# CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM
# ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## INTERVIEW OF FRANK S. WYLE

**by Joan M. Benedetti**

**Frank S. Wyle**
**In his office in Marina del Rey**
**July 21, 2008**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Frank S. Wyle was born in Glencoe, Illinois, July 23, 1919. His parents owned a chain of millinery stores in Wisconsin and Illinois. In 1937, they moved to California and Wyle was admitted to MIT on a scholarship. Summers, he worked as a technician for Lockheed subsidiary Triplett and Barton, which was doing work for the aircraft industry. Wyle worked for them full-time during World War II. In 1949, he borrowed $5,000 from his father to start Wyle Laboratories. Wyle Laboratories was very successful as an aeronautic--and, eventually, missile and nuclear--testing company. It went public in 1961 with net sales of $7 million. Wyle retired as CEO in 1984.

Wyle married Edith Robinson in January 1942. Three children were born eighteen months apart: Stephen, Nancy, and Diana. Edith Wyle was a painter; her parents were professional musicians. Both Frank and Edith Wyle were active with the MIT Council for the Arts for many years. In 1959, they bought 400 acres in North Fork, California (near Yosemite) and built a house there designed by John Rex and furnished with Sam Maloof furniture. The property is now about 4,000 acres, with houses for children, grandchildren, and several friends.

In 1965, Edith, their friend, Bette Chase, and 30 shareholders, started a commercial gallery, The Egg and The Eye, at 5814 Wilshire Boulevard, focusing on contemporary craft and international folk art and including an omelette restaurant. Both gallery and restaurant were hugely popular, though never profitable. In 1973, they gained IRS nonprofit status and in 1975 the first Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) exhibitions were mounted. Edith Wyle was Program Director and Patrick Ela was hired as Administrative Director. Frank Wyle, elected board chairman in November, stepped aside, while remaining on the board, when Mort Winston became board chair the following year.

Frank and Edith Wyle both retired in 1984, continuing to be active on the CAFAM board. In 1987 Frank again became board chair as CAFAM embarked on a major capital campaign and building program. CAFAM was well-known for its annual Festival of Masks, colorful exhibitions, and innovative educational programs. But like many museums, its financial health was perennially in doubt. At the end of 1997, after a major renovation during a global recession, the museum was closed. At that point, Patrick Ela, CAFAM's former Executive Director, interceded with Al Nodal, General Manager, L.A. Cultural Affairs. In 1999, a ten-year partnership with the City of L.A. was negotiated. Edith Wyle passed away that October knowing the museum had been saved.

After Edith's passing, Bette Chase became Frank's companion until Bette's death in June 2008. In 2002, Frank's younger daughter, Diana, died suddenly after the failure of surgery to remove a tumor on her heart.

Frank Wyle served as board chair until August 2008, remaining as Chairman Emeritus. In 2012, he married long-time friend, Anita Alvarez Williams, an original Egg and The Eye shareholder. He died at his beloved ranch on August 29, 2016 at the age of 97.

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

**Interviewer:** Joan M. Benedetti. B.A., Theater; M.A., Library Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Related Experience: Milwaukee Public Library Decorative Arts Librarian, 1967 – 1968; CAFAM Museum Librarian 1976 – 1997. From 1998 – 2012, Benedetti worked to process the CAFAM Records, 1965 – 1997, which are now part of Special Collections at the UCLA Young Research Library. From 2008 – 2010 she conducted oral history interviews with seventeen former CAFAM staff and trustees; almost 60 hours were recorded and transcribed. She is the author of several articles on folk art terminology and small art museum libraries and the editor of *Art Museum Libraries and Librarianship*, Lanham, MD: ARLIS/NA and Scarecrow Press, 2007.

### Time and Setting of Interview

**Place:** Frank Wyle's office in Marina del Rey, California.

**Dates:** May 19, June 30, and July 21, 2008.

**Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of hours recorded:** The first session was held in the morning and lasted one hour and eighteen minutes; the second session was one hour and twenty-eight minutes and took place in the afternoon after having lunch with Wyle and his secretary, Tina Nord, at the Bistro du Soleil; the third session was in the afternoon and lasted just thirty-six minutes. A total of three hours and twenty-one minutes were recorded.

**Persons Present during Interview:** Benedetti and Wyle.

**Conduct and Content of Interview:** To prepare for the Wyle interview, Benedetti reviewed the relevant documents in the CAFAM Records, including several Wyle résumés and articles; she searched the Internet for information on the history of Wyle Laboratories; she also read the transcript of an interview of Edith Wyle by Sharon Emanuelli recorded for the Archives of American Art on March 9, 1993.

**Editing:** Wyle was given the opportunity to review the transcript and to supply missing or mis-spelled names and to verify the accuracy of the contents. Benedetti added full names and opening dates of CAFAM exhibitions where appropriate, and she added information for clarification and deleted some back-and-forth comments that did not add to the reader's understanding of the narrative. Time stamps have been added to both the table of contents and the transcript at five-minute intervals; the time stamps make it easier to locate the topics in the transcript that are mentioned in the table of contents.

## Table of Contents

Meeting Ruth Bowman at MIT; Ruth at LACMA, hires Patrick Ela, introduces him to Wyles; Patrick hired, 1975, as Administrative Director; Executive Director, 1984, when Edith retires. **35:00**

Inception of Festival of Masks, first as parade only in 1976; police try to arrest CalArts' Gamelan orchestra--Frank helps build dragon head entryway to publicize Devils, Demons, and Dragons. **40:00** Following year, performances, vendors added to Festival, held across street in Hancock Park; growth of Festival to two days; Maskerade Ball added. **45:00** 1984, Festival is part of Olympic Arts Festival; Bob Fitzpatrick (President of CalArts), on CAFAM board—Financial, logistical problems of 1984 Festival; admission charged, fence necessitated--Olympic Torch run part of Festival; takes place in July at L.A. Summer Olympics. **50:00**

Edith and Frank Wyle retire in 1984. **55:00** Mort Winston resigns as board chair--Press conference to announce Ratkovich Museum Tower development, May 9, 1989--Marcy Goodwin hired to work with staff on building program--Move to May Company; controversy re CAFAM in May Company--Museum entrance designed by Charles Moore firm. **1:00:00**

Hodgetts & Fung design renovated, merged 5800/5814 Wilshire buildings--Van Holland Co. contractors for earthquake retrofitting and renovation. **1:05:00** Staff move to 5800; CAFAM closed 28 months during renovations--Language of Objects project. **1:10:00**

Restaurant closed permanently when staff move to May Co.; 5814 Wilshire vacated--Gala re-opening of CAFAM May 1995--Opening exhibitions: Warmbold collection of Mexican folk art and history of CAFAM, Museum for a New Century. **1:15:00** Major L.A. earthquake (6.7) while Wyles in India-- Bud Knapp becomes board chair--Patrick resigns June 1996. **1:20:00** 731 S. Curson (the "cottage") sold--Permanent collection sold at auction; problems of museum collections--Committee to find new home for archives and library--Paul Kusserow new director; hires Martha Drexler Lynn as curator. **1:25:00** Archives go to UCLA, library to LACMA.

