

COLLINGS: You really were planning to be an astronaut?

SEGALOVE: Well, that's when Alan Shepard traveled around the moon. I thought he was so cute. And we studied the astronauts, and I just assumed— I was really good in science. My dad was a scientist. It didn't occur to me, well, that women, girls, were not being considered; and you also had to be good at math, and although I got A's in math, I could never understand it. But I assumed I'd be an astronaut or a speech therapist.

COLLINGS: Why a speech therapist?

SEGALOVE: The reasons are so insane. Actually, I wish I had become one. At the time, on "What's My Line?" on TV, there was once a woman that was on and she was a speech therapist. She was really pretty and also really smart, and it was the first time I saw a woman that was not only attractive, but intelligent all at once, and I said, "Okay, if I can be both those things, I would like to be a speech therapist."

COLLINGS: What about your teachers at school? Did they try to direct you in any certain way?

SEGALOVE: Yes. I was always one of the few people chosen to be tested. I was the only girl ever pulled out of class, with a bunch of boys, to be tested for after-school special science classes. There was a lot of that in Beverly Hills; special reading, a lot of accelerated stuff. So I was put in all the accelerated programs. I was also pulled out to be the artist, and I was also a dancer, danced a lot. So I was this— If you can only imagine. I had long braids and I got all A's, I was a little brain. I was completely over the top.

COLLINGS: And you were the only girl?

SEGALOVE: Always. I wasn't the only girl artist, but I was the only girl chosen to go out and be tested. What I learned was, if you were an artist, you were given special attention, not so much in class, but you got privileges, and you got to be pulled out of class and have your kind of own schedule. So I learned that being an artist had a lot of, at that point, perks. I didn't realize later they'd all be taken away.

COLLINGS: You got your perks. [laughs]

SEGALOVE: Really. And it was probably because by default. No one could draw hands or horses and I could, so there you have it. I mean, it was real easy to be an artist then. But I could draw.

COLLINGS: What kinds of things were you reading when you were reading all these books?

SEGALOVE: I liked the science. I like science stuff, and I still go there for my

source material. A lot about astronomy. Really, all the sciences. I was my father's daughter. I entered all the science competitions and collaborated with him and made work.

COLLINGS: Was he encouraging you to go into any particular area?

SEGALOVE: No. I think they kind of let us— We were all really good students. I think if it had been another era, I think I would have gone into medicine. But I was "the creative one." My sister was more into clothes and got married early, and my brother was a really good student, and he became the doctor

COLLINGS: Had they been interested in your sister pursuing a career of any kind?

SEGALOVE: No. She actually graduated college. She got married right away. I never even thought of my sister having a career. I think she would be an interior designer now if she had gone to school, but she was into having a family.

COLLINGS: But was it understood that you would work?

SEGALOVE: No. As a matter of fact, the notion of work was strange. It was understood I would study. It's kind of a classic Jewish family, in a way, protecting me. When I wanted to get jobs, they wouldn't let me. They'd say, "Take two classes." So I became good at being a student and confused about what working was. When I ended up going to college in the sixties, as you know, that era wasn't really career-based. If it had been, I would have had a job, you know, but it never occurred to me. I mean, I look back and I think, wow, what was that about? It was that unique, strange slice of time, for better or worse. I would have probably been a journalist, a photojournalist, and gotten out of the country and done some interesting photo text

pieces. But that is not the direction I went, although I'm kind of doing it now in a roundabout way.

COLLINGS: In terms of the larger community, what about religious upbringing, extended family?

SEGALOVE: My grandparents were around, and so I had this kind of Orthodox Jewish piece. My father's father was an Orthodox Jew, who kind of shifted out. My father pooh-poohed it as a scientist, really had disdain for it. My mother secretly wishes she could do more, but doesn't. So we were Jewish in terms of culture, but not really religious. I did go to Sunday school, but I didn't bother with it much.

Only recently did I read something in Exodus or whatever. I did an audio-installation as a commission piece for a temple in town and I realized that— It's so obvious, but it never occurred to me, that in the text Jews are told not to create an image of God. Actually, this is the culture of The Word. It's the only culture where boys, in order to transition to adulthood would have to read. Other cultures, they killed a lion. Jews read a book. So I'm very text-based. I really love the word. I think of the word as an object. But I have had disdain for the object, not knowing why. When I was reading about this, I thought, jeez, maybe it's in my cell structure.

COLLINGS: What do you mean "the object"?

SEGALOVE: Creating an image is actually superficial, that painting something beautiful is not important and that making art from that place has no value. It doesn't have meaning and it's not controversial. What are you doing? And so I keep fighting towards beauty because I know more people will buy my work. But that was an issue,

and I think it feeds into feminism. That isn't where I come from, and my family certainly didn't support that.

COLLINGS: They did support that?

SEGALOVE: They did not support the beauty piece. It was like, you know, how many books can you read? Knowledge can't be stolen from you. It's that kind of Jewish thing where they can take everything from you, but not what you know.

So I really was born in a household that was post-Holocaust, without talking about that, but, again looking back, I realize I was infused with that kind of fear, and text seemed to be the gold. I don't know if it would be my choice, but it's certainly how I was programmed.

COLLINGS: I was going to ask you if you had done a lot of writing as a child or as a young person, because so many of your pieces are centered around writing.

SEGALOVE: I never thought I was a writer. I still don't. But my schooling was very much write reports, and I was the kid— I look back and think what an obnoxious child. I was a kid who came in already with my "What I Did This Summer" report. You have to understand, my mother didn't like me to leave the house. There's only so much you can do in your room.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's interesting.

SEGALOVE: I would crave to wander on the hills and ride a horse. I'm really outdoorsey. Again, Jewish household, "Stay in your room." Who did I have in my room? I had the encyclopedia. There we go. So what am I going to do? I write a research paper about the bee or whatever, and then I'd illustrate it, and I got such

incredible strokes, that I thought, "Fine, I'll keep doing this." So honestly, the writing was simply something I could do. But it was also from that we wrote research papers in junior high, which is a little early. So, yeah, I could write, and that's how I got through high school, college, and the university.

COLLINGS: But no creative writing at that time?

SEGALOVE: Never. I never have. As a matter of fact, everything I knew and have done for a living, I never studied. What I studied was how to think and how to trust my ideas. The rest I just— When I pick up a camera, I still don't have any idea. I taught photography for years. I have no idea. I am not a tech. I taught video, I taught journalism, I taught radio production, I've taught probably everything, but I prefer to come in from the conceptual place. I hate reading instruction manuals. So I wish I'd had more of a craft-based background, but it just didn't happen.

COLLINGS: I just wanted to ask you another thing about the upbringing. This is sort of jumping ahead to your *Riot Tapes*, the tape that you talked about how you came to UC [University of California] Santa Barbara and you'd been doing all of this political theory, reading in political theory, and I was just sort of wondering, did you have friends with whom you shared these political theory kinds of interests?

SEGALOVE: When I was in high school, I had a boyfriend who actually donated his Marxist library to the school when he died in '79. He was my serious Marxist boyfriend who sent away to Europe for reading materials when we were in late high school. So I was kind of in an existentialist mode and feeling like that was the end of the line, and then Ricky Probris kind of leaped into theory and phenomenological

studies and very, very hard readings, and so pre-college I was steeped in some of that, more because I wanted to converse with him than because I felt like it really spoke to me.

When the Biafra stuff went down, Ricky became very— Well, there was no choice. That's what he was doing. He was going to be dealing with really transforming this country, leading a revolution. That's where his head was at. He went to [University of California] Berkeley. I applied to Berkeley to be with him and got rejected, and was sort of dumped into one of a few choices. UC Santa Barbara was one of the options.

COLLINGS: How did your parents feel about you having this boyfriend?

SEGALOVE: They really liked Ricky because his father was a doctor and they were solid people. They didn't know his mother had been a card-carrying Communist. Although my parents are very liberal, they certainly weren't standing up for any kind of radical approach to living. But they liked Ricky and they were fine, because he was smart and a good student. It's kind of like, if you're a good student, it's good.

When I got dropped into Santa Barbara, it was interesting. It was sort of like, you know, the gods were deciding that I was going to take another path. I kicked and screamed. I was shocked, but I realized also it was like, "Oh god, maybe I can breathe." It was so hard to walk that path, and Ricky proceeded to become very active with the SDS [Students for Democratic Society]; his demise, actually. He is dead now. He did commit suicide, but it really was a function of a great deal of paranoia wrapped up with a lot of activity in his Berkeley days.

COLLINGS: As you say in the tape, did he actually starve himself to death?

SEGALOVE: Yes. Well, he was anorexic and bulimic. What ultimately happened was, he did try to commit suicide and failed, and then he actually gagged, which a lot of bulimics do, and died at twenty-nine. I cannot imagine him having survived [President Ronald W.] Reagan and [President George H.W.] Bush. I don't know how he would get through the day. He'd be horrified. So I don't think he had the actual human—I don't know what it is—mettle to handle how the ideals and the reality were at odds.

But I did make that tape kind of to honor him, and also because it was really a funny time for me. I felt guilty a little, but being dropped into Santa Barbara was a strange world. And I didn't leave. I mean, I kept reapplying everywhere. I don't know if it's because I was lazy. Probably, to a degree. But I just stayed.

COLLINGS: That's probably a fairly good school.

SEGALOVE: It was good enough. During that era, again, the class was pass/fail. There was a lot of— Well, we weren't studying toward our degree, let's just say that.

COLLINGS: Another question I have for you is, sort of going back to the upbringing, was humor important for you growing up?

SEGALOVE: Yes, absolutely. My mother's really funny, and my dad liked her sense of humor. I mean, my mother is fabulous edited, let's just say that.

COLLINGS: Is she?

SEGALOVE: And I wish I had the courage and strength to do what I used to do with her. I don't right now. But way back when I really enjoyed working with her. During

the Feminist Era, I would bring her with me on some of my public presentations for levity, because it was a pretty serious time.

I do want to go on a brief tangent about my love of "text." I just realized it the other day, knowing I was coming here— Do you remember American cheese started coming out in those flat packs so you could unwrap one at a time? That must have been in say 1960 or so.

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: My father used to work very hard, and he had a lot of physical issues. He'd come home, and he was not feeling that well, and to kind of welcome him home, I used to make words out of cheese. I really liked sculpting language out of cheese. Early text art. Maybe I'll do that again. But it just cracked me up. They had the hard edges, so it was real easy. He'd come home, and I've have like the sentence of the day on a big green platter. I don't remember what I said, but it was like really riveting. So these things are funny how they just sort of show up.

COLLINGS: One more question about your upbringing. What kinds of career goals did your friends at high school have?

SEGALOVE: Most of my peers were hugely competitive and ended up at Radcliffe [College]. They were the first girls at Wellesley [College], Radcliffe, Vassar [College], those schools. My parents would not allow me to apply to those schools. They thought they were elitist, pretentious, and forget about it. I don't think I really wanted to go, but I wanted to apply. Many of my peers became famous. One girl became a TV news personality in San Francisco. These were serious, aspiring girls. I

had dinner with one last night who I hadn't seen in ages. She was the head of the Directors Guild. Many of these women have political bents, you know, and they often were so mature at fifteen or sixteen. They had career goals. I was one of the people that wasn't like that. I had no vision. It didn't occur to me. I mean, I was a dancer but I was very serious too. I was reading [Jean-Paul] Sartre and [Friedrich] Nietzsche and thinking life had no meaning. So I wasn't exactly planning my future. I never wanted to have kids and a family; that seemed too conventional.

COLLINGS: Did you know other girls who had these restrictions like not being able to apply and not being able to go out much?

SEGALOVE: Not really. We didn't have that much money then, even in Beverly Hills! We moved into Beverly Hills, but we weren't— A lot of these girls really were wealthy. There were different classes even in Beverly Hills.

I did have a girlfriend who went to UCLA. Many went to the design school here, which again was something I didn't even know about. I remember it was like, "Do you want to be in the design school or the fine arts school?" What is the difference? Of course, it was and is huge. I look back, I must have known more than I remember. But I was not that interested. I was a bit apathetic and needed to find real inspiration somehow. I thought life was meaningless. I didn't even go to graduation. COLLINGS: You didn't go to graduation?

SEGALOVE: Absolutely not. I think we went off and, you know, tripped out somewhere. I was really not into conventional— I was getting ready to be, you know, I guess a political activist of some sort, and tradition and ritual seemed pretentious and

phony.

COLLINGS: At that point were you able to kind of like go out more, or did your parents want you more to just go to school and come home?

SEGALOVE: I always had a lot of boyfriends, and I could go out. Because I was a good student, I was welcome to everybody's house, and I studied with people a lot. So I could go. But I remember, I was saying to my friend last night, "I'd come to your house and we'd study, right?"

She said, "No, we went to Disneyland and ballet and stuff."

I have no memory of that. I remember just going and drawing mitochondria for science class. So I think I was trying to be a good girl. With my parents there wasn't a lot of room to misbehave.

COLLINGS: Did you have people over to your house much?

SEGALOVE: Yes, all the time. My parents ended up creating an environment that was hard to resist. We had a stainless-steel soda fountain, with like the cool glass banana split plates, whipped cream, cherries. We had a candy drawer filled with semi-sweet candy and caramel corn. We had a kidney-shaped swimming pool with a waterfall.

COLLINGS: Was this the House of Tomorrow?

SEGALOVE: It was, and it was featured in *Whatever Happened to the Future*?" It was like a beautiful little prison. So I did have friends over, but I preferred going out to more interesting families. My friend's mother, she was a big reader and she had a wonderful library room filled from floor to ceiling. She was a very quiet woman,

unlike my mother, who was always wearing polka-dot outfits and was just wild. So I would try to go elsewhere, because I preferred quiet, animals, outdoors, and my household was a little bit like a busy Holiday Inn from the fifties. We lived in a lot of orange and pink, with a bright pink kitchen, like the House of Pies.

COLLINGS: Did she like colors?

SEGALOVE: Absolutely. She said I was like walking death because I wore black and brown all the time.

COLLINGS: What are some of the wild things that your mom would sort of do?

SEGALOVE: She was the mother that swore. Kids would be in the back seat of my mother's car, somebody would honk, and she'd say, "Blow it out your ass." Kids would just—

COLLINGS: They would freak.

SEGALOVE: They'd sit downstairs waiting for her to come downstairs. She's like one of those inner monologues that just comes out. She claims it's because she was a social worker in Chicago and she had to deal with so-called regular folk so she learned how to speak like them. Now she's eighty-eight and she believes she has officially earned the right to say and do as she pleases.

COLLINGS: I see another videotape.

SEGALOVE: Just seeing her at a restaurant is phenomenal. It's like, "Uh-oh." So she's over the top. My dad was very charming and well behaved, but obviously she cracked him up because she really was, and is, wild. I wish she had channeled her energy towards something other than her three children. Now she's an e-mail fanatic.

She e-mails in all caps sometimes. You know how horrible that is?

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: The first thing e-mails were, "Hi, honey. I'm using the e-mail." Finally, it took about three weeks, she became Mom. It was like, "Goddamn it, the plumber was here. I should hang him up by his balls. I don't know why they charge an elderly woman like me this. The hell with it. I'm not calling him anymore." That was the next e-mail. It's like, oh, now she's really herself on the e-mail. But it's funny. If I had been really good about it, I [would have] just saved the evolution. It's a great piece of social archeology.

And so that is why I felt the only way to handle growing up in my household was to be— I thought I might be a cartoonist. I was one of the few girls who had a subscription to *Mad*.

COLLINGS: Love *Mad*, yes.

SEGALOVE: Fabulous. And Don Martin was the great cartoonist. My brother was very sensitive, and my parents would fight at night behind their door. And I would write down what they said and then draw cartoons, and my brother would laugh hysterically. I didn't feel particularly uncomfortable with their behavior, because to me it was just material. Now, I don't know where I got this point of view as a child, but I'm thinking, "It's raw material. It's good stuff." I think it's the only way I could survive, honestly.

COLLINGS: Well, you probably felt like they didn't really mean it.

SEGALOVE: It was like, "Who are these people? I've been dropped into this

house." I remember I used to say to myself, "These are my parents." I had wished I was adopted so I'd have like an undercurrent story, but forget it. I'm my mother's daughter.

COLLINGS: Looked into it, found that you weren't.

SEGALOVE: I couldn't wait. I was looking for the drawer, you know. When my dad died, I was just craving that there would be some wonderful mystery box, but Dad wasn't that kind of person. He did have some of my personal letters in his tie drawer, which was touching, but there was nothing, you know, like, "And by the way…."