**Session 3:** Museum will close; museum in debt; board decides to sell 5814 Wilshire, then decides against it. Patrick Ela approaches L.A. Cultural Affairs re CAFAM's plight; Cultural Affairs agrees to provide support and staff for CAFAM; board to raise funds to pay for programming; in first year, board funds elevator construction. **05:00** Director Joan de Bruin resigns; Peter Takovsky hired; Takovsky leaves; James Goodwin hired; Goodwin leaves; Maryna Hrushetska hired. City's funding of CAFAM severely reduced; board raises additional funds. **10:00**

[Back to closure of museum:] Decision to sell permanent collection; auction preview days displayed whole collection for first time; Frank tells about buying art for Wyle Electronics and then giving that collection to CAFAM; these objects were part of auction sale; auction raises almost $250,000. **15:00** Edith and Frank attended sale; Frank was able to later buy back from the museum a few pieces from what had been the Wyle Electronics collection and they are now in his Marina del Rey office. **20:00**

Edith's 80th birthday party in 1998; board continued to meet through 1999; museum closed for 14 months while negotiations with city went on; museum reopened April 1999. Edith dies October 12, 1999. Frank continues as board chair. **25:00** Joan de Bruin's tenure was four years; Tokovsky one year; then Goodwin one year, then Hrushetska, the present director.

**30:00** Frank continues to be a major supporter. New board members are being added. Frank has given notice as of next board meeting in August [2008]; hopes to have a new chairman by that time; Frank will stay on board; future of museum "entirely a function of whether the board steps forward and takes responsibility to keep it going."

# CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
# INTERVIEW OF FRANK WYLE

**Session 1 (1:59:31), Monday, May 19, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti**

JB: Today is Monday, May 19, 2008, and I'm in Marina del Rey, California, in the office of Frank Wyle, who was a founder, with his wife, Edith, of The Egg and The Eye Gallery and the Craft and Folk Art Museum. He is Chairman of the Board of CAFAM (as it's affectionately known) and today we're going to talk about CAFAM's predecessor, The Egg and The Eye Gallery, and if we have time, the early days of the museum and some of Frank's personal background as well. And my name is Joan Benedetti. So, Frank, let's start with you. Can you tell us when and where you were born?

FW: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, on July 23, 1919.

JB: Can you tell us a little bit about your parents and—maybe—what part of Chicago were you born in—what neighborhood?

FW: I was born in the suburbs in Glencoe, Illinois, so long ago that our phone number was Glencoe 138. Glencoe since then has become a rather prosperous suburb of Chicago.

JB: And what were your parents doing there?

FW: Well, at that time I think my father was working for the Schoenhofen Brewery, which made Hires root beer and various kinds of beer until prohibition came along, and then they made what was called "near beer."

JB: Oh yes. And was your mom a housewife or did she--?

FW: My mom was a housewife, but later on my father began a chain of millinery stores—I think he had something like 35 stores, most of which were in Wisconsin and parts of Illinois. They were in any town of 100,000 or larger. And at that time my mother went to work and she did a lot of the buying for the chain of hat stores.

JB: How did he happen to get involved with the millinery business?

FW: His brother had started it originally and had stores throughout Iowa and Illinois also and they . . . weren't partners, but they each operated in a different territory.

JB: And what about siblings? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

FW: I had one sister who was two and a half years older than I was, and we grew up in that area.

JB: Given your involvement with the Craft and Folk Art Museum and The Egg and The Eye Gallery and the collecting that you and Edith did over the years—I'm wondering—did you

have any background in that at all at home as you were growing up? Did your folks have any collections or--

FW: Not really. All of the artistic portion of the gallery and the museum came from my wife. I was involved mostly from a support and financial point of view.

JB: Very important point of view! [Laughing] So—you went to MIT in Mechanical Engineering. Did your engineering interests start before that—I mean—were you always interested in that kind of thing?

FW: In looking back, I think that my interest in engineering was, it seemed to me, the lesser of various evils—I knew I didn't want to be a doctor or a lawyer. And I wasn't quite sure what an engineer did, but it sounded more interesting. **[05:04]**

JB: Your parents didn't pressure you one way or the other.

FW: No, in fact I don't believe there was ever an engineer in the family.

JB: So—how did you come to go to MIT? That's kind of far from Chicago.

FW: My parents moved to California the year I graduated from high school and I had applied at two universities. I applied at Cal Tech and I applied to MIT. Cal Tech said they were interested if I would take entrance exams. MIT said they would admit me and give me a scholarship.

JB: Wow.

FW: So, it wasn't much of a choice.

JB: No. That's fabulous. So . . . when you were in high school--did you take science or physics courses or anything that would have prepared you for engineering?

FW: I think I took all the normal high school courses. In fact, I took the same courses that almost everybody else took.

JB: Well, they [MIT] obviously saw something very special in you early on. I gather that your MIT experiences were very good since you've remained involved.

FW: I love the Institute. I felt that when I was there that there wasn't anything I couldn't find out from somebody on the faculty. It was a very stimulating place.

JB: It was a very good faculty even then.

FW: Very good.

JB: And you graduated [from MIT] in 1941. I did read [laughing] a little bit of biography before I started this--

FW: That's correct. I graduated in June of 1941 and prior to the time that—well, let's see, I'm getting ahead of myself—I graduated . . . [from high school in 1937] and took the train from California to Boston and entered the Institute.

JB: Now . . . [when you graduated from the Institute] the United States was getting involved in the war. Pearl Harbor, I guess, didn't happen until December. It was December of '41, I think.

FW: That's correct.

JB: But you—were you involved at all at any time in the war effort?

FW: After my freshman year I got interested in the work in high-speed photography that Dr. Edgerton [Harold E. "Doc" Edgerton, inventor of ultra-high-speed and stop-action photography] was doing and built some high-speed units that were capable of taking pictures in one one-hundred-thousandth of a second, and—I forget at the time—but I think I spent forty or fifty dollars on the equipment--

JB: Which was a lot at that time!

FW: And I figured I had to do something that summer to pay for it and I wrote a letter to Bob Gross, who was president of Lockheed, and to Donald Douglas, who was president of Douglas, and said I had an interesting piece of equipment and thought there might be an application in their industries. Douglas didn't answer the letter, but I got a letter from a guy by the name of Washburn who was the head of the photographic department at Lockheed. And he said come in and see him, which I did. And I later had an interview with Donald Douglas, who turned me over to his chief engineer, and they both suggested that I talk to a company by the name of Triplett and Barton who did the x-ray work for Lockheed and shared a darkroom with Joe Washburn and out of those conversations, they offered me a job. **[10:12]** And so they turned me loose in the Lockheed plant with my equipment and not much came of it, but my second summer at MIT I went to work as a technician for Triplett and Barton, who were at that time doing physical testing and chemical analysis and metallurgical work, primarily for the aircraft industry.

JB: And was that in connection with the war effort at that point?

FW: At the time, I went to the Lockheed plant, I had a Lockheed badge, although I wasn't a Lockheed employee, but my badge was #2500 and something. Before the war ended, the attendance at Lockheed was over 50,000.

JB: . . . . And so you were there to watch all that happening.

FW: Yes. After Dunkirk [May 25 – June 3, 1940], the British were in fairly sad shape, but they sent a purchasing commission to Lockheed and to Douglas to buy aircraft, and at that

time they eventually placed an order for 200 Lockheed Hudson bombers, which was the largest single order of aircraft that had ever been placed in the United States. And, of course, this was well after Pearl Harbor and after Dunkirk and later, I believe it was during my junior year at MIT, I remember listening to Roosevelt give his "Arsenal of Democracy" speech [December 29, 1940] in which he said, "We're going to build 50,000 airplanes a year," and I listened to that with my knowledge of the industry and I thought he was crazy. But by the end of the war, we were producing 50,000 airplanes a year. It was incredible.

JB: So, now, where was Triplett and Barton? This was in California, right?

FW: They were in the plant in Burbank. And our offices actually were in the Lockheed plant. Later on Triplett and Barton built their own offices outside of Lockheed.

JB: But it was in Burbank.

FW: Yeah. But I stayed with them, worked there every summer [while I was going to MIT] until I graduated in 1941 and then went to work full-time for them all during the war.

JB: So—that was aeronautic testing, which I guess was what eventually was the business of Wyle Laboratories that you started?

FW: There was beginning to be an interest, a need for a testing laboratory. In the aircraft business, most of the testing was done as flight testing. In other words, they would query a pilot to see how various systems worked. But with the advent of jet airplanes, where systems became highly more complex, the pilot could no longer tell whether certain valves or other equipment were malfunctioning and there became a need for testing these things in the laboratory beforehand, and so in 1949 I started Wyle Laboratories with five thousand dollars that I received as a gift from my father and that was the beginning of the company. **[15:18]**

JB: Now I did read that somewhere in between your starting Wyle Labs and your leaving Triplett and Barton, you spent six months running a furniture factory? What was that all about?

FW: That's true. When I left Triplett and Barton—I can't remember [when]—I believe in 1949-- and went to work running a factory in South Pasadena making wrought iron furniture. And I was supposed to make an investment in the company, but I didn't like the business and actually was fired, and that's when I went to my father and borrowed the money and started Wyle Laboratories.

JB: Well, that solves that mystery. So before we go ahead and talk more about Wyle Labs, let's go back because I believe it was about the time that you—well, let me ask you—let's talk

about Edith Robinson. All I know is that you were married in 1942, but when and where did you meet?

FW: I met Edith in November of '41 and we were engaged, I think, for five weeks and we were married in January of '42. In between the time that we were engaged and the time we were married, Pearl Harbor occurred.

JB: Yes, December 7--

FW: And I remember my boss at Triplett and Barton saying, "You're not going to get married, now are you?" And I said, "Yes, I am," and I did—we did.

JB: So—what was Edith like when you first met her?

FW: She was a very pleasant young lady, had just finished her college career. She had gone both to UCLA and to University of California in San Francisco and graduated—she was actually a couple of years older than I was. And we liked each other and decided to get married. It was about that simple.

JB: Well, from reading her interview—I should interject here, for anyone that's interested in knowing more about Edith—she was interviewed by Shan Emanuelli for the Archives of American Art in 1993—and she does say in that interview how much she was in love with Frank Wyle at that time. Now she had, up to that time, been involved in all of the arts, really, as far as I can tell. Her parents were both musicians. She decided not to become a musician herself, but she loved music very much. She turned her attention more to the visual arts, to painting--

FW: She was a painter. She was a painter, which was kind of a surprising thing that she got involved in The Egg and The Eye because painting is a rather solitary experience and The Egg and The Eye was just the opposite. It was a very public experience.

JB: Yes, she says in the [Archives of American Art] interview that until she started working on The Egg and The Eye, she really hadn't worked with a lot people before--

FW: That's correct.

JB: But she surprised herself at how much she liked it. But—so she was painting when you met **[20:02]** --

FW: Yes.

JB: Did she have career intentions in terms of painting at that time? Or—how did she describe it to you?

FW: Not really. She did it really more as an avocation, although after we were first married—and I have to point out that at the time we were married I was making $180 a month, which

was considered pretty good because most of my classmates in the graduating class were getting $145 a month. And after we were married, in order to augment our income, she took a job as a secretary to Jesse Lasky, Jr. [Lasky, Sr. produced the first full-length motion picture and the studio he founded became Paramount Pictures.]

JB: Oh yes.

FW: --who was doing a biography of his father. And the extra $50 that she earned was a big help in our budget. And Edith didn't want to have children—or rather, she did want to have children right away and I persuaded her to wait a year, and my son was born—or our son was born—a year and eight months after we were married. A year and nine months rather.

JB: That was Stephen.

FW: That was Stephen.

JB: So, Stephen was your first. Can you talk a little bit about that whole period when the kids were coming along and—actually, I understand from what Edith said in her interview, that she was--at the same time that she was having the children--that . . . her interest in painting became even more serious for a while.

FW: Well, in the very early years, our three kids were each born eighteen months apart, and we had three children in diapers at the same time.

JB: Did you have some help at home? Did you have a housekeeper or someone that could help with the children?

FW: Yes, we had a maid who helped somewhat. And—I can't remember what year—but my parents—we had been renting a house during the first years of our marriage and as the family grew, my parents helped us buy a much larger house, which in retrospect, was quite remarkable by today's standards. It was a five-bedroom, three-bath, living room, dining room, sewing room house.

JB: So there was plenty of room for the kids.

FW: There was plenty of room and that's where we spent the next few years.

JB: So—and I think—was that the house where she eventually had a studio built?

FW: No, no. That was after we—we actually sold that house—toward the—I guess it was at the end of the war and we moved in with my parents, who lived in Westwood, and we lived with them for three or four years until they built their home in Ojai.

JB: Oh yes, I heard that they had a home in Ojai. That was when you—sometime after that I guess—you met Beatrice Wood? **[24:58]**

FW: After they built their house, they were friends with Beatrice and Beatrice had asked me to take photographs of her work for—she was going to have an exhibition in New York—and we became good friends after I did that.

JB: What a remarkable woman [Beatrice Wood]. You were also involved with some of the artists that Edith studied with. I think you became good friends with Howard Warshaw and certainly with Rico LeBrun, I know.

FW: That's true. That's true. And after I had started the business, we had bought a home in Westwood and it was in that home that we built a studio for Edith.

JB: That's not the home where you are now, though. This was the previous one. Well, what did you think of all this [Edith's interest in art and painting]? It was, in a sense, a separate world for you, and yet, in terms of friendships, you made many friendships and personal friendships with many of the artists that Edith--

FW: That was really much the result of Edith's influence that our circle of friends included mostly artists. Because I was in a fairly technical business and Edith really had no interest in the people that I associated with in business.

JB: So, in the meantime, how was Wyle Laboratories doing? I guess after—you started [the Labs] in 1949 and your children were growing up then through the fifties--

FW: Well, the business was—and you have to correct for inflation because these numbers sound silly in today's market--

JB: Of course.

FW: --but if you multiply them by about twenty, they begin to make some sense.

JB: Yes.

FW: The first year we were in business we did $55,000 worth of business and we netted $25,000 and the second year we did $100,000 worth of business and netted about $50,000 and the company began to grow fairly rapidly after that, so by the time the company was ten years old, we had developed a net worth of about a million and a half dollars--

JB: And that was when a million was really a million [laughing]!

FW: [laughing] It made a difference!

JB: Yeah.

FW: And we took the company public with Kidder Peabody & Co. in 1961 and sold twenty-two percent of it for a million eight, which doubled our net worth and it began to really grow after that.

JB: Well, it—looking back on it—it probably seems easy now, in retrospect, but I'm sure there were some bumps along the road.

FW: Well, we pretty well grew rather rapidly. Finally, after I retired in—now let's see—I believe in 19—well, when I was 65, whenever that would be.

JB: . . . It would have been [1984].