I never felt like my life merited making art about, because, in a sense, the content in my life was not that eventful. Girls' lives are boring, in the scheme of the old books I read, which were all about adventurous boys. It was actually, I think, quite political and quite important for women of my era to even think what they thought, let alone to even consider putting it out as important storytelling and art. Now women are everywhere!

COLLINGS: They're all over the darn place.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

January 29, 2004

COLLINGS: Okay. So you get to college at—

SEGALOVE: 1968.

COLLINGS: '68, a very important year. Did you have a sense of the moment of that year at the time?

SEGALOVE: When I graduated, we published— There was a lot of publishing at Beverly High [School], and we published, I don't know, I guess it was a newspaper to honor the year in our graduation, and on the cover was Robert [F.] Kennedy and Martin Luther King [Jr.]. I still have that piece. Oh yes. We knew it was big, but it seemed like the delusion factor was huge, as well. It seemed like we were going to change the world, and it was happening right now. It really felt that way. And I miss it terribly. I would pay, I'd sell my house. I'd give my house away to go back to that time, as painful as it was, because I really felt alive. Maybe everybody feels alive at eighteen.

COLLINGS: Well, I think certainly that's part of it, but that was definitely a very unique time in American history, no question.

SEGALOVE: I mean, I know if I hadn't lived through that, I'd certainly have a bigger job. I mean, I'd have a different life, there is no question. But I have no regrets. I was very aware it was a pivotal time and I was really torn about what to think, what to study, who to be. It was really hard to figure out what to do.

UCSB [University of California, Santa Barbara] was a surfer, party school, but it became a hub of political activity in a small way, I mean for a moment. I wasn't aware of that when I landed, though. I just thought, "Boy, this is a strange place."

COLLINGS: What did you start off studying when you got there?

SEGALOVE: I was undeclared for as long as possible. I did take art classes, but I also took anthropology. Again, in another life I probably would have been, I don't know, what do they call a psychological or visual anthropologist? I really love— I feel comfortable as an outsider. But I wasn't that interested in the tribes of New Guinea. I really was studying my own culture, and that made more sense to me. I took sociology-type classes. I did not take one single psychology class. I chose not to do that....

COLLINGS: Because of your—

SEGALOVE: It had no windows. The building had no windows.

COLLINGS: Ah. Good reason. [laughs]

SEGALOVE: It turned out they were doing a lot of monkey research, a lot of animal stuff. But I didn't like the vibe of the building. These reasons sound— You know, maybe that's profound. I didn't like the building.

And then I discovered the art department, and I met a lot of people, guys in particular who were very different than the guys I'd ever known. They were mostly Irish Catholic, and it was another world. They liked to have fun. They smiled and were happy. They didn't care about Nietzsche, and they were artists. It was real interesting. I felt kind of guilty, because I thought, "Are they stupid?"

So I was torn between this art thing and these kind of guys, and I'd fly up to see my high school boyfriend Ricky a lot. I'd go to Berkeley. I was and am really a split person.

COLLINGS: Yes, that sounds like a real split.

SEGALOVE: I could have two husbands and families, and I'd be happy that way. So I'd go up and be political, hang out with the Black Panthers. I had access. I'd come back to these Irish guys that were drinking beer and talking about— I don't know. They were potters, usually, ceramists. They were talking about glazes. So it was a kind of strange piece of time.

COLLINGS: They were making something.

SEGALOVE: They were making things, thank you. They were. And the things had no content, really. They were exploring surfaces. They were defining ceramic history by creating vessels that didn't hold anything. In a way, they were doing their own revolutionary work. It just wasn't, you know, considered threatening, although actually in our world it was. It was starting to happen that the object was becoming questioned. Conceptual art was sort of being born, I guess.

So that was like '68, '69. Of course, the draft was happening. There was so much going on. I can't separate school from the war.

COLLINGS: Did you have any women friends at that time?

SEGALOVE: Yeah, I had a lot of women artist friends. All my friends were artists. I made art with one woman. I had one very politically active woman, who's actually currently a speaker and a writer for KPFK. She was my roommate.

COLLINGS: Not the one with the Snoopy?

SEGALOVE: No. I won't even mention this woman's name, because I know she's quite undercover, this political person, but she was a mover and a shaker, right in there. I didn't realize how close I was to [William] Kunstler and Jerry Rubin and all the activity that was bubbling. I'm really delighted she's still as brilliant, as articulate. I mean, I'm shocked. Well, she survived. A lot of people didn't.

So there was this political thing, and then there was art, and it just seemed, you know, at odds, and it was a hard thing to hold, the conflict. I know now that's what I do. I'm always at odds.

COLLINGS: You were there initially for two years.

SEGALOVE: Actually, I got through the whole.

COLLINGS: Did you go away to Italy?

SEGALOVE: Yes. I just split for a while. I took off a couple quarters. But mostly I was there, and I'd go up to see Ricky and I'd come back and be with my Irish boyfriends. I was becoming influenced by some of the art teachers. One was an artist from South Africa who had been in England and then showed up at UCSB, Roland Brenner. He's in Victoria, B.C. now.

There was another artist named Billy Adler, who was basically a photographer of popular culture, popular architecture. So between the camera and Roland's irreverence and Billy, his partner, John Margolies— You may know John Margolies' work.

COLLINGS: Yes, the name is— Yes.

SEGALOVE: *Miniature Golf Across America*. He's captured all of the kind of lost architecture of this culture. He did a book on the Fontainebleau [Hotel] in Florida. I found myself recognizing that I actually was interested in popular culture, something I didn't know had a name because I thought it was just my life, that a photograph of a Sambo's coffee cup actually it was more than a pretty picture. So these people started helping me understand that the art I was interested in making could have content and that content and context was important.

COLLINGS: Was this, do you think, the outsider perspective of Roland Brenner from England, did you say?

SEGALOVE: Yes. He was an outsider. The visiting artists that were considered important were given large art studios, and Roland, in his art studio, built a boat. The art department was horrified. You don't build a boat. It's just to make art. Well, "Hello, a gray area here."

And then Billy and John— Billy Adler and John and I got very involved when I graduated, but I started to understand that I had a point of view. That's a big deal.

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: I had a point of view, and it was consistent. So I didn't have to worry about what was I going to make, or the medium, because I always had the same point of view. So that was really powerful, and also really unnerving. I don't know about other people, and I don't think it's been discussed much, but physiologically, when I'm on a project. I would and still do get so physically spun out. I guess it's like an adrenal kind of thing. I can barely breathe a lot of times.

COLLINGS: Could barely breathe?

SEGALOVE: Yes. I'd be so excited about the feeling of the truth that I was exploring and then I'd have to figure out how to make it work—that I was really torn, and I would try to forget every good idea I had, because I knew it required going into that realm of great discomfort. At fifty-three—so I've been doing this, probably, since twenty-three, let's say—I'm finally managing to figure out how to handle that physiological space, which I think would be helped by alcohol, but I don't like to drink and never could. I know artists often enjoy, you know, alternates.

COLLINGS: Something to dial it back.

SEGALOVE: I remember making these pieces and feeling kind of crazy.

COLLINGS: Would you start something and then just work on it for sort of three days straight?

SEGALOVE: No. I work fast. I'd probably pull it off in an hour. I'm lazy, so that's probably part of the problem. It was more the profundity of the idea, and this could be just narcissism or arrogance, but, I mean, I was caught up.

For example, I did one piece— It sounds really dumb. I can't remember exactly the content of the assignment. It was for a sculpture class, and I think I created the world out of foam rubber and felt, and I put it in my living room. The countires of the world became cushions, and the only way you could see the collection was by peeking through the living room window. I mailed my teacher a letter, and then he came to my window at a certain time. He had to look through the blinds, and that's where the piece was. I remember doing this whole thing. I was creating a new

sensibility in my mind about what art was. Of course, I didn't know what other people had been doing, because we didn't know what Europe was up to.

But those kinds of pieces, I bought some Astroturf and I rolled it across the street from the apartment I lived in, and it just so happened these people were getting married at the church across the street then, and they got married on my Astroturf and I took pictures of them crossing the street. It seemed like so big, and I guess it kind of was, because it wasn't a piece of painting on a wall. So I was breaking boundaries personally rather than learning about them. I studied nothing about that. I just made it up. So I kind of got caught up in that.

COLLINGS: So you were doing photography and video and sculpture?

SEGALOVE: It was called sculpture. Video came in later, and I really didn't do video until I graduated, because we only had access to one PortaPak at that point.

I was caught up in the fact that I could squeeze my life into the television set. I just didn't know you were allowed to do that. It was beyond belief. Yes, so I was taking pictures, but I wasn't a photographer; I just used it. And I was writing stuff and I was creating environmental spaces.

COLLINGS: How was your work being received by your—

SEGALOVE: Really well. I think it was senior year, each artist got the opportunity to do something at the university gallery, so I did something that was called *Pool On The Roof*. I had this sign made out of Plexiglas that said "Pool" with an arrow point up. You had to walk to the roof and the roof had been covered with rocks, like flat roofs always have those rocks broken up. So I bought I don't know how many bags of

blue rock, and I just created a kidney-shaped pool on the roof, and that was it. Well, God, it was like I'd invented, I don't know, the cure for something.

COLLINGS: Rocket to the moon.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. I mean, people were blown away by that piece. And to me, I didn't even think about it. It was like obvious when I saw the roof, duh, I'm going to find a pool, put it on the roof, blah, blah.

But I have to say I have been always treated, I don't know well, but— What can I say? I got some reviews for that, I got some applause, and part of me would always question it and wonder, "What was I doing?" I think if I really believed in what I was doing on some level, I would have really pursued a more traditional art career, but to me, a lot of that work were throwaway pieces, and I thought the art world was almost pulling a joke on itself.

I don't know. I've never come to terms with how I feel about all this. I wish I'd been a different person—and I have said that a lot—who could have pursued that. I think I would have done some interesting environmental work. I do one thing and I'm on to the next medium; done. Rocks, I've done rocks. Other people would take that as material and work rocks for thirty, forty years. To me, it was a one-liner. I just wanted to do something else, so I couldn't maintain it. The art world didn't used to support artists that kept changing mediums. It really questioned their commitment.

COLLINGS: At a certain point, you have to have something to sell, too.

SEGALOVE: Wow, and who's going to buy the roof? Well, you know, in this day and age some artist could sell that piece, but that was beyond me. I think if I'd studied

in New York I might have understood better how the commerce piece entered in. Certainly not in Santa Barbara in the sixties!

COLLINGS: And certainly at that period of time, when it was so conceptual.

SEGALOVE: Forget it. So that was my senior year. I had met some very interesting artists, though. When I graduated, I became part of an art group called Telethon and worked with Billy Adler and John Margolies. And in those days, the way you joined a group was one of them was your boyfriend. Billy was my boyfriend. I think if he wasn't my boyfriend, I can't imagine—

COLLINGS: That you would have been in the group.

SEGALOVE: Probably not. Now, I'm not saying that he couldn't handle me that way. It's just that's how those alliances often are made, by some romantic. Now I know better. I knew that I was really in love with his work, not him. At the time, I couldn't separate them. People are all guilty of that.

COLLINGS: How were you treated as a female art student?

SEGALOVE: With him or in school?

COLLINGS: At school.

SEGALOVE: I was treated very well. There were many female art students. There were more in painting and less in sculpture, there were more in ceramics. Sculpture was the name, the catchall for what was going to be, and the teacher, Miles Varner, was very supportive of innovative work and really wanted me to go to the Art Institute in Chicago, really wanted me to go there, was committed to that and saw me as an important artist. I, of course, can't imagine going to Chicago. I wish I'd had, again,

but I couldn't deal with the climate.

COLLINGS: So when he would talk about that, you would just be saying to yourself—

SEGALOVE: I was flattered, but no way. I mean, bottom line, I'm a creature of comfort. I'm kind of lazy, and I really want to be warm. If I had been willing to be cold, this whole life would be very different, but I just don't like it.

COLLINGS: But for this guy, it was Chicago Art Institute or nothing, I guess?

SEGALOVE: He just thought it was a great school. I guess it was at the time, and I think it probably still is. I don't know.

What I decided to do was take a year off, and I worked with Billy and John and we started documenting popular culture. I remember we photographed and wrote an article on chocolate ice cream cones in Los Angeles. We went on a local talk show and were featured in *West* magazine, which was the magazine that went with the *L.A. Times*.

We went to the Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo and did a piece for a magazine about it. We went to Las Vegas. Billy and I won a three-day, two-night trip and basically documented the lowlife that we got from the tickets we got in the mail. It really was interesting to me. All the things we did, we had outlets that were not art outlets, they were more popular culture than art world and I kind of liked that.

We were also into documenting TV, way before a "Nickelodeon" idea came about.

One of the things Billy and John did was collect [President Richard M.] Nixon

every time he was on TV. They cut together—in those days very low tech—a piece about Nixon, and we, me and John and Billy, had a show at the UCSB art gallery, I think around '73. It was called *The TV Environment*. It was a traveling show. We recreated a living room in the museum, which was very innovative. Again, all of this sounds like, "So?" It had never been done, wallpaper, old couch, and people had access to watching television in a museum.

COLLINGS: That sounds great.

SEGALOVE: I'll tell you, there were never more people in a show.

COLLINGS: Exactly. When you think about walking around a museum with your back hurting.

SEGALOVE: Exactly. And I got it. I just thought, "TV is okay now. This is it. We are on the beginning of a huge— Something big's going to happen, and I'm going to be there." Because it was television. What would be more natural for me? That's what I loved. So that was huge.

At the time, there was a group called Radical Software, also called TVTV, Guerrilla Television. There were a lot of groups forming in San Francisco, particularly, and New York. People were starting to get a hold of these PortaPak video cameras and decks that were coming in from Japan, and forming collectives, and the concept was they would become their own, you know, reality television. The fantasy was that cable would not only assist, but would give access, not public access but like real CNN equivalent. So TVTV would be like CNN. Well, of course that was thirty years ahead of the game, but there was the feeling that the revolution was going

to be on television and that we were going to be a part of it.

Many of the people from those groups became Hollywood producers once they recognized, way before it occurred to me, that this art thing was going nowhere and there was no money. You could get some funding, NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities], but that got you from year to year. So Michael Shamberg became a producer. He did *The Big Chill*. Harold Ramis became *Ghostbusters* and *Groundhog Day*. Serious players. And then some of us became video artists.

COLLINGS: Now, the documenting of popular culture, was that sort of meshed in some way with the notion of, you know, the revolution is coming, or were these separate?

SEGALOVE: For me, it was a new world.

COLLINGS: Direction, yes.

SEGALOVE: That gave me, to my life, an inner context that had some humor that I could live through, because I didn't have what it took to live through that political time. My friends were basically moving to Canada, committing suicide, or trying to get out from being crazy. I did not have friends that joined the army.

I realized my work, the politics of what I was doing was actually being a female involved in anything, and that was huge. So I didn't have to think about the war, because, really, there was another war at home, and it was about women having voice. I wasn't gung-ho and articulate in that way. I was far more cynical and sarcastic, kind of a lightweight compared to Martha Rosler and Suzanne Lacy and

other women that were seriously talking the talk. I just couldn't. I felt like it wasn't my language.

COLLINGS: Were you aware of these *Womanhouse* and the Woman's Building, that kind of thing?

SEGALOVE: Well, the beauty of that was, the first show I ever had was somebody found me— I don't remember her name, but Womanspace was on Venice Boulevard in a small gallery, and I was asked to be part of a small show. In the show, I put the dress I wore to my sister's wedding, maid-of-honor dress, in a plastic bag, hanging on the wall, with a picture of me and a story about what a miserable day that was. I had to wear a push-up bra. I mean, just trying to turn me into a woman. And they didn't even ask what I wanted to wear, which would not have been that, so it was being forced into a mold.

So that was my first show. Around that time, I guess it was '74, '73— I graduated in '72. Okay, around '74, I decided I should go to graduate school, and that's when, again, I was torn. Oh, me! I thought I should do something to make a living at this point. I'd basically gotten sort of paid to work with Billy, but I kind of lived cheap then. I think my parents were still paying for my apartment.

So, CalArts [California Institute for the Arts] was just being born. It was in a small barn and it was in another school— I don't remember, somewhere in Burbank?

COLLINGS: Glendale, I think it was.

SEGALOVE: Okay. When I was in college, I had another boyfriend—the men are part of the story always—named Wolfgang Stoerchle, who is also not alive anymore.

The dead boyfriends, that's another video. Wolfgang was a very amazing artist, early video artist, real concept artist. He was from Germany. He came as a visiting artist. Again, one of these outsiders.