FW: After I retired (I was still on the board of the company) two things occurred: one, my son helped to organize a management buy-out. **[30:05]** The Company had at that time had two divisions. It had the scientific services and systems group, which was an outgrowth of the original business and which was now, not only in the aircraft business, but in the missile and the nuclear business—and probably at that time that division employed about fifteen hundred people, of which over half were engineers or scientists of various kinds. Anyway, he organized a management buy-out and that division was sold. Meanwhile, the other part of the company was in the distribution business. We distributed electronic components, mostly semiconductors, which was a very fast-growing segment of the business, and we eventually sold the company. At the time we were doing about a billion and a half dollars and that division had grown and also employed about three thousand people—pardon me, closer to fifteen hundred people at that time. I'm happy to say that both companies are still in existence and combined, now, and while I don't have anything to do with them, they employ about six thousand people.

JB: Well, that must be very satisfying to look back on something that you started from scratch and built.

FW: That it is, yes.

JB: Yes. So, at some point, you bought a ranch!

FW: In 1959, we bought the first piece of property in North Fork, California, which consisted of 1,200 acres, . . . which we bought from an Indian by the name of Telford. [Later, Nancy Romero said the first purchase was 400 acres.]

JB: You were telling me at lunch how you made that connection. Why don't you tell us that story?

FW: Over the years I had a recurring back problem and I had a masseur that came to the house twice a week to give me a massage by the name of Basil Robinson. Basil worked with the masseur at [MGM] and his main claim to fame was that he gave Louis B. Mayer a massage every morning for 25 years at 7:30 in the morning. And he'd saved up enough money to start a real estate development in a little town called North Fork, California, which was a kind of a Seventh Day Adventist retreat.

JB: Oh, I didn't know that.

FW: I asked Basil one morning [to let me know] if he ever heard of any big pieces of property for sale up there that sounded interesting, and I'd be interested. So, he came in one day and said that Telford (the Indian) wanted to sell 1,200 acres. So, we flew up and it was a very interesting experience because the asking price was $40 an acre and I kept trying to find an acre that I didn't think was worth $40 and so we made an offer the same day and bought the 1,200 acres.

JB: Was Edith with you?

FW: Yes. After we purchased the property, the people in town said, "You must be crazy. Do you know that the people next door to you sold—or bought fifteen thousand acres for $8 an acre just five years before? [Laughing] Anyway, that was the beginning.

JB: [laughing] It's worth a lot more than $40 an acre now!

FW: One of the best things that I ever did!

JB: Yes. So that was 1959.

FW: After that, as other pieces of property that adjoined the original 1,200 acres came on the market, we bought them and the ranch today has about 4,000 acres.

JB: And you—did you start to build a house there right away? **[35:01]**

FW: We first bought a used trailer and put it on the property and began plans to build a house with a friend who was an architect by the name of John Rex of the firm of Honnold and Rex and we completed that house in February of 1962.

JB: John Rex was the architect.

FW: John Rex was the architect.

JB: And did you add on to it later or was it finished pretty much [in 1962]?

FW: What happened was very interesting. We—our three kids were grown and away in college mostly and they kept asking me, you know, are you going up to the ranch this weekend? And I said, "I don't know. Are you thinking about it?" And what I finally figured out was that what they were really saying is, "If you're not, we will."

JB: [laughing]

FW: And when I figured that out—we had a cabin there that was pretty dilapidated, but I gave it to my son. And so suddenly it became *his* ranch. And then--

JB: Was he out of college by this time?

FW: I think he was out of college at that time. And then my daughter Nancy found a house that was part of a PG & E installation. They had built dams and powerhouses down the San

Joaquin River in the 1920s and there were not people living in the mountains in those days so they built housing for the people that ran the powerhouses. . . . . And this was one of the houses that was built in the 20s, which they no longer needed, and so she bought the house **[background conversation intermittently audible from other room throughout remainder of interview]** for $1,000 and they cut it in half and brought it down to our property--

JB: Oh, they moved it! Oh, my goodness!

FW: They moved the two halves in a very frightening experience. They brought it down a hill, which—there's an 800' drop in less than a mile and—anyway, they managed to get the two halves on our property and set it on the foundation we had prepared, so that was her house. And later on, my other daughter, Diana, and her husband built a rather magnificent house on another piece of the property so that--

JB: Now that house was designed by Lorenzo Tedesco?

FW: It was designed by Lorenzo Tedesco, who was the husband of Tomi [Kuwayama] Haas.

JB: Yes, yes. She [Kuwayama] mentioned it to me [when I interviewed her for this project].

FW: A number of years later, my daughter Nancy's daughter, Rosie, came to me and said, "It's not fair. Our parents have houses and we don't."

JB: [laughing] You started something.

FW: [laughing] So the result of that was that three of our married granddaughters now have houses there.

JB: And several friends as well, I believe.

FW: And we had an extra piece of property that we sold 40-acre parcels to five friends. So, we've built up quite a community there.

JB: Yes, yes. And--

FW: And just to give you an example, last Easter we had 80 guests.

JB: Oh my.

FW: Everybody comes up for Easter with their kids and their friends. Everybody has house guests. And we had 35 egg-hunters, average age maybe five.

JB: That is really wonderful. I can understand why you say that was the best thing--

FW: Well, it's been very important to the family because our family has now grown to where we have eight grandchildren and we have thirteen great-grandchildren.

JB: And obviously your children fell in love with it early—early on **[40:06]** and wanted to be a part of it.

FW: Well we took a very interesting attitude when we bought the property. We said, "You know, this ranch is for Edith and I to enjoy and, you know, if you guys want to come up, be happy to have you, and if you don't, that's fine too." And one of the more interesting things was that we had insisted that our three kids go east to college and the rather surprising thing occurred. My son spent four years in Pittsburgh at Carnegie Mellon and my daughter was at Bard—one daughter at Bard—and the other daughter at Sarah Lawrence. And while they were east, they all discovered California.

JB: [laughing] Absence makes the heart grow fonder!

FW: [laughing] So that was a dividend.

JB: Well, a lot of people were discovering California about that time. There was really a sea-change.

FW: Well, that's true. That's true.

JB: Were you always interested in running cattle on the ranch? When did that start?

FW: Well, when you have a large piece of property--the mountain property is not good for ordinary farming and a cow is the best invention that we have for creating, turning grass into a useful product, so it's a natural thing that traditionally they ran cattle on the property and we just continued that tradition.

JB: But it's a pretty serious business at this point, I understand, or at least it was. I read a couple of articles from a while back that talked about it.

FW: It's an interesting business, which—not necessarily a profitable business, but certainly an interesting one.

JB: You have a full-time manager--

FW: And we are producing now about two hundred and five calves a year.

JB: That's pretty big.

**[Break in recording.]**

FW: [Back in the sixties, Edith became aware that in L.A. there was virtually no] . . . commercial outlet for fine crafts and very little outlet for folk art. And she conceived the idea of having a gallery which would give shows to craftsmen and prepare catalogs of their work, and so it became one of the first venues where craftsmen could actually sell their work and folk art naturally fitted into that, and she felt that folk art was disappearing and she put together—she and some friends--

JB: Bette Chase was involved--

FW: --including Bette Chase and Ruth Greenberg and—I can't remember all the names of the people that were interested in this—and the women put together a brochure, which described what they wanted to do and there was a building on Wilshire Boulevard across from the Page Museum which had been the home of Martha Schroeder Cakes and there was also a dance studio in the building [Madame Oleska's Theater of Arts].

JB: Madame Oleska! I have a note! [Laughing]

FW: Madame Oleska.

JB: She presented some problems for you, I guess.

FW: [laughing] We rented the building and--

JB: Well, it was part of the building that you rented to begin with, right?

FW: That's right. We rented the--

JB: Can you describe exactly—I have a hard time picturing exactly what part of it that you had at the beginning. Can you describe that?

FW: We rented the—the building in itself was, I think, a ten thousand square foot building. We rented the downstairs floor and the balcony [the mezzanine].

JB: Now—was it the whole downstairs floor on both sides? Did that staircase exist at the beginning, that central staircase? **[45:06]**

FW: Yes.

JB: And you had both sides plus the mezzanine.

FW: Plus, the mezzanine.

JB: So the part that Mme. Oleska—she was--

FW: She was on the third--

JB: She was on the third floor—OK. That's clear. [Edith Wyle, in her 1993 interview for the Archives of American Art (p. 51) states that "It was occupied at the time by a Madame Oleska. . . . She had the west side of the building, which included a mezzanine, and the entire top floor, which was much bigger than half the building. It was three-quarters of the building."]

FW: And dance studios are somewhat noisy--

JB: Oh, I bet.

FW: Which was a continual problem. And so that eventually a few years after that Edith and I bought the building and, originally, she had a group of people that wanted to support her idea and they raised—I think . . . the original amount was about $60,000 and they sold stock.

JB: So they were really shareholders.

FW: They were shareholders.

JB: Do you remember approximately how much each share was? I mean, was there--

FW: I don't remember, but the total was about $60,000, and I think Mayer Greenberg and I were among the biggest shareholders. And after operating that way for a few years—the Egg and The Eye lost money and we began to feel kind of responsible to the shareholders, so that we ended up buying out [those who wished it].

JB: Well, it was intended to be a commercial gallery—or a retail gallery—and of course the legend is that when it turned into a museum it didn't really change that much because you weren't making very much money anyhow. But that's the legend. Is it true that it was not a profitable business? It was certainly successful in every other way.

FW: It was successful in every way except financially. And over the years, Edith and I eventually became the main supporters, although--well, we have to go back to a key meeting that we had. . . . Edith had decided that folk art and crafts—well, mostly folk art—was disappearing and that we really ought to be a museum and not a commercial business. And we had a meeting in which—I can't remember all the people who were there—Peter Bing was there and Joan Palevsky and I think Bernard Kester, perhaps, was there, although I'm not certain about that. And--

JB: Were these people who had been shareholders—or were they other--

FW: No. None of them were shareholders. And Edith talked about her idea of wanting to make a museum and the Bings said, you know, "Do you have any idea of what you're getting into?" And Joan Palevsky said, "I'll put up $50,000."

JB: Wow.

FW: And that was kind of the end of the meeting, so with her help we, I believe, we began to rebuild it into a museum.

JB: Now—in the interview with Edith—the Archives of American Art interview—I read something that surprised me because I haven't found any documentation for it—she said that there was actually a board for The Egg and The Eye Gallery.

FW: Yes.

JB: Now what was she referring to? Was that the board of The Egg and The Eye Association?

FW: I think so. It must have been.

JB: And do you think these people that you just mentioned were some of those--

FW: No, no. These were community leaders--

JB: Who might be interested in contributing [to a museum].

FW: Yeah. And--

JB: Yes, because in the section **[50:00]** of the interview where she talks about the board of The Egg and The Eye, she does mention that they [the board] were responsible in part for Bette Chase leaving at that point—that—apparently this was just a few years after the start of The Egg and The Eye Gallery and--

FW: It may have been. I don't remember.

JB: So—you and Edith in the meantime were doing quite a bit of traveling. And I suppose that helped to develop her interest in folk art also.

FW: Well, she by then was firmly committed to the concept of the museum world and we used to attend the World Craft Council meetings wherever they occurred.

JB: Oh yes.

FW: I remember--

JB: So you went with her on a lot of those trips--

FW: Yes, I went with her on all of them. I think we went—we had one meeting in—can't remember—one in Peru, one in Tokyo--or in Japan--

JB: In Kyoto, I think maybe.

FW: One in Kyoto, yeah.

JB: Yes, we have all of those--the programs--for those in the archives.

FW: Yeah.

JB: There were quite a few. So she had become pretty active with that group too.

FW: And she was always active with the New York group.

JB: Yes. The American Craft Council. Now there were a lot of ideas that were kind of percolating to the surface at that time, and certainly, I think people that knew about The Egg and The Eye [Gallery] realized, at least in terms of the West Coast, that The Egg and The Eye was one of the leaders of this idea that craft and folk art could be presented as art!

FW: Yes, that was true. . . .

**[Recording interrupted]**

JB: Go ahead.

FW: In 1976, Mort Winston joined the board and said he was happy to be a trustee, but he wanted to be chairman.

JB: Oh-h-h. And you were chairman at that point.

FW: I think so. And I was delighted [laughing].

JB: [laughing] That's good!

FW: So Mort became chairman for quite a number of years [1976 – 1987], and helped contribute to the growth, and it was during that time that Edith retired as the program director and gave way to Patrick Ela.

JB: Right. Well, let's—before we get into the museum, per se, I'd like to just talk a little bit more about the Gallery. And about some of the individuals that were associated with it. I know that Sam Maloof was someone who became involved early on. And—can you tell me when you met Sam—how you met Sam and got interested—I think he ended up building some furniture for your ranch house—isn't that right?

FW: We met Sam—Edith had talked about him. I never knew him. And we went to [the L.A.] County Fair in Pomona. And Sam had some furniture on exhibit and I met him for the first time and was very much attracted to him and we were just at that time **[55:00]** either beginning or finishing our house at the ranch and we ordered furniture from Sam: a dining room table with two benches and a round table and some side chairs and a rocking chair, I think. And we became friends and after—at some later date, I bought furniture from Sam for my office.

JB: Which we're sitting on!

FW: Which we're sitting on today.

JB: Beautiful.

FW: So, we've been friends for many, many years. And Sam eventually became a trustee of the museum and for how long I can't remember, but--

JB: For quite a long time, I believe, at least through the end of 1997. I don't know if he has been on the board since the museum reopened, but--

FW: I can't remember, but eventually he got interested in his own museum and so his attention was directed in that direction.

JB: He, I think, was active with the American Craft Council also—I don't know if he introduced Edith to people at the American Craft Council, but it was, I think, around the time that she first became interested in that, that she got to know Sam. Do you remember it differently?

FW: I think we knew Sam before that--

JB: Now I'd like to ask you what you remember about the opening of The Egg and The Eye Gallery. This will take you back. In November 1965.

FW: Yes--

JB: You had gathered all those shareholders together and put some of them to work, I guess, too.

FW: I think our—Edith and I had met a couple who lived in Toronto—and were interested in Eskimo sculpture.

JB: Oh yes.

FW: And they had a friend who was—in fact I think they were both on the Canadian Art Council—and so we called them and said, "Could you put together a show of Eskimo sculpture for the opening of the museum gallery?" And they said they could.

JB: So that was the first show. ["Kenojoak, Eskimo Sculpture" was one of three exhibitions that were the opening shows (November 1, 1965 – January 9, 1966) at The Egg and The Eye Gallery.]