COLLINGS: Yes, exactly. This seems important.

SEGALOVE: He was my boyfriend while I was with Billy. Who knows the overlap? You could do it then. It was okay. Wolfgang was one of the first teachers hired to be at CalArts, so I hung out right when CalArts was being conceived. And then my partner in art making, Ricki Blau, another girl artist that I was friends with, who had a lot of money and parents that wanted her to be an artist, she went to CalArts. CalArts was real expensive even then. My memory is it was five thousand dollars a year, which in—

COLLINGS: That would be huge back then.

SEGALOVE: Huge. You know, UC was a hundred a quarter. So Ricki decided to go to CalArts. I thought it would be stupid to go to an art school. I thought about becoming a Montessori teacher, which my other art friend went to do, and then my other art friend went to Tampa to get a master's, and then it was me. I didn't know what to do, and Billy Adler said to me, "There's this new communication arts building being built at Loyola [Marymount] University in Westchester." I had no idea where that was, up on the hill. "Check it out."

I remember just being so depressed and confused, and I went up there and I met Ben Abbene, who started the department. He had been kind of a "B" director. The school was taught by Hollywood people that, I don't know, weren't doing as great

as they'd like, but they had this vision of creating a communication arts school, and that was very innovative then. I think it was one of the very first communication arts schools. I know Annenberg was starting theirs, but that was much more film-based. This was going to be more TV.

So I got in there. It was at night, night school, and basically you learned television production for TV.

COLLINGS: Like how to do news programs, commercials, sitcoms?

SEGALOVE: Right. Three cameras, the old ones, big stage. It was the weirdest thing in the world. My teacher was the director of *General Hospital*. It was so wacky.

COLLINGS: Totally different context.

SEGALOVE: So what I ended up doing was, my friend Ricki, she and I had collaborated on some art, and I thought, "Let's make more art together." So I'd go to CalArts during the day and then I'd go to Loyola at night.

COLLINGS: Boy, that sounds schizophrenic.

SEGALOVE: It was cuckoo. I chose not to go to CalArts and pay all that money. Plus, all the people seemed so self-important and I questioned that.

But at CalArts I met John Baldessari, David Salle was my boyfriend. So there was a core of mostly David Salle, Matt Mullican, a few other people, Paul Brach. This was around 1973 or 1974. I don't remember much, but all I knew was that I got John and John got me. So I started to work for John. I was his photographer, whatever, and he was not my boyfriend. I started making art in that time in that

context, but I was going to Loyola and doing this other weird stuff, writing screenplays, and met my boyfriend there, who became my boyfriend of fourteen years.

So I had this split life again, and split life was, why don't I do television, because I knew a lot of kind of— I was friends with Francis Ford Coppola. I knew people from my Hollywood upbringing. Baldessari was feeding off of Hollywood, obviously, but in another context. And I went back and forth and I did work in both, and it was really confusing. One of the things I did was I made more video than the people at CalArts and chose not to make objects, but I helped make many of John's early works. John was fabulous. John would just say, "Go out and shoot some pictures of, I don't know, gushy things," and then I'd shoot like twelve rolls and then we'd come back, print it off, and make art, mark art.

COLLINGS: Wow.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. I mean, I feel like I think like John. It's just that I wasn't attached. I had no information about making product, and John also had a serious budget.

COLLINGS: Did he mentor you in any way?

SEGALOVE: I think by making art with him, by him considering me an equal artist and never thinking I was anything but in his world, yeah, he did. Of course, I was so much younger. He did take me to New York a number of times and introduced me to the people I should have been nicer to. He did take David, as well. David and I made a lot of art together. David was a photographer way before he was a painter, so we did a lot of work together. David moves to New York, Paul Brach moves to New York,

John has an apartment in New York, and I go visit. David, I remember sitting in his Wall Street cold studio—before he was famous—walking in. I [inaudible], California person, and he had paintings. And I was just like, "What are you doing?"

He said, "I've figured something out. It's going to be painting."

COLLINGS: It's going to be painting.

SEGALOVE: I thought, "I can't believe you're going to paint," like we didn't paint. You don't paint.

COLLINGS: "We don't paint. Painting's finished."

SEGALOVE: Jesus, you're painting? It was one of those diptychs. Remember, it had a red background, there was a clown. And he's the worst painter. It was like, god, I couldn't believe it. He said, "You should move to New York, move in with me. I'll introduce you to Holly Solomon, Mary Boone. And I remember wandering around the dark, cold pit of that place and thinking, "I'm going to have to paint?" But it was like, "Come do this." We were going out with Paul Brach. It was sort of like, "Come join us. We'll drink, we'll smoke cigars, we'll paint. We're important artists." It was sort of like the flavor of the forties, in my mind, the fifties, that era. I just thought, "I want to go back being with my boyfriend."

COLLINGS: It was like you were being offered a partnership at a law firm.

SEGALOVE: And I knew I was a fool.

COLLINGS: At the time?

SEGALOVE: I knew it, and I thought, "It's dark, it's cold. I want to be with my dogs in California and go camping. I'll make some art when I feel like it. This is dismal."

And I knew it. I remember flying home. I went a few times, and I went with John often, and I thought, "I am so stupid."

COLLINGS: I don't want to sort of harp at this point, but do you think if there'd been other women in the group that it would have felt better?

SEGALOVE: If there would have been other women like me? Eleanor Antin. And other women who were about ten to fifteen years older than I, and they were all from New York, and there was a vibe about them. They were hard. I mean, they were fabulous and I really adored them. Helene Weiner had a gallery. Marsha Tucker was at the New Museum. They were in another— They were East Coast hard-edged women, with little black thin glasses and the haircuts, you know. And part of me felt stupid. I really didn't have the language. And I also thought they were just so solipsistic. I mean, it was like, hello.

COLLINGS: They didn't believe in the revolution, I take it.

SEGALOVE: They believed in themselves. They were serious. They were really committed to the new art that they were doing, and they were doing great art. They were well connected to Europe. They were like adults. I didn't meet too many women like me. I knew Laurie Anderson pretty well, but she was seriously ambitious and had the musical piece. So I didn't meet too many of my peers. I think if I had, it might have been different. And the women that did end up going there— I think Susan Mogul ended up going there for a while. I tell you, it was cold and not pleasant. They had more ambition. I think that's been my core issue.

COLLINGS: Susan Mogul was from the East, anyway.

SEGALOVE: Right. Yeah, I just was a California person, which was the strength, I think, of the work, in a way, for the humor piece. [William] Wegman and I aligned with the humor thing, and he was from back East, too. But I wish it would have been a little easier, but I think you had to really pay your dues to get the goods, and I wasn't willing to. It was a career decision. And so I went down, you know. They say you keep taking forks in the road and at the end you get forked. I mean, I was forking.

COLLINGS: So what year was that?

SEGALOVE: Gosh, it must have been '75, '76, '77, '78, somewhere in there. So, the truth of it was, I seriously knew the kind of work I was doing, even though it was in many mediums. Baldessari and David Salle both suggested I stop making video. They felt that it took too much time and it was a lot of money. There were very few venues, and, really, I could have been developing a body of work, because galleries were not showing video, and because they weren't selling video. So I made a choice to go that route anyhow, because I thought, "I'll just do a Hollywood thing. I'll get this out of my system and I'll go talk to one of my big-shot friends and get a job."

COLLINGS: Get a job with "General Hospital" or something.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. Or be a writer, a screenwriter, learn how to do that.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

January 29, 2004

SEGALOVE: One of the experiences in New York, I remember it well, Paul Brach, David Salle, me, and John Baldessari walking the streets well past 10 p.m.

COLLINGS: Past your bedtime.

SEGALOVE: Absolutely. Smoking cigars. And we'd been at probably two bars, I don't think we'd eaten, because you don't eat till later. And I remember thinking to myself, "There is no way I can do this." Conversation was fabulous, but I don't drink, I like to eat by five, and I want to be in bed at ten. I can't live that lifestyle. If that means I can't be a famous New York artist, so be it. I couldn't do it. These guys were good at it, to this day. So I think, you know, it really was a networking lifestyle, and I didn't enjoy it. They were making deals. They were making things happen.

COLLINGS: All after ten o'clock at night.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. And I think to this day it's true for many things That isn't my lifestyle, and so that really did color my choices. If I ever make a list of the most important influences in my life, John Baldessari, David Ross, who comes into this story, Lowell Darling, Billy Adler in college, and Roland Brenner, all men, and all kind of gave me permission to do what I do. And, ironically, I worked for all of them. I helped them do their work, as women do, and I served them. I was either paid or I was part of the team. Interesting.

Lowell Darling and I ran into one another at the first Southland Video

Anthology in '76, '77, somewhere in there. David Ross was the new director or curator of video. It was a very new field. David really had big vision, and he had put together early video artists, and I was one of them.

Lowell and I meet. He, at that time, was running what was called The Fat City School of Finds Art. He was giving out fake master's degrees right and left. He called me a few weeks later and asked if I wanted to come over and do a videotape for him, because I had the equipment. The video was of the Growing Up Skipper doll, the doll that grew breasts and a waist when you rotated her arm! How could I resist?

So, I'd go to Lowell's house, and Lowell was in the armpit, I guess, of Hollywood on Stewart Street, and he spent a lot of his time just walking around. And one of the things he did was, he picked up random pieces of film footage that were the ends of films that would be out on his street. Now he's put together a film called *Hollywood Archeology*, which is this beautiful movie of footage that's been run over by cars, the stuff he picked up in 1978. So he was really an archaeologist.

Well, one of the things he did that I loved, he was teaching at Otis Art Institute and he had been hanging out regularly with a group of old boxers and wrestlers called the Cauliflower Alley Club. I never showed you the video I made about them. So he asked if I wanted to hang out with these people and we could make a videotape, and we asked David Ross if we could borrow the camera from the museum.

Lowell and I began working together and collaborating, and I shot with— Did this video, and Lowell kind of pointed and hung out with the guys, and I did all the work. I schlepped out of the car. I had a car that had foam in the trunk so my

equipment could be in it. Again, I had never had any training. I knew nothing about lighting. I had no idea. But it was like a lot of mistakes, and I kind of figured it out. I didn't want anybody to teach me, that was for sure, and Lowell knew nothing. He had a good idea. John wasn't a photographer; Baldessari. He had cameras and people that could use them. Lowell had a great set of ideas and did not want to do other stuff.

So we created a relationship so that when he ran for governor of California in 1978 against Jerry Brown, and other things, I became his photographer and kind of collaborated on many projects. So Lowell helped distill the notion of archeology as art, and most of his stuff was covered by the media. He learned how to get commercial TV to make his art for him.

COLLINGS: Wonderful.

SEGALOVE: So he was a real media artist, an exceptional artist, to this day, and had great disdain for the art world. Now, of course, he wonders why he isn't having a retrospective!

So I was kind of busy making media work with him, and then I was making text, photographic personal narrative work on my own, and then working for Baldessari and going to Loyola, so there was this strange mishmash. And I guess I had a lot of energy, because I was real busy.

COLLINGS: It certainly sounds like it.

SEGALOVE: I got lots of grants so I could underwrite all my projects. I was very fortunate.

COLLINGS: Why do you think you were so successful getting all the grants?

SEGALOVE: Because I am funny. I was on the NEA panel. I know what they like to watch. I think there was some relief that there was humor.

COLLINGS: And narrative.

SEGALOVE: And narrative. I also know that when I won the Young Talent Award at the L.A. County Museum of Art in 1980, I actually had to defend my work to a group of women who could not understand how art that was funny and that was understandable could be art. I literally had to explain Daumier, Hogarth. I had to like have some references so that they got a handle on it.

COLLINGS: Was it because they had a sincere preference for other work or they just had been taught that you had to not like it and not understand it for it to be art?

SEGALOVE: I don't think they had ever articulated it until I showed up. I don't think they thought TV could be art. I don't think they understood that if it wasn't beautiful, and if it wasn't a painting it could be art.

COLLINGS: Oh, I see what you're saying.

SEGALOVE: I remember going there and thinking, "God," but then I sort of liked the challenge, because it was, you know, it was kind of odd. I didn't know how to articulate this exactly. I refused to ever read history or art talk. I skipped all those classes. I didn't want to learn to talk like an art teacher.

COLLINGS: Well, that kind of raises a question, because when you were in high school, you were doing all of this reading and reading a lot of political theory and whatnot.

SEGALOVE: Right, and philosophic.

COLLINGS: Philosophy, yes. But it sounds like once you got to college, were you turned off from doing this kind of reading?

SEGALOVE: It was over. Yeah, it was over.

COLLINGS: So were you reading at all during that time?

SEGALOVE: Yeah, and I wonder what, because you did have to read. I mean, there were lots of classes.

COLLINGS: But, I mean just for your own pleasure.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, probably novels. I did take a lot of English. I remember I took a lot of children's lit classes. I really liked that. I thought I could be a children's writer. I felt like I could do that, because I did love, and do still cherish, *A Wrinkle In Time*.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's a fantastic book.

SEGALOVE: I tried to make that into a movie, actually, with a couple of people. That was my one big venture.

COLLINGS: That would be great.

SEGALOVE: I really loved the *Peter Pan* story. Of course, *Alice in Wonderland*. Those were worlds I inhabited in my own head. I guess, though, as you're saying how did I articulate, you know, in college there wasn't a lot of language about the work we were doing, because books were being written. John Berger's book came out when? Kind of at the end of that.

COLLINGS: Yes, probably. *Ways of Seeing*.

SEGALOVE: Yes. There was a little gap. There was one book, I can't remember what it was. It was real important, and that was the only book. And then *Artforum*

was kind of coming out. It was just being born around '72, when I graduated. So the language probably would have been there if I was elsewhere, but this school was certainly not book-savvy.

COLLINGS: And then another thing that strikes me as being different is that, you know, you were talking about how you came to so many of your realizations about art and formulated so many of your questions about art kind of in your own head when you were younger. It sounds like later on it was very important for you to be a part of a large art community. Were you spending a lot of time alone anymore at that time?

SEGALOVE: Yeah, I was, actually.

COLLINGS: You still were?

SEGALOVE: You know, I tended to feel suspect about discussing my own work in art language. There is a guy— God I'm forgetting his name, and he's important. He teaches at USC [University of Southern California] in the critical studies department. He wrote a critical piece about one of my pieces. You may have it.

COLLINGS: Would it be David James, by any chance?

SEGALOVE: No. I read the piece he wrote about me, and I was like, "Whoa." I kind of refused to learn the benchmarks of that era, because I questioned it. I don't know why exactly. I'm kind of a contrarian soul.

COLLINGS: Did you think it would wreck it for you?

SEGALOVE: A little bit. Yeah. You know, I just wanted to make it. It's hard enough, hard enough to make it. My art students, when I taught—I taught for quite a while—some of them were furious I wouldn't do the art critique. I mean, I was more

like the Balinese; there's no word for art. I either like it or I don't, type of thing. I didn't want to discuss it in terms of the art history realms, and all that. It seemed too scholarly.

COLLINGS: Well, I think that's very true of a lot of artists. That's not what they do.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. I could do that, because I'm a good student. I could study it. But then again, it's like, eh, you know. So I think I failed to read. I can't read art magazines. I never have. I just like to look at the pictures. I kind of covet how some of them got their work in there, and like how do they get to keep doing art out of straws? I would have liked to do that, damn it. But, again, I never said I was an artist when people asked me what I do.

COLLINGS: Oh, really?

SEGALOVE: I couldn't say that.

COLLINGS: Even through this whole point?

SEGALOVE: I could say I'm a writer. That's easier. I couldn't say I was an artist. First of all, because people would say, "Oh, you paint."

And you say, "No, I don't paint. I make video."

"What's video?" Because the word wasn't— You know, it didn't exist.

"Oh, TV." Well, TV's not [inaudible].

I got a license plate that said "TV is OK." That caused a lot of havoc.

COLLINGS: Really?

SEGALOVE: I had bottles thrown through my windows in Berkeley. In Hollywood people pulled me over and said, "No, film is better."

I was making TV, not video; one channel, not many, basic storytelling. Now you look at this stuff and you think, "So what? Why would that be innovative? You were just telling a little story," because it exists all over now. But it was weird and unique then; it was different.

COLLINGS: One of the things that's wonderful about them for now is some of the period detail.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, that's true.

COLLINGS: I mean, they're fabulously— They're really well observed in that way.

SEGALOVE: Yes, and it is another era. I mean, it's really fun to live long enough. I advise everyone not to commit suicide, just to get through it, because it's fascinating. You go, "Wow, that really was important."