FW: That was the first show. And I'll never forget that the work was held up in customs because—for some obscure reason—and we went around them and found out that there was a new regulation that allowed for the import of Eskimo sculpture which the Los Angeles customs people didn't know anything about. And we finally got the show broken loose so that it could be mounted in the museum [i.e., the Gallery] for the opening.

JB: Now part of the concept—I think from the beginning—was that a restaurant would be included.

FW: Yes. The original idea included a restaurant . . . [and] the women that really organized it worked for a long time **[1:00:00]** to design the, I think, 34 different omelettes that were served. And of course, the name, "The Egg and The Eye," came from an original book called *The Egg and I*, [a humorous best-selling autobiography by Betty MacDonald published in 1945] and we added the word "The," and "The Eye" was the Gallery, and, of course, "The Egg" was the omelette restaurant.

JB: That book is in the archives also [laughing].

FW: [laughs]

JB: Now Edith tells the story that you were just at home, I guess in your bedroom on a Sunday morning or something, when the name came to both of you. Is that--

FW: Could be. My memory--

JB: That's one of the legends.

FW: I believe her version.

JB: Well, it was a fantastic name. And I know that many, many people that I talk to about the Craft and Folk Art Museum will still--

FW: Well there's hardly a day comes by that someone doesn't come in and say, . . . "My mother brought me here when I was twelve years old. We had omelettes and saw the shows."

JB: Yeah, or "I took my fiancé there." It was considered a most romantic and exciting place.

FW: Uh-huh.

JB: So "The Egg" was the omelette restaurant—and you found a wonderful—I never met her, but Rodessa—don't remember her last name--

FW: Moore. Rodessa Moore.

JB: --was the chef. And she had kind of a little stage, almost, where she prepared the omelets.

FW: Well, one of the popular things that the museum [i.e., the Gallery] did is Rodessa conducted omelette classes in which they would get thirty people together and she would instruct them on making an omelette and then each person would make their own omelette and have lunch, and this became extremely popular, and those classes went on—I don't know how long—but she probably gave more than 20 of them and they were very, very popular.

JB: And I was just realizing, the designer of the interior of the gallery—wasn't his name Guy Moore?

FW: Guy Moore.

JB: He wasn't related to Rodessa?

FW: No, not at all. Guy Moore was an independent designer.

JB: He made that wonderful wall with the ceramic--

FW: The wall was made by an artist in Fresno.

JB: Oh.

FW: I can't recall his name.

JB: . . . Yes, those [hand-fired and glazed bricks that made up the mezzanine wall overlooking the galleries] were beautiful. In fact, when it finally was ripped out, we ended up with a piece of that. I'm very glad to have that. So it was The Egg for the restaurant and The Eye, of course, was the gallery. And there were shows of individual artists there occasionally.

FW: Yes, in fact, many of the today more famous designers, artists were shown—people like, oh the glass people—Chihuly and all of those—Muriel Chastanet, who is a jeweler--

JB: Laura Andreson--

FW: Laura Andreson—many, many people who were fine artists had their first shows at The Egg and The Eye.

JB: People who are quite famous and whose works [now] sell for astronomic amounts of money. The Egg and The Eye, I think, really, they weren't alone, but they were absolutely leaders in creating this market, really, for fine crafts and--

FW: Yes--

JB: For making people see that they could be--

FW: I think one of the few people that showed crafts and fine art was Stanley Marcus. **[1:05:04]**

JB: Oh yes.

FW: He used to have--

JB: Neiman Marcus.

FW: --shows in Neiman Marcus occasionally. And we used to run into him all over the world. Very interesting, interesting man. We became very good friends.

JB: I remember Edith mentioning him. Of course, in Japan there have been exhibitions in department stores, I guess, for a long time.

FW: That's true.

JB: But Neiman Marcus was one of the first in the U.S.

FW: True.

JB: I wonder—at the time Edith had a lot of friends who were artists or simply admirers and collectors of art during this time when The Egg and The Eye was being developed and had opened, but was struggling. Who were some of the people that you relied on, I guess for financial advice or legal advice or—did you have some people who were sort of "in your corner," so to speak?

FW: Well, of course, I used most of the advisers that I use in business.

JB: And some of those people became quite involved too with the gallery.

FW: I'm a blank.

JB: OK. So gradually the idea for making this—what was supposed to have been a commercial gallery into something that was more what it truly was, which was a nonprofit enterprise—became more and more uppermost. And it was really natural because in addition to showing these objects, Edith and her fellow shareholders at the gallery were always interested in educational matters. There were always—isn't this true?--lectures and even a film series—a film series which actually didn't have much to do with craft and folk art, but it had a lot to do with fine filmmaking. [Douglas Edwards ran a series called Encounter Cinema.] So, all of these matters began to look like—look more like a museum than—certainly than a for-profit gallery. I guess one thing I'd like to go back to is when you decided to buy the building and you still had Mme. Oleska to deal with. I understand that she actually took you to court—or took the gallery to court.

FW: I have no recollection.

JB: Really? Because Edith said she spent quite a few days downtown, I guess, defending the gallery against some pretty--

FW: I don't remember. All I recall is that when her lease was up, we never renewed it.

JB: Oh, she actually was leasing from you! Cause I thought--

FW: She was leasing from—the building was owned by a guy by the name of Maymie [sp?], and she was leasing from them. The same people we leased from.

JB: But then you were able to buy it—buy the building.

FW: We bought the building.

JB: Yeah. So, Mme. Oleska was—in the early stages—she was leasing it from you? Or she just backed out at that point.

FW: I don't recall.

JB: John Browse and . . . Alan Donovan, arrived at the gallery in 1971. Do you remember that? **[1:10:04]**

FW: Yes, yes. I think we met John first. We met Alan on a trip to Nairobi. John was from Nairobi.

JB: Well, they did come [to L.A.] together. I just found this out myself—because I wasn't around during The Egg and The Eye Gallery days--but when I interviewed John a few weeks

ago, he told me about arriving at The Egg and The Eye Gallery. The two of them had done a cross-country tour. They'd had a big exhibition of African art, mostly from Kenya, in New York and then in Chicago—and I guess it was very popular because this was at a time in the early seventies when African Americans were just beginning to develop a—you know—some pride in being Black. So, they were involved in this Black Expo in Chicago. Then they went to Denver. They had called ahead so presumably Edith knew that they were coming. But apparently the people who were actually in the gallery (I think it was a Sunday when they arrived) and they either didn't know or didn't remember that John and Alan were arriving with all of their [objects for the exhibition] . . . They were pulling a little trailer with all of their objects. So, they had an uncertain welcome when they first arrived [laughing].

FW: [laughing]

JB: Well, apparently, they sort of pushed themselves in and started to get unpacked and set up and Edith did show up the next day and—but John ended up playing a pretty big role in the gallery.

FW: He became manager of the shop.

JB: Yes.

FW: For quite a number of years.

JB: Yes. And then a second time after the museum [i.e., the gallery] became a museum. He was invited back when Ann Robbins [resigned].

FW: Could be. I'm a little hazy on that.

JB: Are there any other particular shows or events that you remember from the—just from the gallery, not from the museum—cause I'd like to talk about the museum in our next session.

FW: One show that I remember in particular is—we went to Santa Fe and met a—actually he was from Boston, but became a dealer in both Hopi and Santo Domingo Indian silver jewelry and Edith wanted to put on a show and then, at that time, the leading Hopi artist was Jimmy Cashone [sp?], I think. And we purchased quite a number of very fine Indian Hopi and other artifacts and had a show there [at the Gallery].

JB: And at that time, Indian art really was only being shown at the natural history museum, so that was kind of another first.

FW: Well, we were the first ones certainly with the Eskimo art and with lots of the Pueblo art. **[1:15:05]**

JB: And I think Guatemalan textiles--

FW: We had shows from Guatemala. We had shows from--

JB: Well, Japan, I suppose--

FW: Where is Lake Titicaca? . . . . We had a show from there.

JB: Bolivia.

FW: Actually, I think we published a book--

JB: Well, the Craft and Folk Art Museum did—yes, they had an excellent--actually there was a couple who—Adelson—Laurie Adelson and Bruce Takami, I think—[who] had spent a lot of time there. And that was a beautiful exhibition and a beautiful catalog. But you may have had--

FW: We had shows from India.

JB: Pratapaditya Pal—Pratap Pal got involved with the gallery, I believe, and his wife.

FW: He was on the board for a short time.

JB: Yes, yeah. I know he was very pleased because he was not—although I guess he had a personal folk art collection. He was not able to collect folk art for LACMA, which was where he was the curator, so he was very pleased . . . .

**[Recording interrupted.]**

JB: .. . . Well, I think that next time we'll talk about . . . the beginnings of the museum as a museum. I'm sure it [the history of the gallery and the history of the museum] kind of blends and blurs together in retrospect.

FW: Well, as long as you know the questions, I probably can--

JB: [laughing]

FW: I know all the things I've always known but my retrieval system is—it's in there, but boy it's tough!

JB: I have the same problem. I really have to write everything down. But I've enjoyed very much going over all of this history with you—and especially The Egg and The Eye Gallery history because I wasn't there, unlike the museum history, where I played a small part. So thank you, Frank, and we'll start this up again next week.

**[End of Session 1: 1:18:04]**

## CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
## INTERVIEW OF FRANK S. WYLE

**Session 2 (1:27:59), Monday, June 30, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti.**

JB: OK. Today is Monday, June 30, 2008, and I'm here again with Frank Wyle in his office—his beautiful office—in Marina del Rey. At our first session, we talked about Frank's personal history and his involvement with the founding of The Egg and The Eye Gallery and its first years and today I want to focus on the transformation of The Egg and The Eye Gallery into the Craft and Folk Art Museum. But before we get started with that, I thought that we ought to acknowledge . . . [that] Frank has [just experienced] the passing of a very dear companion—and someone who was involved with The Egg and The Eye Gallery at the very beginning—Bette Chase—and I thought I'd ask [you], Frank, if you'd like to say anything about Bette.

FW: I first met Bette Chase in the 1950s. We had a close friend, an artist by the name of Rico Lebrun, and Bette's husband, Albert, was a physician that treated Rico and later became a physician for my kids. Bette had excellent taste and was among the founders of The Egg and The Eye Gallery and worked there for a couple of years. Her husband Albert was considerably older than she was and he eventually died at the age of 92, I believe in 1994 or 1995. After my wife of 57 years died in 1999, Bette and I got together, and we lived together for approximately eight years. She eventually died on June 2 or 3 and I miss her sorely.

JB: Well, I was very sorry to hear about that, and I just thought we ought to acknowledge that before we continue. That was a long relationship and I know she always felt very close to The Egg and The Eye Gallery and the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

So, Frank, I thought, maybe it would be a good idea to just kind of summarize your involvement with the Craft and Folk Art Museum. We're going to focus on the museum this time and according to my calculations, it's been 34 years [since you first served as chairman of the CAFAM board], starting with sometime in November '75. Of course, you were there at the very beginning with the transition from The Egg and The Eye Gallery and Cultural Center into what became the museum, and the first meeting of [the board of] that organization [the Craft and Folk Art Museum] was in June of [1975], but it wasn't until November that you actually took on the role of [museum board] chairman. There's a little bit of a question—I guess it's more of a legal nature—in regard to who was the first chairman. According to the minutes of that first meeting, Bernard Kester was elected the first chairman, but [laughing] he denies it. I think that what he means is [that although] he

was very much involved, . . . [his brief chairmanship] was more of a legal matter to transition to the [actual operating board, which, starting in November, was led by you].

FW: First of all, I'd like to comment about a meeting that we had in Edith's office **[05:02]** where we talked about converting The Egg and The Eye to a nonprofit public museum, and as I recall Peter Bing was there, Joan Palevsky was there, and I don't remember who the other people were. And we talked about it and Peter . . . said, you know, you don't know what you're getting into. You'll have big problems. And Joan said, "If you start a museum, I'll contribute $50,000," which she did, and with that as a start, we decided to become a public museum. But Edith had to go to Washington and convince the people there that it qualified as a museum, which she was able to do. And I believe it became a public museum in 1974 or '75.

JB: There is a document from the IRS actually from 1973—and that is, I know, when you celebrate officially the anniversary of the museum. However, as you well know, it took a lot of work to get from there to having the full board, and to hiring staff, and so on. So it was in . . . [August 1975] that the first exhibitions that were publicized as Craft and Folk Art Museum exhibitions were actually put on. And it was about the same time that you were elected chairman of the board. And I think probably because you were still involved at that time very much with Wyle Laboratories--

FW: That's correct.

JB: --you were not very eager to take that on. And so just nine months later, in September of '76, Mort Winston was elected chair; you remained on the board of course. He served as chair for 11 years until the end of 1987, when you again took it over. And you served as chair during some very difficult but exciting times—eight years all together during which the museum expanded dramatically, and a major renovation took place. And of course, we're going to talk about all that. But I just wanted to summarize: in October of 1995, you were very happy, I think, to turn over the reins to Bud Knapp, but just eight months later he resigned, and again you took on the chairmanship in August of '96. And today, 12 years later, you're still chairman of the board. So, it's been a long, fascinating, interesting, exciting, difficult journey. I wondered—just to start out with—I said that you were still chairman of the Wyle Labs board in 1975. You really didn't want to take on the chairmanship of the CAFAM board at that time [in 1976], did you?

FW: Not really. No, I didn't need it. We first met Mort Winston through, I think, Ruth Bowman. And invited him to serve on the board of the museum, and he said he would serve on the board if he was chairman. And I was absolutely delighted [laughing] and he became Chairman and he was a good chairman during this period.

JB: He was chairman when I first started working there in 1976 and I believe that he brought some people from Tosco. **[10:00]** I guess they served as volunteers but [had] very important positions: Mark Gallon, who served really as the first development person for the Craft and Folk Art Museum. He really—at least this is my recollection--he was the one that really started having, you know, the annual fundraisers, and doing the grant writing--

FW: That's right. Yes, he was very, very good and organized the first dinner, which we raised money at, and subsequent dinners, and he also helped organize the group from the museum that traveled.

JB: Oh, the Associates.

FW: The Associates. And he would go along as kind of the mentor of the Associates.

JB: Yes, they were a wonderful organization. We have most of the records of the Associates in the CAFAM archives, and the trips you took were wonderful. You and Edith went on a lot of those, didn't you?

FW: I think we went on almost all of them, yes. And we went to Indian country up in the northwest, visiting various museums. One of the basic tenets of those trips that was Mark's idea was that we would get a local person to kind of sponsor the local area and we would visit museums and private collections and his kind of gimmick was that he would say to a museum director, "Would you give a luncheon for our visiting group?" And, of course, museums don't have budgets for that, but he offered that we would pay for it and they were catered. So that the museum directors were always delighted to host the luncheon and take us through the museums—as were private collectors. We often had dinners. I remember in the northwest meeting having one of the local Indians cook salmon over an open fire and it was marvelous.