COLLINGS: Would you like to start talking about making *The Mom Tapes* now or would you like to leave that? Are you getting a bit tired?

SEGALOVE: No, I'm not tired yet.

COLLINGS: Let's talk about how you first got your own equipment.

SEGALOVE: Let me think about it. It was so expensive. So the first video camera, portable video camera I saw was Roland Brenner's, and that must have been in '72. I graduated in '72, so I think it was in the winter of '72 to the spring. He brought it to a sculpture installation we'd all done outside to document it. That was the first time I ever heard the word *document*. He was going to document our art. And I remember the feeling I had was of complete— I was horrified. I felt almost like those Indians where you take a picture of them and their soul is being stolen. I felt ripped off.

COLLINGS: Oh, you did, did you?

SEGALOVE: Yeah. I felt ripped off, which is weird because I usually am cool about stuff. I had an issue with it. My piece was, I had created the State of Idaho on the whole hill made out of potatoes. God knows how many potatoes. You know, baking potatoes. And that was the piece. It was Idaho.

COLLINGS: Why were you doing a piece on Idaho?

SEGALOVE: I wonder. Good question. Oh, I know. I was in my food period. I was making art out of food. The American cheese—

COLLINGS: Right, right.

SEGALOVE: What I had done in my painting class, Larry Rivers, the collage painter— You know who he is.

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: He was a guest instructor at UCSB, and I took a painting class, my only painting class, with him. I refused to paint, and each assignment I made a cake, and I decorated the cake in a style of art. So there was the Cubist cake and the Abstract Expressionist cake. Then we would all eat my art, which he was pissed at me because he wanted me to paint, but I wasn't going to paint, ever, and I haven't. But they never minded eating it, of course. So I was on my food thing, and then I made this potato piece. I think that's why I was doing it.

So Roland was wandering around shooting it and wanted us to be in it. Then I remember he came back and he was going to show it. I never watched it. I was like, "That is bullshit. You're ripping me off. It's my art. It's our work. Now it's yours."

I mean, it was a whole issue of appropriation. I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't have the language for it, but I had the emotion. I was pissed.

That was it for video. Other artists were using it. Wolfgang was doing some sort of sexual pieces. Some people were documenting performances. It was one camera kind of going around. It was a Sony PortaPak, reel-to-reel.

COLLINGS: Those things are big and heavy, too.

SEGALOVE: I'll tell you, then I met Billy Adler, and it was all about TV; and when I graduated college, I had my parents buy me a PortaPak. It was like one of the first ones that came in the country. Nam June Paik and his girlfriend were bringing them in from Japan. It was three thousand dollars in 1973.

COLLINGS: Wow.

SEGALOVE: It was black and white, and it was so silly the way they designed it. Not only was it reel to reel so you had to thread the tape, but when you clicked your F-stop, the microphone was right by the F-stop so you could hear the F-stop clicking. There were no external mics. You're on your own. No editing. It never occurred to me. I didn't know what editing was. So I was all into real time, so it didn't matter.

So I took this thing home and kept it in the closet, could barely unwrap it, not like some of my other friends who had gotten some and were like busy. Wegman was busy shooting his dog, and John Sturgeon was shooting things. It scared me.

COLLINGS: You stuck it in the closet.

SEGALOVE: And it made me tremble. The power of that piece of equipment blew my mind. Truly, the power of it blew my mind. Plus, I'm not a technical person or

mechanical, so it also was like, "Whoa, what do you do here?"

So I gradually started shooting with it, not much, not as much as one should if one owns a PortaPak. I lent it out a lot. I think I lent it to Susan Mogul a few times.

COLLINGS: Maybe she did those tapes with it, those early black-and-white tapes of hers.

SEGALOVE: Yes, I think she did. I helped people because I had more money. My parents were more generous with me. A lot of people were really, really broke. And Susan was part of that world, of which I didn't know existed at the time.

So I shot a few things, which I wish I'd kept. A lot of that reel-to-reel is long dead. It all fell off, the oxidize. It was just a mess. I saved some, but they're worthless. But I shot the *Coal Confession*, because I started to think, you know, obviously this is a tool for personal confession, and I told the story of how— I'd never told anyone this, and so I never showed the tape. I never showed the tape. It was in the archives at Long Beach.

COLLINGS: So this really was a confession?

SEGALOVE: Yes. And the big confession was that I had copied a report out of the *World Book Encyclopedia* and got an A++ on it and probably have been living with that guilt ever since, even to this day. It's like, "She liked it. Hmm." Now that I know the word *appropriation*, and Baldessari was certainly justifying that, it was like, "This is cool. I'm really good at this." So I told the *Coal Confession*, and about three weeks later, I don't know how, maybe through Billy, David Ross was coming to L.A. and wanted to see people's videos.

COLLINGS: Excuse me. The *Coal Confession* was your very first piece on your new PortaPak?

SEGALOVE: I think probably it was like the second or third. It was the first complete thing I think I shot. I did a piece called *This is My House*, and I shot it at night. The lights were on, and at the end of the piece the lights went off, and I couldn't decide if that was really great art or the stupidest thing in the world, which was usually my question. So I got rid of it. I wish I'd kept it. It doesn't have to be great art. It would have been a good document. But to me, it was like, "Does this suck or this good? I don't know."

But David came by, and I had done another piece called, I don't know, like *Going to Italy*. I don't think it's on the collection. I went to the library and bought *The Walking Tour of Rome*. I played the tape, and I had pizza. That was the tape. So boring.

Another tape you haven't seen, it was called *Memory Lane: A Bra You'll Never Forget*. There was a woman advertised in the paper. She came over and custom-fit me for a bra. I taped that. That would be good now. Damn. I have some stills from it. You know, I was twenty-two. It was like, "Hey, I'm looking good." Just for the sake of vanity I'd like to watch it. But I never showed that. I probably would have had a following if I did. The women would have been mad.

So, *Coal Confession*, David Ross came by to look at tapes for the Everson Museum, I think, in Syracuse. He was working with a man named John Hanhardt, who became the curator of video at the Whitney [Museum] to this day. And David

saw the tape and said, "Wow, that's cool. What else are you doing?"

I said, "I don't know." He encouraged me. I said, "I'm doing these things with my mom," which he loved.

He said, "Well, the next time I'm here, I'll watch these things, because there's something called the Whitney Biennial."

I'm thinking, "Whatever. Who cares? Why am I doing this?"

So he left, and then I started doing other things, one of which was *The Mom* [*Tapes*], because it had been on my mind. So I started doing *The Mom Tapes*, I think in '74.

COLLINGS: And you were living at your parents' house at this point?

SEGALOVE: No, no. I was living in a little apartment in Westwood and then in a little house in Marina del Rey.

The Mom Tapes began. They were like hell to make, because she's just horrible to be with, but I knew she'd be good on TV. And truly it was a power trip, because I could shrink her down and put her in a box. I mean, you talk about therapy. It was a way to engage with her. Man Ray was being shot by Wegman and I was shooting my mother, and we were in many shows together; it was Mom and the dog. It was kind of interesting. I wished again that I could turn her into a brand, but the dog was a lot easier to work with, I assure you.

So I started doing these things, and the fun part was I'd show them to my teacher at Loyola, who was the *General Hospital* director, and he would say, "You have a very good idea, but you should get someone else to play your mother and

someone else to do her voice."

COLLINGS: What was the reason for that?

SEGALOVE: Well, she was a terrible actress. Her voice is too low. Now, I'm shooting real life, which at the time he didn't know reality television was actually kind of cool. This was *The Osbournes*, but way before its time.

So, I was sort of like, "Now, is this valuable what I'm making?" But in a way, his dislike of it was collaboration that I was on the right track. Then I'd go to CalArts and show it and everybody going's, "Whoa, cool. Keep doing this." So, you know, it was this strange thing.

So I just collected them over time. It took a long time. I didn't feel like it, and my equipment, I got a color camera at some point, so it shifts to color. I did not edit them. They were edited in-camera, and they were all real-time otherwise. I chose not to edit them for many reasons.

COLLINGS: How would you work out with your mother how you were going to—

SEGALOVE: First of all, my mother, she's predictable, and I knew she would always be able to say something. So, tape I had her be quiet and I had a voiceover, because I wanted her more reflective. But generally it was obvious. I mean, there's lots of things in *The Mom Tapes* you don't see that I did other tapes. All I need to say was, "Mom, where do I get shoes?" and she'd talk for an hour and a half, so I set it up just to be typical situations. But setting it up and the lighting, I didn't know it was really hard to shoot by yourself. I didn't know, like, god, you know, it's exhausting.

COLLINGS: That tape in particular, that one in particular I think is really interesting

because it— And I don't know if this is what you're driving at in this when you were doing it, but it shows this really detailed, in-depth body of knowledge that she has about where to find things in the city, and this is a kind of expertise.

SEGALOVE: Absolutely. She should be twenty-four-hour mom who you should call to. That's how I thought of her. She's everybody's mother. She's was my worst nightmare of a Jewish mother, but she's great if you're not her daughter.

COLLINGS: And that she's, quote, unquote, "not employed." She's a house—

SEGALOVE: She's a mother.

COLLINGS: House mother, whatever. But she's got this in-depth body of knowledge in her subject area.

SEGALOVE: That's her specialty.

COLLINGS: Exactly.

SEGALOVE: Now, when I showed that tape to Martha Rosler and the political women in San Diego, they took issue with it, because they were pissed that an upper middle-class woman who didn't work was talking about consuming. And I was like, "Well, what else is she going to talk about? That's who she is." And they were doing these political pieces about poverty and socialism, you know, some of the wealthier women that were guilty and others that felt compelled. In a way, I had to defend my position, and I really could. I was just doing what I knew, which was what went on in my kitchen. So I ran up against lots and lots of problems.

COLLINGS: Yes, I could see how that tape would really draw a lot of fire at that particular time.

SEGALOVE: Never occurred to me. To me, it was a portrait of a person.

COLLINGS: Were you trying to make her look like she really knew something about a certain area of life, or were you making it look like, oh, this poor woman, look at how small her world is?

SEGALOVE: I don't think the latter, or the former, actually. I think I was doing kind of real TV about my mom and her house, and without a lot of thought outside of it. I knew she was off the wall in her passion about where to get steak. I thought it was humorous. But the truth is, that is her area, and can we criticize that? But I didn't have a lot of language around it.

So I kept collecting, and eventually there were lots of pieces to it. One of the things my mother did well was consume, and she, of course, likes everything at a bargain, so she's a typical Jewish mother. So the trouble with shooting my mom—and then I did stuff on my sister that you will never see—their personalities came out so clearly that they became exploitative pieces, if you wanted to see it that way. So I often ran into that. "You're exploiting your sister." "You're exploiting the *Cauliflower Alley* guys." "You're exploiting your mother." That was a word that was pretty popular, and I was like, "Wow, am I that unconscious? Am I really— Am I doing that?" I didn't think I was, but you could make a case.

COLLINGS: I think that the notion of the appropriation of one's image was an important question for the time, so it would be just applied to all of these situations—

SEGALOVE: Correct.

COLLINGS: —in a way that probably would not today.

SEGALOVE: And women were very apprehensive about it.

COLLINGS: Yes.

SEGALOVE: And rightfully so. So again, I wasn't aware at the time what I was doing.

COLLINGS: What about the question when you asked her, "Where can I get some money?"

SEGALOVE: And she said, "Ask you father."

COLLINGS: Yeah.

SEGALOVE: I had no idea she'd say that, and that's when I love her, because she's Mom. She did it well. She looked around and she went— There was a beat, and I thought, "Oh, Christ, we're going to have to shut it off." She just said, "Ask your father."

COLLINGS: Did she know how significant this line was?

SEGALOVE: No. She didn't know what this was. It was so home movie, except she became Mom. The tapes were shown in lots and lots and lots of places. They're one of the most popular tapes from the Video Data Bank, and she was in a lot of books as Mom, so she got a kick out of it.

COLLINGS: I'll bet.

SEGALOVE: And then she'd go with me places to do things. We did a series of performances, and, again, it was about consumerism. I would force her not to give me gifts on a regular basis, and to save them up and put them in a suitcase, and then we'd go perform at CalArts at the theater.

COLLINGS: Oh, neat.

SEGALOVE: One of the things about my mom is that she buys me crap, things I hate and things that have nothing to do with me, because ultimately, in my mind, she doesn't know me. So she would take these gifts out, and I would yell at her, and she would go, "Oh, honey, come on. That's cute on you." You know, she'd be just herself. She smoked then. She's smoking and snapping her gum, and I'd be just pissed. We didn't have to rehearse.

Afterward, it was always the same. People would come up and go, "You are the worst daughter. I wish my mother gave me something. You're so rude to her."

I said, "But she gives me a blue gingham dress. I mean, that's not who I am. I want her to know me."

"Just be thankful you have a mother that loves you."

COLLINGS: So people weren't able to sort of see this conceptually or symbolically?

SEGALOVE: Some did. Mom got off on it, because she got all these people going, "You are the coolest mom." And so it was very interesting. I think she and I could do that anywhere now, and it would be a hell of a performance, because that's just what we do, we fight, and then we go have lunch.

You know, Jewish parents often, and mine in particular, that's just part of your life. You don't get away from them, so you may as well give it up. You know, forget it. She's freaking out because I didn't e-mail her yesterday, I'm sure. I thought I'd skip a day. She doesn't know I'm here. I'm fifty-three.

But *The Mom Tapes* were interesting because they were kind of defiant of the

medium. There was some editing equipment available, but, again, I didn't want to learn anything, you know, and I didn't want to sit with the material. I just wanted to make it. And so I tended to not cut anything until there was enough sophisticated post-production that I could go into post and have somebody else do it. That was just my style.

COLLINGS: So, the collection of *The Mom Tapes*, 1974 to 1979, is that the entire body or is there a lot of other—

SEGALOVE: There are a few odds and ends, but that's the body that I chose. There were times I thought of adding other things and really cutting it well and then doing a voiceover about it, you know, and I thought, you know, I don't even care, because I'm not in the art world, and to what end? You know, I'm not that interested in it.

But Mom became an interesting vehicle, particularly with the Feminist Movement. In one incident that I may have told you, but I'll tell you again, Woman's Building was then downtown and really an active center. I wasn't that much a part of it, but I was one of the video artists, so I was included. I showed *The Mom Tapes*, pieces of them, particularly *Skin Cancer* where she wears a scary rubber mask. After the showing, the lights came on. It was a very full house, and I got the usual "You are really exploiting Mother. How can you do that to her? She's not an object. You're objectifying women," all that stuff.

I had brought my mother that night. No one knew. She was somewhere out in the audience. I'm up there on stage, and I seriously don't know how to answer those questions. I still don't. There must be a rap someone could write for me. So I said,

"Mom, they're being mean to me. Come up here, Mom." She just walked up. She has no stage [fright]. She just stood there, and she said, "Girls, you've got to get a sense of humor. Life is difficult, and without a sense of humor, it's going to be a long road." She said, "My daughter and I worked very hard on these tapes. Do you know how hard it is to do this work? She works very hard." And she said, 'I'm not an object; I'm her mother." And it was like one of those times when I thought, "Thank God she has a big mouth." There was a hush. When she said, "Girls," I was really cracking up.

COLLINGS: It's kind of an interesting anecdote, because it sort of shows you how in some ways the Women's Movement of that period was what people have sometimes called a "movement of daughters."

SEGALOVE: I hadn't heard that, in effect.

COLLINGS: Yes. And not allowing her to be a mom, and any kind of depiction of her which shows her in her role as a mom is—

SEGALOVE: Shunned, to a point.

COLLINGS: Yes. It's like it's degrading. I'm sorry, the woman is your mother.

SEGALOVE: She had a degree. She chose to stay at home. My father is supporting her. "Oh, God." But, yeah, it was a great moment, great moment.

Then I brought her to Chicago for a show, with her family watching, and they saw the tapes and their response was very different. They said, "That's not your mother. Your mother doesn't talk—" My mother cleaned up her language for the tapes on her own. She behaved differently. She was not. Her own editing. They

said, "Your mother didn't play herself." They were pissed.

COLLINGS: Would she sort of like giddily look forward to the tapings or was she just kind of noncommittal about it?

SEGALOVE: It was, "I'm coming over and we're going to spend time." I mean, if I told her, "Now we're going to make tapes," oh, she'd be in heaven. It meant she had tons of time with me, and I couldn't leave. She's really, to be honest, if she sat here—and she could—she'd say she felt honored by the daughter who'd want to spend that much time with her. That is what she says. I have never been able to believe that, but I do now. I mean, I know she was honored that a young woman would want to come over. And the truth was, I knew what an amazing mother she was, and I thought the work— I thought it was important, you know, and I didn't know why. It was the only thing to do.

COLLINGS: Do you think you would have made the tapes without the context of the Women's Movement at that time?

SEGALOVE: Absolutely.

COLLINGS: Do you think you made them despite the context?

SEGALOVE: No. You know, it's so interesting. I just did what I did because— I was driven. I'm not anymore. Now I'm doing it because I'm deciding to. But when I was young, it was like I had no choice. I had to do that and I had to do this. The photograph pieces, just had to, until, I guess, I was done. *The Riot Tapes,* I had to do *The Riot Tapes.*

COLLINGS: How did you come up with the topics for *The Mom Tapes*?

SEGALOVE: Well, they were about things she'd always talked about. *The Underground Walkway* was seriously a place I wasn't allowed. That was a really cool tape, because I made it by myself and my mom did a voiceover, and she'd never been under the ground.

COLLINGS: Her voiceover is great in that tape.

SEGALOVE: She was fabulous. "I've never been down here before. I wouldn't go in there." That's my mother.

Skin Cancer. Skin Cancer was the only videotape I fictionalized. She did have skin cancer. She did wear a cover on her nose. The mask I bought, because I just thought it would make it visually more striking, which it did. But I was so blown away by her willingness to wear it and also because she never swam in the deep end before.

COLLINGS: Really?

SEGALOVE: Ever. So I thought, "Oh, this woman will do anything for me. I'm going to stop doing this now." It was just too much power. It scared me.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's very interesting.

SEGALOVE: The topics were organic and just part of normal life. I had her read out of the *Joy of Yiddish*. There's about five pages for *oy*. I had her read *oy*, and she read them in all different expressions. It was very funny. I didn't include it. I'm trying to think of what some of the other pieces were.

COLLINGS: *Famous Women*.

SEGALOVE: *Famous Women*. That was so funny, because she always gave me little

things, but she took them very seriously. When she read it, she was just like, "Well, there's many more women, but they don't fit in this little book." And that was just her. It was cracking me up. The *Professional Retirement Home*, she always said she wanted to turn her home into a professional retirement home. When she walked through the window at the end, I'd never seen her do that. She used to do that. My dad used to laugh. I mean, that was her. At the end, I said, "What are we going to do with getting you back in the house?" She points to the window and says…

COLLINGS: "I always walk through here."

SEGALOVE: I thought, "there she goes again. She's making this tape work."

COLLINGS: Yeah, that's right. That really does make it work, doesn't it?

SEGALOVE: I mean, she's like this lady with her big house, but she climbs through the window to save steps.

COLLINGS: A few steps, yeah.

SEGALOVE: What is that about? That's her. I mean, it starts to build up, you know. Who is this person? You know, she's a nut. But it was fun, and then when I ended it, I was just like, "Thank you, God, I'm done with this." She's been in a lot of photographic pieces, as was my father. My father's in a bunch of videos you haven't seen, that I should transfer to DVD. I made a few of him, but he didn't quite like them.

COLLINGS: He didn't like it?

SEGALOVE: He thought a couple of them were really great. He thought I was kind of making fun. He was sensitive.

COLLINGS: Was *Famous Women* in any way a response to *The Dinner Party*?

SEGALOVE: No. No, but it should be. You know, maybe it was unconsciously. I think I was working on a lot of levels, but I made sure I didn't see much art or talk about it. I really wanted to work in a vacuum. I chose to; I still do. I'll go to movies and watch TV, but I rarely go to art shows. I don't know. Personally, I tend to not like to go. I don't care for the experience. They're such head trips, and yet I really appreciate the people doing them. I like that they're committed.

COLLINGS: "You go run along now and do that." [laughs]

SEGALOVE: Yeah. "Can I go outside?"

So, yeah, *The Mom Tapes* were cool. The *Professional Retirement Home* was in the first Whitney Biennial that I was in. I didn't go back to see it, but that was very important for my career. Once I was in the Whitney Biennial, I was somebody, enough to be given shows, grants, and some kind of respect.

COLLINGS: So that show was a turning point.

SEGALOVE: I don't know what year that was. I have it in my résumé. Maybe, I don't know, '78, '76. Somewhere. I was in a few of them, but that was the first one.

COLLINGS: So what were you really planning to show in that tour of the house? I mean, a woman living alone— Not alone but in a large house.

SEGALOVE: Well, it's interesting now. She's living in that house still, but my dad died, and it's certainly not a professional retirement— She actually thought that it was going to become a professional retirement home. She's very defiant of planned living for older people. She feels like it's like living in a prison. And her plan was to stay

there forever till they take her out on a slab, which is what she still says, and she really thought she was to create a kind of template for other people, where they'd have a place that felt like home. I thought she was crazy; my father thought she was nuts. What was she talking about? That was her vision.

COLLINGS: Because that tape certainly has kind of a sadder, more lonely feel than—*The Mom Tapes* are quite alive, and I wondered if that was intentional.

SEGALOVE: She was sad that day, you know, and she was low energy. And also, she was quite alone, and she was not looking in the camera. She was really like a prop in her own home. That house had just been built, and I had some strange feelings about it. I never lived there. It seemed like a series of stage sets. I did use it later for *Whatever Happened to the Future* as the set, and I felt like it was a monstrosity in some ways, so maybe that came through. I also felt like she really was alone in a big space. But she built that house when she was almost my age now. She was fifty-four. She built it in '71. I was twenty-one, and I never lived there. I visited, and the way I got to know it was through videotaping it. And it seemed like a vault to me. It was overkill. But it was their dream. It was my father's final thing, and he built it.

COLLINGS: Yes, certainly that one comes across as more of what you might call more of a party line, kind of a feminist statement about a woman in isolation.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, I think so, in the big dream house.

COLLINGS: Yeah, exactly. Was that what it was intended to be?

SEGALOVE: To a degree, especially when we went outside and she looked at the condo, and she thought her place was better. That was real interesting, because she'd

always badmouthed the condos. In my mind, what was the difference? Well, she could paint the door the color she wants. That's freedom. To me, what kind of freedom is that? You have a door. She's insulated there. She has a double security system. We didn't get into that.

COLLINGS: Whereas the one about her knowledge and expertise about where to buy things is—

SEGALOVE: Yeah, then she's alive.

COLLINGS: Exactly. That's a different kind of portrait.

SEGALOVE: Right.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

September 22, 2004

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Ilene Segalove in the UCLA Oral History Program office on September 22, 2004.

SEGALOVE: I was realizing that depending on your academic training, obviously it creates a filter and a perspective for how you dialogue about your work, and I intentionally resisted taking any courses that were critical studies.

COLLINGS: I think that was wise.

SEGALOVE: It's wise, and yet there's a certain conservation that you learn in those situations that allows you to see work in a different light, sometimes too rarefied, and in my mind it was always just too out of the mainstream. But it does give one the feeling that they're doing something important sometimes, and maybe we are. I mean, I question some of the value of all of this. I really champion the fact that women picked up hardware and went out to tell their stories. I mean, there's nothing I can say that was better than that, for whatever. Who knows how the story's going to end? I don't know.

But yesterday I was resurrecting this photographic career of mine, as I'm considering, and talking to a director of a museum, a curator, and then a dealer, and the conversation was so interesting as they looked at the work, because they were using critical language, and they're insular in that they're self-referential to an art context. So I'm hearing all this chit-chat and I'm writing notes, because it's making

me think what I'm doing is actually important; whereas I was questioning the value because I keep imposing more traditional entertainment narrative paradigms onto the work, which is, "Is this interesting? Do I answer enough questions the audience might have? Am I being too private?" Whereas they're going, "Oh, so that's so mysterious. Don't overlap that. You don't need to tell me what this is about. I respect the artist who's asking questions."

I was like going, "Okay." And so what my whole career has been about is being torn between, as we've talked, the more traditional entertainment value and then art.

COLLINGS: And I think also particularly because you came from this context where you were saying "TV IS OK," and, in fact, what's happened with these kinds of photographic art, it's a real sort of niche that is entirely separate from the mainstream.

SEGALOVE: Entirely separate. Now, I think HBO is not TV, and I love HBO, some of that. I love that moniker "HBO is not TV," and it's so funny. It's true there's these niches, and so seen in an art context is lovely, but it seems so insular to me. I'm fighting that, and then I want to be part of it because it's a great place to explore things that are important in my own private world. I'm trying to reconcile that. I mean, I'll always be torn, just because I'm stepping in and out, and I think going to CalArts and Loyola was an example of— I was doing two things.

COLLINGS: That's a perfect example.

SEGALOVE: I just got a call from a guy named Josh Siegel. He's a curator at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art]. He's putting a show together of CalArts video,

particularly of the seventies. Now, I didn't ever really graduate CalArts. I kind of hung at CalArts. John Baldessari, who I've reconnected with because of me resurrecting this career, whatever, said, "Call Josh. You were hanging out. You were there. You were there."

And so I called Josh, and I said, "You know, I'm going to send you some early work, but I'm not official."

And so it was interesting. There's this new interest in, like we've talked about, work from that era, when the equipment was new. So they're taking it seriously at MoMA, which is kind of fun.

COLLINGS: In order to have a show of California video of the seventies, it has to be held in New York?

SEGALOVE: Exactly. And it's twenty dollars now to get in. Did you know that? They're charging twenty to get in because of the nature of the beast. Now, can you can imagine anyone in Los Angeles paying twenty dollars to get into an art museum? I'm sorry, no.

COLLINGS: I don't think so. LACMA's [Los Angeles County Museum of Art] got all these ways you can go for free.

SEGALOVE: Right, exactly. They're just trying to pull people in off the street, "Come to this great art." So it's was interesting that, yes, it's in New York, and it has a CalArts Mafia, almost, ring to it.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's great. That's sounds like it's going to be a fabulous show.

SEGALOVE: It could be an interesting show.

COLLINGS: What are you going to put into it?

SEGALOVE: Well, he looked at everything. I think some of the stuff from the very early tape. The color stuff held up. He was looking to try to put together a good-looking show. So probably a couple of odds and ends from *The Mom Tapes* and I think one of the early pieces from the compilation that you saw, maybe *Where's God*?

COLLINGS: "God could be that black bag."

SEGALOVE: That's right, that's right. I was just thinking about it on the way here, just because yesterday I was trying to be an artist, and so the question of what is an artist constantly comes up, and I'm more comfortable saying I'm an artist now because— Well, I guess I'm just more comfortable. I think at fifty-three, you know, it's sort of like I'll say whatever I want.

COLLINGS: "You don't like it, that's too bad."

SEGALOVE: Yes. I don't kind of care. I still, when I'm alone doing the work, I feel like I'm a charlatan, an impostor, a genius, out of my mind, wish I had a million dollars, and then why would I spend it on this? There's always a question about doing it. A lot of people don't have that. They're really on the path, and they're doing their thing. So right now I'm an artist because I'm talking with art people, and I know that that's the only world I could do this kind of work in.

COLLINGS: Also, the context that you came out of in terms of your video work was very socially conscious.

SEGALOVE: Right.

COLLINGS: But that context really no longer exists for video and photography,

experimental films.

SEGALOVE: Well, the fact that they're welcome into the fold and yet there are installations and that you don't have to fight anymore to show your work, it's so different. As I told you, I brought in—I know Susan did, too—I brought in my own equipment to show tapes at LACMA to the curators, who acted like big shots and had nothing to show it on. They didn't know you needed a player. I don't know what they thought you were going to do. So that level of naiveté is gone, and I think if I were an artist now, I know I wouldn't do video. I would do whatever else is— I don't think I'd even want to do online stuff. I'd come up with some new rebellious thing, or I'd make handmade paper and go back into the old-fashioned. I definitely would have to be against the norm. Or I'd want to work for Michael Moore or try to really get into some serious—

COLLINGS: Something social.

SEGALOVE: Social, where there's actually funding because people want to see it, at least for this time frame, and you can win awards. So I think documentary was really more my calling, which is what Telethon was pretty much about. It was about recycling the media to represent it before people knew that you could. And Telethon was started by Billy Adler and John Margolies, who were both in advertising. John actually wrote for the *Architectural Digest* in New York. They came to teach at UCSB for one quarter, and I was fortunate enough to fall into that class, or not. You know, it either made it or broke it.

I remember the first two slide shows that they presented. I don't know if I've

talked about it, but the first was the story of each of their lives. They just showed themselves growing up and presented the notion that— And I don't think in these words, but that the raw material of your life was material.

COLLINGS: Sort of the diary documentary.

SEGALOVE: Yes. And these were men, and most men weren't doing that. The women were the ones.

COLLINGS: Who would think of that, yes.

SEGALOVE: Like Susan [Mogul] and I and the gals, we were all really into doing that personal narrative. I don't know any men— Cindy Sherman then evolved it. I don't know too many men that did. Richard Prince maybe a little, but not much. A couple of early guys. Wegman did, but then he found his thing. The dog spoke, you know.

COLLINGS: Which is very ironic.

SEGALOVE: Yes. Yes, exactly. So anyhow, that was slide selection number one.

Slide selection number two was of their collection of images from popular culture. I'll never forget, there on the screen, huge, one of these serious art history rooms, was a picture of a Sambo's coffee cup. I couldn't believe it. I remember the cup meant a lot to me even then, and I couldn't believe that that was legitimate work. I mean, it completely blew my mind.

And then they showed some very early collections of some video stuff. They were obsessed with Nixon. They actually taped off the air on the old heavy-duty—I can't remember—¾ [inch] machines. I don't remember the number. I mean, nobody

was doing that. And they were crazy. I mean, they had many sets and many machines, and they were just collecting. This was pre-editing. So they're basically archiving, and they took it very seriously. They knew it was important.

They were also fascinated with early television, which, of course, was something that I couldn't believe *that* had value. So, here I am. The Sambo's coffee cup and, you know, Captain Kangaroo are suddenly iconic, and I'm an authority. I mean, I am an expert on this, because that was my whole childhood. So I'm suddenly, like, an expert at twenty because that was my— My history had value. And it was unbelievable.

I, of course, at that age made the mistake of thinking I liked Billy, the boy. You know how that was. I mean, he was brilliant. So I got involved with him as a boyfriend or whatever. I think that was the way women had doors open. I mean, it wasn't like I had to have sex to learn something. I didn't. It was more that I wanted to know his life, and the only way you know someone's life was by being relational. So I hung with Billy for a couple years, and John, and Billy and I— They included me instantly, which was remarkable.

One of the first things I shot, because I brought my PortaPak, I shot a tour of the Madonna Inn. We documented every room and interviewed Mr. Madonna, who died recently, and built that piece. We shot photographs of chocolate ice cream cones around Los Angeles and did this wonderful spread in *West* magazine. The *L.A. Times* had a magazine that had a lot of featured images. It's kind of a cool mag. And we were on the *Today Show*.

COLLINGS: You were on the *Today Show*?

SEGALOVE: Oh yeah, talking about chocolate ice cream. We were on a lot of shows. What they were interested in was not the art world. They happened to teach in the art class, but they were really into the fine line between architecture, popular culture, and art, and they weren't concerned what it was called, but they really loved media. They knew pretty well how to do stuff.

So what ended up happening was my senior year, our project, we did an installation at the university art gallery, and we created a prototype living room, with wallpaper and a couch and a TV, and we played compilations. One was of old television game shows; one was [inaudible]; one was Nixon, of course; and it broke down into topics. I was instrumental in organizing that.

And then Telethon was a guest for the Michael Shamberg— What was it called? Radical Software series. They had some guest editors, and our series was called *The TV Environment*, and it was all about the TV culture. This was in '72. It was way before television became a cool thing, I mean way before Nickelodeon and MTV and everything that became all that stuff. I'll never forget being in the museum.

COLLINGS: TV was sort of the realm of the silent majority.

SEGALOVE: Oh, right. But there were more people that showed up for that show—they keep a count—than any other show up to that time, because, hey, there was TV, there was a couch, and there was popcorn. I mean, it was home. It made me think, "Hmm, this is interesting. I mean, people are enjoying this experience. They're not standing there looking at art and going, 'Yeah, whatever.'"

COLLINGS: "What am I supposed to think?"

SEGALOVE: Yeah, and that kind of silent. It was loud, there was ruckus, it was activity. It was very contradictory to the quiet museum etiquette. So I got a kick out of that. It was so easy to be rebellious. All you had to do was put a television set in a museum.

COLLINGS: Also I think people are interesting in things when it seems to be connected to their own daily life, and what better way to connect it than through the TV viewing experience.

SEGALOVE: It was remarkable. It was remarkable. And all the other groups, there was the Radical Software group, there was TVTV, that group that Michael Shamberg and Harold Ramis started that did a lot of early documentaries. There were—I can't remember them—some great groups in Chicago, one in Boston, and they were, you know, Guerrilla Television. Most of them were making Michael Moore-esque types of docs, and it seemed to be much more about the political/social piece of time than some of us, like Billy and I, were doing some more artsy things. By that, it meant that, in my sense, nobody would ever see it, because the museums had no idea that this was anything to do.

So Telethon kind of evolved, and then what ended up happening, John went off to shoot many, many images that became books, that you probably know, on miniature golf courses across the country, motels. He was into the goofball architecture.

COLLINGS: Sort of the distancing of these commonplace images.

SEGALOVE: Exactly. And then the funny stuff, and then he did a thing on the Fontainebleau. He was really into kitsch.

Billy ended up doing more and more of just becoming obsessive, staying home, always watching television, and then he kind of disappeared into his computer. I don't really know what happened to him.

And then I ended up kind of going from that to CalArts and to Loyola. Loyola had their communications department, so I was doing television, studying under TV directors for soap op[era]s; and then CalArts with John Baldessari and David Salle, and creating a lot of self-importance. Now, all those people that I was in school with then have become very, very successful. They were kind of the early strategists of the gallery scene in New York, and they all went to New York, except for John, and became painters, because this core group— I just read a book called *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* by one of the students there, who ended up committing suicide. He did not become successful and famous. I think he was more of a true artist, in the old-fashioned sense. But David and the gang strategized about what product would sell. I remember visiting with David, and I told him about my videos and he just said, "You're spending too much time and money."

COLLINGS: "Well, you can't sell that."

SEGALOVE: "What are you, nuts?"

And I was like, "Yeah, but this is important," blah, blah, blah, blah.

And David was, you know, doing the math, and he said, "Well, I want to show you what I'm doing." He showed me a painting, which to me was like he just sold

out; he was going to be arrested. And he became— He started his—

COLLINGS: Ascent.

SEGALOVE: Ascent, exactly. His empire, which I appreciated. But again, it was a very, very smart choice. I could never have done it. There's no way. First of all, I didn't want to paint. I chose not to. And secondly, I didn't have the ambition.

COLLINGS: Well, your work seems to be more literal-minded anyway.

SEGALOVE: Yes, it is. I sometimes wish I could pull that part out so I could do that art thing, but I'm very much into—

COLLINGS: Into text.

SEGALOVE: Yes, and I maybe overly am concerned that the audience be taken care of, whereas David was busy with his own thing. So a lot of people split at that point into a more art-for-sale decision. John Baldessari did a few videos. Again, he couldn't imagine. They're kind of cool, but he got right into product, which he's continued, as well. He's teaching here now.

COLLINGS: Yes, at the art department. Now, did Telethon have like a manifesto or anything like that?

SEGALOVE: There was— I mean, I have the materials. Since I didn't write it, I mean, yes, they did. I could provide you with some of that material. It's very interesting. I have it all in a carton.

So then I don't kind of remember how Telethon dissipated. I think when I met David Ross and Baldessari, I started to think I was going a certain path, and that's when the grants became a means of support. I think in the seventies and eighties,

obviously, you know that that was a way to survive.

COLLINGS: Right. That was something that kind of came up during that period that hadn't existed before.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, and I know now, most artists, you really are more into a patronage system. Again, I had such a not-for-profit sensibility that, you know, it's undermining, but that was the nature, again, of the time. I mean, I'd lend out my equipment. I just think about things now. I go, "My god, I would never do that."

COLLINGS: How did like sort of the feminism of *The Mom Tapes*, that period, work into the things that you started to do with Telethon and CalArts? Was the feminism something that was sort of more personal and about your relationship with your mother and then you didn't really have a need for it after that point, or was there an intermingling?

SEGALOVE: I think that there was an intermingling in that that the Woman's Building and the women involved—Suzanne Lacy, Mogul—it was certainly a place to have dialogue and to feel like you weren't alone.

COLLINGS: Were you interested in the Woman's Building?

SEGALOVE: No. I'm really not a mingler. What I had behind me was a pretty solid family and some money, and so I wasn't a struggling artist. I mean, I was making my own living, but I always knew if anything happened, I could just go home. A lot of these women weren't living like that. So I was in a more elite position. I also cannot bear groups, support groups, clubs. I can't bear it.

COLLINGS: Because you said last time that you would bring your mother to the

screenings to offer levity.

SEGALOVE: Yes, my job was that, and I know there was a huge amount of seriousness. My mother always was, in her own way, a feminist. She always told me to be unique, to say what I needed to say, and that I could do whatever I wanted. I don't know if she knew what I was up against, but that was the M.O.

The Woman's Building was a great opportunity to— I think it was the first place I had a show and it was the first place I really started to show up, and I really— I liked it. But I knew I wasn't speaking the party line. When I made the video, *California Casual*, I think that was in '76, maybe, that was about a group of women whose husbands gave up their suits for polyester leisure suits, it was a metaphor.

COLLINGS: Right, so they didn't have to iron anymore.

SEGALOVE: Right, and that was a metaphor for freedom. It was an installation. Life-size cutouts of the men wearing leisure suits surround the TV. When it played on its own, I read some reviews and they were interpreting it like some upper-class person was making light of the role of women in the suburbs or something. I mean, I was just like, whoa. Your upper-class position would be used against you a lot, and you weren't taken as seriously. I remember that being an issue. I didn't really ever address it. I just kind of skirted around, because I skirt a lot, I'm learning, as I look back. "Well, I'm outta here."

I think after *The Mom Tapes* I did *Five True Stories*, and then I did— I'm trying to think of the sequence. I did *California Casual*. I dealt with issues in the home without my mother, and I was dealing with women's issues. Really, *California*

Casual was very much a women's liberation piece, but it was very funny. The women would talk to their husbands off-screen, wherever the cutout was placed. I never had the ultimate installation, whereas the right solution— It would be interesting to pull it out now. It could probably be shortened.

It was at the ARCO Center downtown in a non-art space, so regular folks would mill around, which I, of course, really liked. It was put on by CARP [California Artists Resource Project] which was Barbara Burden, and my friend Elizabeth Freeman, these alternative people. Usually women with connections and money were supporting other women, small scale, but they paid for invitations, and we were really into alternative spaces. Like, New York had The Kitchen and P.S.1, all those, but we didn't have that here.

So ARCO became an interesting corporate sponsor, and, again, I liked that. I wanted regular folks to stand there and go, "What is this?" So anytime I could show the work outside of an art gallery I would, and because of the grant system, I could— because I'd get a ten, fifteen, or twenty-five thousand-dollar grant, and in those days you could kind of pull it off.

COLLINGS: I suppose maybe one of the problems that feminists would have had with that piece was that the women were addressing their husbands.

SEGALOVE: Right, they were, but that is who they were. I mean, and I think the problem with the women a lot was that they were thinking of what could be, but I really was appreciating the reality of people that were struggling with their own issues. And I didn't have big ideals about women's lib. I mean, I thought life would

be different than it is now for women.

COLLINGS: What did you—

SEGALOVE: Well, I didn't think people would be getting breast implants and everything be so highly sexualized and that young women would be dressed like whores. I mean, I'm shocked. It doesn't offend me; I'm just, wow.

COLLINGS: It's surprising. I know what you mean.

SEGALOVE: I thought I lived through an era where that was all dealt with.

COLLINGS: Yeah.

SEGALOVE: And I look at these girls, and I'm just like, "Wow, I can't believe it." And I know it'll come and go, but it hasn't gone. I mean, it's actually getting a little more pronounced, and I guess that has to do with all kinds of issues that are beyond women, you know; I can sort of tell. But I'm shocked, not from a moral standpoint.

COLLINGS: No, I know.

SEGALOVE: Just shocked. I thought something changed.

COLLINGS: It's kind of like what Corky [in *What Happened to the Future?*] says, "It's just not what I expected."

SEGALOVE: Exactly. I'm still standing around going, "Huh?" And I'm also amazed, when I re-entered my art moment here, that all the demons that I haven't seen for fifteen years, because I haven't bothered to make any work, were just waiting in the room.

COLLINGS: Which demons are those?

SEGALOVE: All the critical demons and all the "What they hell are you doing?" and

all the "This is a waste of time" and "You just spent ten thousand dollars on what?" All the question marks with faces, you know, they're sitting in there. I just thought, "Wow, I forgot about this group." You know, so some things just don't change. It just depends where you put your attention.

COLLINGS: How did you find the women for *California Casual*? I mean, how did you select them?

SEGALOVE: Oh, okay, let me think about it. They were very off-the-wall choices. One of my professors at Loyola's wife—and he was a wacky comic writer—she was fabulous. I can't remember her name. They're all dead now. One was, my sister had been on a cruise and she really liked the man who taught art on the cruise, and his wife. I remember them. My girlfriend's father and mother, they were interesting. Those are them. Oh, the dean of Loyola's wife. I kind of worked with what was right around me. I didn't put an ad out. Oh, and Sylvia, my mother's old friend and her husband, our family doctor.

COLLINGS: And all of their husbands actually had switched to non-ironing—

SEGALOVE: Absolutely. And they all posed, and I had life-size cutouts made. And it was very funny, because the place I had them printed only did cut outs of boys who were having bar mitzvahs, so they were used to little photographs and some of my guys were really big, and husky, and tall. All the men were saying, "I am free, too."

COLLINGS: It's sort of reminiscent of your dad handing you that bottle of the future.

SEGALOVE: Exactly.

COLLINGS: "Here's the future," and it's very upbeat.

SEGALOVE: It was. And yet people were going, "Oh, my god, that's not freedom." But these women had truly changed their lives, and they did say that that— I mean, it freed them up. And the men no longer were confined in the suits, and I think that was as good as they could do.

COLLINGS: Well, this sounds like it would be sort of inflammatory, because here you are supporting non-natural fabrics.

SEGALOVE: Yes, that's true. I remember having to defend my upper middle-class upbringing to other women artists.

COLLINGS: How did they know about it?

SEGALOVE: That's a good question. I don't know. I mean, they never went to the house. My father was poor. He was a pulled-them-up-by-the-bootstraps type of guy. My dad made his money.

COLLINGS: He wasn't third-generation.

SEGALOVE: No, this was not an inheritance. I was fortunate, at thirteen or fourteen, my parents were not wealthy, but they moved to Beverly Hills. Oh, well, I did this video of Beverly Hills. Maybe they knew because of the Beverly Hills tape, which was 1981.

COLLINGS: Well, I think there was a hyper awareness of that kind of thing at the time, anyway.

SEGALOVE: Yes. And women really were— I mean, there were serious distinctions. Hildegard Duane was a video artist then who had come from a similar background, and Elizabeth Freeman, who would fund people, came from that

background. So we found ourselves— I was friends with a lot of people from Harvard [University]. They all came from wealthy backgrounds, and some of them became musicians and artists and some became movie moguls. There was that strange thing that was going on then.

Martha Rosler, who was an artist you may know, she was very politically minded and very critical. She actually came from a higher demographic financially than she admitted. She was always dealing with issues of poverty and social oppression. She was very critical of my work and, I remember, loud about it. And, you know, there was no defense. I remember saying, "I can only tell the story that I know. Why is my story less valuable than yours?" And that was the whole point with the women. Let's be inclusive here.

COLLINGS: So you did not receive support at the Woman's Building, it sounds like.

SEGALOVE: No, no. But I didn't ask for it, and I really didn't show up a lot. I mean, I went to some events and I was deeply appreciative of having showings and screenings. Susan Mogul and Suzanne [Lacy] were people I was friends with and would circulate with, Susan particularly, Mogul, because she made funny stuff and I made funny stuff. Mostly, artists were so serious. So Susan and I were often in the humor shows with [William] Wegman.

I wish I had more memories of the Woman's Building. I have some great photographs of some of the events.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's great.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, so there's some documentation.

COLLINGS: So as far as these women that had some money and that sort of supported other women's artwork, did they ever have any kind of like loose sort of name for their group?

SEGALOVE: Yes. Elizabeth Freeman had a company. There was CARP.

COLLINGS: CARP. What does that stand for?

SEGALOVE: California Arts Resources Projects. It was a pretty big concept, because they wanted to support alternative art installation, and that was very important then because museums didn't do that. Well, nobody had defined that. Now you see the [Bill] Viola installation thing that's been happening. No. You had to kind of convince people of the value.

COLLINGS: This was a group of sort of well-to-do women?

SEGALOVE: They weren't all well-to-do. A couple of them, I think, were well connected, knew how to write grants. They got grant support, too, because, of course, there were grants for individuals and then for organizations, so if you became a nonprofit, you, of course, had access.

Some Serious Business was also a group that Elizabeth Freeman ended up beginning, and she was very much— She gave me some startup money for *My Puberty*. She came in for that, I remember that, five thousand dollars, which was great, so I could hire a producer, because I thought to myself at that time I wanted to learn how to do it more properly instead of doing everything.

COLLINGS: I was wondering if you had done that at Loyola, because it looked like—

SEGALOVE: We learned how to do it there. But, you know, the artist is a one-woman band, and, again, if you had a crew or a team, that was so "Oh, you don't do that." So Elizabeth came in, and she funded the R&D [research and development], and then I hired Karen Murphy, who produced *Spinal Tap* and *Best of Show*. She's an old friend. We shared a boyfriend in college, so I knew her, and she became a movie producer. She produced *My Puberty*, and I guess that helped me. The trouble with that was that we were doing it for real, so I had to hire a teacher and a nurse because I had kids on the set. If I were just making art, I wouldn't bother with that; just do my thing and leave, you know. But I had to do it properly, so it cost me a lot more. I think, again, for me, I love to learn how things are done and then do something else.

COLLINGS: This was definitely the most highly produced of all your videos.

SEGALOVE: Right. It was on a stage, and it was pretty expensive for me. I mean, I had money on the line there, so it was nerve-racking, compared to the *Mom* tapes. I could say, "Mom, I don't feel like coming over." I enjoyed making *Puberty*. I mean, it was a lot of tension, but it was very fun.

COLLINGS: And how has that piece been received?

SEGALOVE: I think it was really well received back then. I mean, it was screened a lot. But, of course, it was 1987, '88, so it was on the BBC a lot, because they had underwritten its production for a show called *Ghosts in the Machine*. You know what? It kind of caught me up to all of the stories I wanted to tell. I was done for a while.

COLLINGS: Okay, good.

SEGALOVE: Then the next batch would be stories of being an adult, and I wasn't sure I was going to be telling those. They'd get kind of seedy. So it was the last piece. I never thought I'd stop making video, because that really was the most successful identity I had cultivated. But—

COLLINGS: Well, it's almost as if the video scene kind of changed sort of around you.

SEGALOVE: It's true.

COLLINGS: Where instead of it being sort of a one-person artistic medium, the demand became that it either be a production like you're describing or be entirely in the art world. There wasn't even really a space for that anymore.

SEGALOVE: I agree. The context really helps. There were a few artists— I can't remember one guy in particular. He was quite well known. A number of them went off to do actual potential— I think they did pilots for either MTV, where that was just beginning to be born then—it was a little early—or public television had some funding, and I know that that was a direction I thought about going. I hooked up with a couple of women who were artists then you may know, called Twin Art, Linda and Ellen Kahn.

COLLINGS: No.

SEGALOVE: They became very successful commercial television ad producer/directors, and they were working in both worlds. They're from New York. Linda and Ellen and I hooked up, and I wrote two TV pilots, and we met with all the people in Hollywood and had two deals. One show, it was called "Time Capsule,"

and they both fell through. But I've got to tell you, I just dreaded— I don't have the capacity to work that hard. I mean, I can think hard, but, you know, when you're in that business, it's twenty-five-hour days.

COLLINGS: Well, and it's constant interaction, as well.

SEGALOVE: It's constant. There's a lot of compromise. They were rewriting as I was sitting there. Again, I wasn't hungry enough. My ego and my ambition weren't strong enough to compete, although I had good product. So I tried that for a couple of years.

I also worked for the Playboy TV Channel, producing the soundtracks for a whole lot of interstitial programming, which is when I kind of went into the radio world. So I slid from *My Puberty* right into radio. Actually, I'd been in radio right before it, because *My Puberty* was a radio story that turned into a video story. So I kept my radio career going for a number of years and then slid into the book world and kept getting away so I could be more alone. Ultimately, I could just be alone in my pajamas in my house, drinking coffee all day.

COLLINGS: Which is kind of full circle, because that's what you were doing in your early years, watching TV.

SEGALOVE: Exactly. And so suddenly I'm a middle-aged woman. It's not as pretty a picture, but it felt good, and I was watching a lot of TV. And I got back into watching TV after I hadn't for years. Fortunately, HBO had been born, and I became, for the last five years I've watched—like I'm an expert—especially with reality TV, which was almost like a joy for me, because that's what I had done in a way with the

Mom Tapes.

COLLINGS: *Wife Swap*, have you seen that?

SEGALOVE: I haven't watched that one. I haven't watched that one; I will.

COLLINGS: Okay. It's very interesting.

SEGALOVE: They're all interesting. I'm a *Survivor* fan— The last *Survivor*, those were my friends. I mean, it sounds sick. I couldn't wait. And now— What was I crazy for recently? Well, I love *Six Feet Under*. And *Sopranos* took me years to get into. I thought it was going to be terrible; brilliant. *Deadwood*, even. I mean, I'm getting into it. But I don't have much of a life, and it's a much more interesting life watching. *Six Feet Under*. I think to myself, if anybody else looked at me, they'd be thinking this is really sad, and I'm feeling like, you know, this is really great.

COLLINGS: That's kind of interesting, because when you were a young girl, I mean, in one of the articles that you gave me, you were talking about how a program like *Winky Dink and You* was important. But you were watching TV as a young girl during a period of real innovation.

SEGALOVE: Yes.

COLLINGS: And now a lot of these cable programs, some of the ones that you've mentioned, this is another period of real innovation.

SEGALOVE: It's being born. I'm thrilled. It's been a long haul. I mean, even *The Apprentice*, just— God, you know, the levels and layers of human exposure, I think it's fantastic. I mean, I know the trash aspect, but I kind of like that, too. So there is some joy in coming full circle, and now I'm back. It's interesting and I'm re-birthing

the potential of making my own work again, and it seems to be showing up— Well, it's showing up in an area I can manage it, which is alone or with an assistant on a computer instead of out in the field again.

COLLINGS: Doing photo montages and so on?

SEGALOVE: Yeah, but I'm using found images. I have a new digital camera, and I've been hesitating shooting, because it's sort of like, why? There's already enough images. I can pull anything. There's the issues of usage, of course. So I'm starting to try to shoot again and go out, because I really do want to feel free to do that. But I've been very insulated for a good five- to ten-year run. I think part of it's just a reflection of living—

COLLINGS: It wasn't during the Reagan years, was it? [laughs]

SEGALOVE: No. Age-wise…from the forties to the fifties, I think, in my own age group, I think something happens to everybody, it's really profound. It's really profound. I think it's a cellular, chemical— I mean, it is. Everything's reconfigured, and it's a new territory.

COLLINGS: Now, was this the period when you were working on the books?

SEGALOVE: Yes.

COLLINGS: How did you come to—

SEGALOVE: Yes! I'm a self-improvement author!

COLLINGS: Just sort of state on the tape what the books are, because, I mean, I got them out of the library and I opened them up, and it's like these are blank pages—

SEGALOVE: Very high concept.

COLLINGS: —that I'm supposed to fill out. And it's actually a really fascinating idea.

SEGALOVE: I get paid to basically know what not to say and when not to say it. I created this whole thing. I am not a person who does journals, first of all, and here I have written twelve journal books!

COLLINGS: And they're all directed towards women, right?

SEGALOVE: Men can do it, but women buy books. This is how it started. An art pal of mine— You may have heard of the team Bob and Bob. They were performance artists in the seventies and early eighties, and visual artists, and then they kind of disappeared. I mean, that's a whole other profile of people that came and went. One of them is a friend. He was in one of my videos called *What Is Business?*

Somehow, he and I were chatting about what we loved to do, and we're both fanatic list makers.

COLLINGS: It's just a nice way to order things.

SEGALOVE: I feel power when I'm doing it, yeah.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

September 22, 2004

SEGALOVE: Anyhow, so I think it was around 1993. Gosh, you know, I have to backtrack, it happened a few years after my big show in 1990. It was at the Laguna Museum of Art, and it traveled the country at six venues, and the museum was filled with images, video, and sound. I mean, it was a multimedia installation.

It was a really strange experience. I turned forty that year, and I felt very disconnected from the work in the show. It was sort of like I'd been a sketch pad. It wasn't my real work, but here I was with a great catalog, big to-do. So I was kind of turning forty, which was significant because there was a lot of self-reflection, going on and I was trying to sort out what's what. Being the precocious girl that I am, I decided I wanted to somehow be prepared for what was coming next, and in my mind that was menopause.

So I had no real inspiration to make art. I was doing some radio, and I had this idea—it just came to me—of creating a journal for women so that they could somehow handle the process of menopause. So I read every book on menopause, thinking, of course, if I read every book it wouldn't hit me, and I'd know. You know, the knowledge is power idea.

Knowledge is not power, I'll tell you that. Knowledge is knowledge, you know. So I do my reading, and I call Paul Bob Velick, this was one of the artists in *Bob and Bob,* he was friends with a man named Boyd Willat and his wife Felice

Willat, Boyd and Felice. You don't know their names, but they created and capitalized on the Day Runner.

COLLINGS: Oh yes.

SEGALOVE: The Day Runner, big deal, big money.

COLLINGS: Absolutely.

SEGALOVE: And I said to Paul, "I don't know, I've got this idea. I imagined a new kind of three-ring journal.

So Paul sets up a meeting for me with Felice, who at that time was fifty-one; perfect. I met her and I really liked her. She was like an artsy chick. And I presented this concept, pretty highly developed. I had a prototype I'd created. In all her years at Day Runner, she'd gotten lots of things sent to her, but she never saw a fit. This one she wanted to do. She went whole hog and took almost $750,000 of her own money and developed these prototypes and created this book and created basically art, not commerce. I thought we were going to do commerce. I wrote many, many versions of it. I worked for two and a half years. We created these too expensive, in my mind very unattractive, only-for-very-rich-women products.

COLLINGS: With expensive binding.

SEGALOVE: It became a travesty, because what I finally found out—she was trying to make art, and I wanted to make commerce; and she was afraid if she succeeded, what would happen, and I never thought we wouldn't because she had had such a track record. It was a cuckoo time, but in the process I realized I can write this stuff.

So Paul and I got together one day and, I just said, "Why don't we do a book

that's like a reflective journal, but that's goofy, not so serious."

We thought about it, and came up with a List book. And then Paul met a woman at a party who, for three thousand dollars, gave us the phone number. We paid three thousand dollars—these are idiot artists—for a woman's phone number who was an agent in New York; and since we were so far from the real world, we gave her a three-thousand-dollar check and called Gareth Esersky at Carol Mann Agency in New York and sent her this thing. Fortunately, I'm a really good student and Paul's a really great thinker, so I could make it look like homework, which is what, you know, agents require, and we got this book deal with Andrews McMeel, which is a publisher in Kansas City, to do *List Your Self* [*Listmaking as the way to Self Discovery*]. *List Your Self* has sold 350,000 copies.

COLLINGS: Wow.

SEGALOVE: It's a blank book mostly with a funny introduction, and just encourages people to ask questions that they know the answers to, because people love that. And they're kooky, and in the process you end up creating an archive, a document, that is really the story of your life.

So then came *More List Your Self*, *List Your Self for Kids*, *List Your Self for Parenting*, *Risk Your Self*, *List Your Creative Self*, *The Write Mood*, which is a book of colored paper reflecting different moods, *Unwritten Letters*, which were triggers to help you get going on letter writing, and then I wrote *40 Days and 40 Nights* recently, which is a forty-day process of journaling and doing things to snap yourself out of habit, which are just from my own experiences. And then I did a book called *Snap*

Out Of It, which is more like little stories that I would write, more like me and my videos, and activities to get you out of your rut. I was in a rut, so I became an authority on ruts. So I have like, I don't know, fifteen books, plus the book I did with Felice that's called *Woman's Book of Changes*, and it did come out in various forms as journals, but I was no longer affiliated.

COLLINGS: It's almost like you've created a place where people can constitute their personality.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. People love it. A lot of younger women that need a place to go, and not everybody wants to write, "Dear diary, today I did this."

COLLINGS: And precisely in a situation where so much of— You know, you were sort of mentioning women dressing these days [inaudible]. We're still so bombarded by images and expectations and what women should do, and this and that, and you've created this little box of paper that is sort of the archive of the essential self.

SEGALOVE: It is, and it had great resonance. I was surprised when I go onto Amazon that people write, "This book changed my life." I was just thinking, "My God," because I'm basically cynical, and the notion was for me to go out on seminars and do the kind of *Artist's Way* thing. I just couldn't, because, honestly, so much of it was off the cuff. I mean, I like some of the triggers, like "List all the things you did to torture your younger brother." You know, people love that. I've had people say they take it on camping trips with their kids and they do it out loud.

COLLINGS: It's very cathartic.

SEGALOVE: Honestly, it was an interesting identity for a while, and my friends all

thought I'd just gone crazy. My art and movie friends were just like—

COLLINGS: They didn't see it as conceptual art or anything?

SEGALOVE: No. Well, when they would look at it they would, because they didn't really realize it was blank. The beauty is it's on a journal shelf, not the self-improvement shelf, so it's a different experience. It's more of a— It's actually an artful product that people— Women buy to give as gifts; whereas *Snap Out Of It* is stuck into the self-improvement aisles.

COLLINGS: Does it have like words on the pages and things?

SEGALOVE: It's filled with words, yes. I'd mostly been told by all the editors I should just write my really sick, twisted stories of being an adult and become like a David Sedaris and do that, but I'm not ready right now.

COLLINGS: You were very comfortable, it seemed, with telling the stories of your childhood.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, enough already. [laughs] These are dark. I don't know, maybe when my mom dies, if she dies, I can do that. There's something about still being a child. She's eighty-eight, so I could be a child for a long time. [laughs] And I still feel like that. I don't feel as generous, maybe, or compelled as some artists to— I either have to do it or I want to. I don't have to or want to. I'm in some other place. I feel embarrassed because it seems like a confused place, but then when I talk to other artists truthfully, they're very much in the same conundrum. I mean, you probably find that out in your interviews.

COLLINGS: Yes, definitely. One of the things that was interesting was in your

videotape, *The Riot Tapes: A Personal History*, it's so much a story of a period of incredible turmoil and changes in consciousness and that the country was changed, the world was changed.

SEGALOVE: Yes.

COLLINGS: And that these changes were very personal, to the point that Ricky actually dies over his grief about the Vietnam War. And then you've got something like *Whatever Happened to the Future?* where it's more of an eighties thing, where Corky, who seems kind of like a sitcom character in a way—

SEGALOVE: She was played by my good friend, who was a sitcom actress.

COLLINGS: That's what I was wondering.

SEGALOVE: Yes, she was.

COLLINGS: Corky is saying, "It's just not what I expected." So it's as if you lived though a period where things were supposed to really change, and the social changes were supposed to be really resonant, but that didn't really come off. It's as if the journaling an effort to come to terms with that.

SEGALOVE: It could be, you know. I think, also, I don't think we expected to be aging. It's easy to say the baby boomers weren't supposed to get old, but I don't think we actually had—

COLLINGS: That's a very good point.

SEGALOVE: We weren't programmed to enter this land. So many of the choices I made—to make sure I didn't have a husband, to make sure I didn't have a traditional job—are so undermining to the security really required as you age when you need

somebody who will drive you to the doctor and you need somebody you can trust, not like that cool, sexy guy, and they're usually not the same person. My mom said, "You made your bed." You know, I believe the choices really, I don't think they backfired, but they create a lifestyle that I don't think many of us expected to have to actually live.

COLLINGS: They created a lifestyle, but at the time, the sense was that this really was the way things were going.

SEGALOVE: Absolutely.

COLLINGS: That this was not an aberration or a blip.

SEGALOVE: Right. It was going to keep going. Right. It wasn't a tear in the fabric, and it wasn't a blip. My friend, Bobby Roth, who I went to grammar school with, who actually was close to Ricky, is a filmmaker. He often, for money, directs television movies. He's made some features. And he's working on his own independent feature called *Berkeley*, which is about Ricky during the Vietnam era also. It was such a great time, even though we suffered.

I felt alive back then. And now with the politics, I mean. I never thought I would see someone that I despise more than Nixon. I thought that was the ultimate. And here we are with someone who actually— Now I think Nixon didn't look so bad. I can't believe I'm saying this.

COLLINGS: Even Reagan.

SEGALOVE: This is a dangerous, vile group of people. So it's really hard to figure out what to do now.

COLLINGS: In terms of the artwork?

SEGALOVE: Yes. I'm curious. It would be interesting to have a roundtable of people that were making things that had value and were important.

COLLINGS: That's a great idea.

SEGALOVE: I'm curious how they live with themselves.

I was talking to the gentleman yesterday, who is the director of an art museum. We discovered issues of scale and context and art talk in this little library. I left and began thinking of the world, you know, and part of me just says, "You know, I'm going to be making some art now, because that's important, and I need to keep remembering its value." But I just spent ten thousand dollars on prints, and I thought, "I could have put ten into the campaign or I could have put ten into something that might—"

COLLINGS: Yes, it's this continual split.

SEGALOVE: Do I want to give ten thousand dollars to some people that are probably, you know, barking up a tree that ain't gonna be? I don't know. So I think these are more difficult times than I've ever lived through. And thank God I don't have— I'm glad I don't have kids. There's a part of me that says that was good, because I'd be feeling really concerned. I wouldn't let them out of my sight, actually. Really. You have a child, right?

COLLINGS: Two, yes.

SEGALOVE: So you have adult kids?

COLLINGS: No, they're nine and eleven.

SEGALOVE: Oh, you have kid kids, so you're grappling with serious issues.

COLLINGS: Yeah. When you look back at something like, for example, the piece you did with your sister, *The New Room*, I mean, that, to me, seems like something that is sort of looking at— I think that you're kind of— Are you making fun of your sister a little bit?

SEGALOVE: I actually just had her to do whatever she wanted. I very rarely showed that tape because I felt it was too much of an expose. I don't think I showed it more than once.

COLLINGS: So here she is, walking around, talking about the addition to the house, and the tone of the tape is that this is the past, that you're videotaping this from the threshold of the future.

SEGALOVE: Right. Right.

COLLINGS: And I think the kinds of things that you're saying now is that it turns out that—

SEGALOVE: That is the future, and she voted for [President George W.] Bush. I mean, it's weird. She has another house now. If she would do that now, the tape would be more remarkable. Remember in the tape she mentions her nail polish matched the color on the couch pillow. I remember shooting and just thinking, "There's no way I can show this." But I showed my brother.

COLLINGS: But this is really the equivalent of you spending ten thousand dollars on your artwork, isn't it? I mean, everybody's doing that.

SEGALOVE: It's true. That's a good context. Everybody asks, "Did you add on [to

your house]?" I mean, we're all just trying to create a reality. My sister's home is some kind of a reflection of an ideal environment, and I hope she has some peace in there. She never saw the tape, by the way.

COLLINGS: I was wondering about that.

SEGALOVE: Never. Never asked.

COLLINGS: I was going to ask did she view it, what did she think about it.

SEGALOVE: No. No. She would have said, "The house looks great."

COLLINGS: So this is one period where you're reviewing this kind of quaint past.

SEGALOVE: Yeah.

COLLINGS: And then when you get to *Whatever Happened to the Future?* you're basically saying that wasn't a quaint past.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. And now what do I do? I think right after that I did *My Puberty*, which was really about— I think it was about the power of being in puberty and leaving that childhood behind. I mean, I think as women in many ways we grapple with that power all the time until— We don't realize it until we're going through menopause, when we realize we don't have the power anymore.

COLLINGS: I know. Isn't that amazing?

SEGALOVE: We're totally invisible.

COLLINGS: You become invisible.

SEGALOVE: I was like a complete— Men would follow me around.

COLLINGS: People are starting to give you seats on the bus.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. Men would follow you around. I mean, I used to go to a party

and I'd get three phone calls the next day, and I didn't look for them or want them.

COLLINGS: But now that's gone. [laughs]

SEGALOVE: I have been fixed up kind of casually with a few guys. I just thought about it this morning. I thought, in the past I couldn't have gotten rid of these guys, even if I couldn't stand them. This time I actually called my friend who tried to match me up and I said, "Would you tell me what Chris said, anything about me? Because I want feedback. Did he say, 'Oh, she's too old,' or, 'She looks tired'?" I want to hear the words. Tell me what the words are, because I just want to hear it. Because, you know, it's a shocker. It's kind of a relief, but I think it takes years to figure out how—So what do you do?

My girlfriend, she's seventy-two now. I did radio with her. She said she remembers she used to go in a store to buy shoes when she was about fifty-eight. Nobody would help her. I mean literally, and this was a woman who used to drive a Porsche. She was the head of NPR [National Public Radio].

COLLINGS: Well, it seems like your work is always sort of very contemporary in that you're always kind of on top of these kinds of social changes, so what are—

SEGALOVE: What am I making now?

COLLINGS: Yes, exactly.

SEGALOVE: I'll tell you, some of this stuff is really far from that. I just did a series of photographs called *Life is Ephemeral*. I've taken images of old masters' eyes, close-ups, and I do a computer effect where I blur them and they become a gorgeous almost painterly backdrop for very crisp, close-up photographs of lightning, sunset.

It's ephemeral. It's based on a Buddhist sutra. There's no irony. I mean, it's just—Well, there is irony, because I do use this effect where it looks like the paint's dripping, and it's a complete plastic effect. I'm playing around with issues of time, so maybe that is the subject. I'm just not talking about being a middle-aged woman. I don't need to. There's too many good people on TV doing those jokes.

I'm actually doing a bunch of pieces using a kiss as an icon, kissing between men and women, but it's about the point of contact. So I think I actually am dealing with some of the issues, but they're very abstracted. I'm really keeping my distance, so my voice isn't there, and I pulled all the text out. I put text in, and then the man I'm working with, who's a technical wizard, says, "What are you doing that for?" So then I throw the words out.

So it's been kind of an interesting struggle. I do a series of photographs of my doll collection. They're just like perfect portraits. In the back of them is a stage, and on the stage there are words, and they're asking very existential questions, like, "Did I leave the light on?" "Where are my keys?" So I kind of built this existential banter.

I've become more painterly, because I really want to deal with issues of beauty. It's kind of a nice place to hang out. [laughs] I'm finding refuge in beauty. And it's interesting, because on the screen it's very different than when it's printed, so I'm grappling with the technology confusion again.

I'm building a show that is going to probably not be familiar. If people look at the work, they're not going to hear the voice, and I'm doing that partially because I want to try something else and see what happens. It's very uncomfortable, but I guess

that's my style.

COLLINGS: Do you think that you're drawn to do this work now because there are new software and there's new stuff you can do on a computer?

SEGALOVE: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

COLLINGS: Whereas when you were doing the video, that was new, and once it became old, it seemed like everybody was doing it, and you didn't want to do it anymore.

SEGALOVE: Well, when people got those small cameras, I stopped making tape, I really did. This is interesting, because although everybody has their Macs or whatever, I'm playing with a few techniques that I haven't seen, and as I said, the real transition between the screen and the prints are very expensive to make them look like you see them. And they completely change, so there's no way I can count on what I see being what I get, which I like. There's something, a schism that happens, and it is fun.

I haven't learned the programs, so I'm working with somebody that does, and I'm directing like I would in a post-production session, which has its ups and downs, you know. I kind of want to get hands-on, but I don't want to get sucked into the computer. I don't like being in there. That will never be a place I want to hang out all day, whereas this guy does.

COLLINGS: Hanging around with the computer.

SEGALOVE: I can't bear it, plus you don't know where to stop. It's really addictive, and it's like a candy. There's something called eye candy. You can literally put fur

on anything by pressing a button. I mean, so I sit there and I put fur on everything I had shot, actually, until it's just covered. And then I thought, if I was like a really cool artist, I would just do fur, but I can't, you know, because I'm trying to tell some other story. So if I'm let loose on the computer, I think the work would be all fur, all fire, all stars. I mean, it's just amazing what happens. So I have somebody I work with and I can talk to him as we work.

COLLINGS: Also, in talking, you're sort of translating your ideas-

SEGALOVE: I am.

COLLINGS: —into something verbal, which is—

SEGALOVE: He keeps saying, "Oh, so that's what we're doing."

COLLINGS: Which is in all the work.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. And he said, "Should we tape this? Should you tell people what this is?" Some of the images that I'm doing are based on an original photo of a kiss, and then it transposes and it loses the icon. The guy I was working with yesterday was trying to figure out the show for me. He said, "Are you going to give the audience that original icon so they can learn it and then build it in or are you going to actually—?"

And I said, "I am going to give it to them, because this is about perception. It's not about tell me what you see. It's about learned iconography." So I do have a different intention. It was a good question on his part, because it clarified my intention.

COLLINGS: You could do a wonderful one of those audio tours that people get at

museums.

SEGALOVE: That's true. You'd have to have a chair, though, because you'd get so tired of standing in front of the pieces. You know, they did have one of those at Laguna [Art Museum] when my show was there. I didn't do it, but the docents did, and what they said was not always true.

COLLINGS: It was wrong.

SEGALOVE: It was so fabulous. I videotaped them telling the wrong stories about my work. It just cracked me up. And that's what made it great, these gals that were making up my life story.

So, yeah, it's a strange process. I don't like making the work any more than I did before. I never enjoyed doing those things. They were not fun. They really were grueling, I think, just because, for me, they dealt with so many unresolved issues. But other people at least get to see them, and they think that they're complete thoughts.

COLLINGS: Well, they're all wonderful, also documentaries of a period, as well.

SEGALOVE: Exactly.

COLLINGS: Just fantastic.

SEGALOVE: And of a technology.

COLLINGS: Yeah, definitely.

SEGALOVE: When MTV started, it was so interesting just watching. People said, "Why don't you just work for them." I was like, "Well, I don't want a job." Making art isn't a job. I mean, you know, it's a life. So if I have to wake up and show up somewhere, I've never been good at that. Teaching is another thing. I'm not doing

that now. I may go back. The books have dried up, the royalties are dried up. The new books haven't earned out, and they may not, and I have no new books out, because I stopped. So this is a really interesting year, because I'm not sure what I'm doing.

I'm a book doctor. I help people write their books, and I help them organize their thoughts. And I like that. It's fun. And anybody that says they have an idea for a book and they want to write a book should be shot. They don't know what they're in for. When people are flip about making art or writing books or music, I just shake my head, because they don't know.

COLLINGS: It's a journey.

SEGALOVE: Oh boy, and there's a lot of quicksand. And, you know, you've got to really be curious about the process, because you may come out with a film that's just not cutting it, but then like we're doing, looking back, somehow there's value, and it's fun to talk about it, because when I looked at *The Riot Tapes* because Bobby needed to see it for his film, I was kind of moved. It was charming, and I didn't get as upset about the things that, quote, "didn't work." You know, I did what I had to do, and you live with it.

COLLINGS: There's a wonderful quote in there, which is an important quote for the period, "Pain isn't a sign of intelligence," because so much of that period had to do with suffering.

SEGALOVE: Oh, absolutely. And if you weren't, you were not welcome. I'm actually suffering now, so maybe I could be part of a group. It took me a long time to

lose my sense of humor. I certainly did lose it through my forties. I recommend you not.

COLLINGS: Okay.

SEGALOVE: But I lost it somewhere, and I've found it again. And my brother was turning fifty this year. He's always been very upbeat and stimulated. He's a shrink; he travels the world. He's been telling me he's depressed. You know, I'm trying to give him kind of a James Hillman context, which is good. It's about time that everything you did to distract yourself and stimulate yourself not work. You don't get to have that right now. If you live long enough, you'll come around the bend, but right now, externals don't fulfill.

And so in terms of the artmaking, it's strange. So much of my work was about being on the cutting edge or people thinking I was interesting and showing up, and now, you know, it's certainly not. It's motivated much more from my own internal kind of struggle. And I think I would do this stuff whether I had a show or not. I probably wouldn't print it, because it would really hard to rationalize the costs. But I need to print it to see it.

I have ignored the gallery institution, so I have rejected the store, and I'm trying to get myself to get a store and to feel good about it. That's my breakthrough now, is to try to be part of the capitalist culture and participate and think that I finally don't have to shun collectors, but actually admire the fact that some people actually think that art has value. Hallelujah. Whether they're doing it to show off, I don't care. The fact that they're even part of that is pretty amazing in this day and age, you

know. So I'm pleased that you guys are doing this. It's still alive; it's percolating, because I think a lot of people don't think it is anymore. If you read the paper, you never— You know.

COLLINGS: Also, just to sort of talk about things that women were doing in video in the seventies is fascinating, because there was so much expression of what was happening socially.

SEGALOVE: Right.

COLLINGS: Whereas now, women in Hollywood and that kind of thing, there are some sort of feminist themes here and there, but mostly it's just about being successful in the industry.

SEGALOVE: Exactly. And then the women artists, I don't really know what contemporary— There are many video artists that are women. I mean, I go to Video Data Bank and I see. I don't know their work. I don't know what's going on, and I don't know what it costs anymore to do this. I mean, the money is an issue always, because the hardware used to really be out of reach.

I just picked up all of my master tapes that have been housed at Producer's Film Center in Hollywood. They've been there since '72, and I decided to take them home.

COLLINGS: Good.

SEGALOVE: Many of them are one-inch and some are two-inch masters. Probably the silver oxide has fallen.

COLLINGS: Oh, that would be terrible.

SEGALOVE: Fortunately, I have the DVDs, you know, that I sent you. Those are my masters, actually. I have to work from them. But there are some pieces in there I'd like to see. I have found a friend who has a three-quarter machine to do some transferring, and I need to do it before I forget, because I don't really need to carry these things around. But it was sort of interesting to take them home.

COLLINGS: In all of these outdated formats.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, all of them, and they're heavy. They were in a vault, and no fire, no dangers of whatever. Now they're, like, in the danger of my own home. If they all went down, I mean, I'd be okay at this point. But it's significant to take them home, because it really is the end of that. It's a long time. It's thirty years. And it's actually thirty years since I met John Baldessari. Lots of thirty-year time frames happening here. I called a gallery director who I haven't spoken to since I was, well, twenty-five and tried to get a meeting with her. Thirty years later, now I want to actually show there. Thank God she's still alive.

COLLINGS: It sounds like now you've been able to get TV out of your system.

SEGALOVE: Yeah, it's true. Ah!

COLLINGS: And you can get on to being an artist, like they always said you were going to be in high school.

SEGALOVE: Yeah. Do you watch *Six Feet Under*?

COLLINGS: Occasionally.

SEGALOVE: So, recently, a woman, the mother of one of the characters, had a hysterectomy, and for a while in the hospital she was struggling with what it meant,

the old, you know, "I'm not a woman anymore," and all this stuff. Then later, she's fine, she's healed. She's at a party. She's dressed like crazy. She's having the time of her life. Somebody says, "God, you look great," and she said, "It's really great to drop an organ now and again." She said, "You know, drop an organ. You'll feel better." It cracked me up, and I thought, "Yeah, this stuff is out of my system."

That post-menopausal zest that Miss Margaret Mead talked about, it's creeping up. It's creeping up, and it's very irreverent, and it's an interesting thing to kind of, I don't know what, plug into. It's like some electrical opportunity. So I'm just around the bend, and I would like to speak to women to not kill themselves from '46 to '54, which is when, you know, you will. I mean, if you're sweating every night like I was, whatever the symptoms. You know, your husband leaves, you have self-doubt, whatever; it all happens. You're having your body play tricks on you. I mean, you know, you're really having to grapple with your own mortality in a pretty significant way. I think we round the bend. I'm proof of that. And I would have checked out, seriously, if there was a door that said "Exit" and I didn't have to make a mess or anything. [laughs] I would have said— If there was food, I'd go, you know.

COLLINGS: It's like you're sort of pointing to the positive aspects of shedding all the baggage of female sexuality.

SEGALOVE: And it doesn't mean you're not a sexual being, but you have a choice about it, and the kind of choices I'm making are shocking me. The people I'm with, they're not the ones I was with before. So I'm hoping my brother can understand there's going to be a new terrain. As Hillman says, you have to find your way in the

dark. It's not that fast. In this culture, everything's supposed to take pounds off overnight.

COLLINGS: Right. Botox. In the context of aging, have you thought about revisiting *Mom Tapes, Part Two* or something like that?

SEGALOVE: I have, you know, and she's just game. I'd like her to do movie reviews. She's got such a strong opinion. But I couldn't shoot it. I'd have to just be there, you know, pointing and directing. You know, the beauty of learning that there's actually a director, that that's an okay role, as an artist, I know that was hard for me. And now I'm learning, "Ah, yes, I can have help!"

COLLINGS: You don't have to actually—

SEGALOVE: Be Barbra Streisand.

COLLINGS: Right. [mutual laughter]

SEGALOVE: You don't have to do that. And not learning PhotoShop, knowing how to fool around but having someone else, gives me the ability, as you said, to speak.

COLLINGS: Open up.

SEGALOVE: I think that helps me—thank you, Jane—because then I can hear what I'm doing. Ironically, of all the pieces I showed yesterday, the narrative excerpts were the least welcome and the least successful, and I've worked the hardest on them, because I was trying to impose a story on images, and nobody really liked them. They didn't even care for the images. It didn't work. And the throwaways, the things I thought of, that got the hit, and I just have to remember. That's a real lesson for me. Belaboring doesn't mean it's going to be any better, or more successful, either, you

know.

[End of interview]

GUIDE TO PROPER NAMES

Abbene, Ben, 34
Adler, Billy, 24, 25, 29, 30, 34, 40, 49, 50, 70, 72, 74
Antin, Eleanor, 38

Baldessari, John, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 50, 68, 75, 76, 109
Blau, Ricki, 34, 35
Boone, Mary, 37
Bohrod, Aaron (uncle), 6
Brach, Paul, 35, 36, 37, 40
Brenner, Roland, 24, 25, 40, 47, 48
Burden, Barbara, 79

California Casual, 78, 81
California Institute for the Arts, 33, 34, 35, 36, 53, 56, 67, 68, 75, 77
Coal Confession, 50, 51

Darling, Lowell, 40, 41, 42
The Dinner Party, 63

Esersky, Gareth, 93

Famous Women, 61, 63
Five True Stories, 78
40 Days and 40 Nights, 93
Freeman, Elizabeth, 79, 82, 84

Going to Italy, 51

Hanhardt, John, 51

James, David E., 45

Kahn, Ellen, 86
Kahn, Linda, 86

Lacy, Suzanne, 32, 83, *See*
Life is Ephemeral, 101
List Your Creative Self, 93
List Your Self, 93
List Your Self for Kids, 93
List Your Self for Parenting, 93
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, 34, 35, 42, 52, 67, 75, 81, 84

The New Room, 99

Margolies, John, 24, 25, 29, 30, 70, 72, 74
Memory Lane: A Bra You'll Never Forget, 51
Mogul, Susan, 38, 50, 71, 77, 83
The Mom Tapes, 47, 52, 53, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 69, 77, 78, 85, 87
More List Your Self, 93
Murphy, Karen, 85
My Puberty, 84, 85, 87, 100

Paik, Nam June, 49
Prince, Richard, 71
Priven, Cheryl (sister), 2, 9, 99, 100
Probis, Ricky, 13, 23, 24, 96, 97
Professional Retirement Home, 62, 63

Ramis, Harold, 32, 74
The Riot Tapes, 12, 60, 96, 106
Risk Your Self, 93
Rivers, Larry, 48
Rosler, Martha, 32, 54, 83
Ross, David, 40, 41, 50, 51, 76
Roth, Bobby, 97

Salle, David, 35, 36, 39, 40, 75
Segalove, Elaine Izner (mother), 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 78, 81
Segalove, Harvey (brother), 1, 2, 9, 19
Segalove, Milton (father), 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 18, 20, 62, 64
Shamberg, Michael, 32, 73, 74
Sherman, Cindy, 71

Skin Cancer, 58, 61
Snap Out Of It, 94, 95
Solomon, Holly, 37
Stoerchle, Wolfgang, 33, 34, 49
Sturgeon, John, 49

This is My House, 51
Tucker, Marsha, 38
The TV Environment, 31, 73

The Underground Walkway, 61
University of California, Santa Barbara, 13, 22, 48, 70
University of Southern California, 45

Unwritten Letters, 93

Velick, Paul Bob, 91, 92, 93

Wegman, William, 39, 49, 52, 71, 83
Weiner, Helene, 38
What Is Business?, 90
Whatever Happened to the Future?, 17, 64, 80, 96, 100
Where's God, 69
Willat, Boyd, 91
Willat, Felice, 92, 94
Woman's Book of Changes, 94
The Write Mood, 93