JB: And those were usually an extended weekend, like three or four, I guess sometimes five days, but--

FW: Yes, that's correct.

JB: That way—they were not too demanding of the Associates' time.

FW: We had one trip through the South, through all of the antebellum cities. We had another trip to Guadalajara, which, as I recall, my daughter Nancy and Frank Romero organized. We had another trip to New York, where we visited private homes and private collections and various museums. And I really can't recall all the trips that we took.

JB: Well, it looks like—I tried to draw up a list of them from the documentation that I have. It looks like you went on at least two a year, and sometimes, I think maybe a third one.

When I was interviewing Tomi Kuwayama, she was especially ebullient about those trips, and I guess she helped to plan some of them. She mentioned in particular one in Philadelphia that your daughter, Diana, helped to organize, that was especially lavish I guess.

FW: Yes, that was a great trip and we visited—I can't remember the name of the museum that had all of the Renoir paintings.

JB: Oh, the--yes, it's now—the collection [the Barnes Collection]—is now being moved. . . . Yes, that was unusual, they didn't accept that many visitors to that museum.

FW: That's right.

JB: And--

FW: I can remember one wall in that museum with, like, 40 Renoir paintings on it. It was amazing.

JB: Yes, . . . [Dr. Albert C. Barnes] was very well respected, although a little eccentric [in his museum practices] in comparison to the way other museums-- [**15:07]**

FW: Yes, at one time early on he had offered the collection to the museum of art in Philadelphia and was turned down and after that he developed his own museum with very strict rules.

JB: Well, and it was in a residential area, so the residents also had rules about just how many buses or whatever could visit. I believe they're going to keep the house—the original house—as a research center, but the collection is going to be in a new facility in Philadelphia itself. And there was some really lavish private dinner party on that same trip—a private collector.

FW: Yes, he was a collector, as I recall, of dishware. . . . We were served with dishes made by many, many artists.

JB: A lot of contemporary work.

FW: Yes, yes.

JB: Another person besides Mark that came from Tosco was Ron Katsky.

FW: Ron was an attorney, a very valuable trustee at the time.

JB: I think he was actually the counsel for—the lawyer—for the board, wasn't he? For a while.

FW: I think so, yes.

JB: I know he gave a lot of legal advice. The staff used him sometimes too. And I think he was also a treasurer of the board for a while. So—Mark, especially, as we said, was a real force in expanding the support for the museum, not only financially, but in terms of

membership. I think he helped to organize some telethons for membership. I remember that he was quite impressed with the feasibility study that Ruth Bowman and I did for the library. And it was really due to him that that feasibility study was sent "as is" to the Irvine Foundation and they funded it several—actually several times over--

FW: Over a period of years. Yes, that's correct.

JB: . . . . But it was Mark that really got that going. You had to—when you were chairman, finally, had to deal with committees, and of course I'm sure you were used to dealing with committees of a corporate nature, but [laughing] at the museum it was a little bit different. I wonder sometimes-- some committees were [probably] more productive than others?

FW: It was always difficult to find chairmen of committees who would really work—and call their meetings and produce things. The most successful committees were perhaps the advisory committee on shows that the museum had.

JB: Oh yes, the program--

FW: The program committee, yes. We never really had a proper fundraising committee, although I'm a little hazy on that now.

JB: Well, it varied, I think. It probably was more successful, like when you had the capital campaign--

FW: That's true.

JB: --and people could really visualize the new museum. And then, of course, at some point--I think it was around the time of the start of that capital campaign--you did have an actual paid development officer. . . . Judith Teitleman was the first one that really kind of got things going. **[20:05]**

FW: Yes, we had a vision of a project in which we would build a high-rise building which would be partly condominiums, but would have 50,000 square feet of museum as part of the structure, and we worked with a developer by the name of Wayne Ratkovich to accomplish this, and we proceeded—I'm trying to think of the name of the company that did the design. [Richard Weinstein of Urban Innovations Group was the architect.]

JB: Well, let's see, Gensler was the engineering . . .

FW: Yeah, well, at that time, I had purchased the cottage [at 731 S. Curson] behind the museum, which we later gave to the museum and we had made a deal with the people that owned the corner building [at 5800 Wilshire Blvd.] to become part of the construction.

JB: Yes, now that was not Ventress at first. That was someone else--

FW: No—that was Ventress.

JB: Oh, I thought they came along and . . . .

FW: Ventress owned the building jointly with Lena Longo—of Toyota fame. She was the widow of Mr. Longo. And for some time we had rented their building to be part of the museum and we convinced them to become a partner in this effort, which they agreed to do because the footprint of the building we envisioned included the corner property [at 5800 Wilshire], included the courtyard between us, and included the [original] museum building [at 5814 Wilshire] itself.

JB: And you had a duplex [at 725/727 S. Curson, also known as the "Black Property"] that you owned also in between the cottage and the corner building.

FW: No we never owned the duplex.

JB: Oh, you didn't own that?

FW: We didn't own the duplex. Later Ventress purchased it.

JB: Oh.

FW: --but it was not part of the footprint that we envisioned.

JB: Oh. [CAFAM staff occupied the duplex from June 30, 1989 until the staff offices were moved to the 5th floor of the May Company June 28, 1990.]

FW: Also, the footprint of the building included the parking lot that was behind the corner building, and it included vacation of the alley between us.

JB: Yes, that was a wonderful parking lot.

FW: And that proceeded until we attempted to fund the building and at that time there was a real estate recession and we couldn't get it funded—which was a great disappointment to everybody.

JB: It was really the Ratkovich Corporation that was going after the funding for the development as a whole.

FW: That's correct. They were the general contractor.

JB: Yes, that was a great disappointment. Although, the more modest plan that you came up with with Hodgetts + Fung was, in some ways, more--

FW: Well after we couldn't get the building funded, we had a further problem that our [original] museum building itself didn't meet the earthquake codes. It was built in the twenties, and we erroneously thought it was going to cost a lot of money to redo that and at that time we moved out of the building into temporary quarters in the May Company property.

JB: Yes, that really happened before the failure of the Ratkovich development. **[25:05]** When we moved to the May Company, we still thought that the Ratkovich development was going to continue.

FW: That's probably true, yeah. When the Ratkovich project fell through, we revisited what we had to do to meet earthquake requirements and decided to rebuild the building and we then hired the architects Hodgetts + Fung and had raised money for this project. Among the donors [for the renovation] were--

JB: Ahmanson, I think, was one of the big ones.

FW: Ahmanson was in the original--

JB: Oh, [you mean] for the Hodgetts + Fung [renovation]--

FW: The soap company.

JB: Oh—Neutrogena—Lloyd Cotsen.

FW: Lloyd Cotsen gave us a million dollars, which paid for most of the rebuilding of the museum building and Hodgetts + Fung were the architects, and they did quite a credible job and--

JB: Yes, now the thing that I'm confused about is at what point did we have to start paying the rent . . . on the 5800 building—I suppose that was when we had to leave the May Company when they unexpectedly closed [at the end of 1992].

FW: Yes.

JB: And we were able to then move into the 5800, which was the corner building. And at that time, the assumption was—at least that I knew about—that that building was going to be purchased. There was something called a "lease-purchase arrangement."

FW: Well, we had had an agreement with them to become part of the overall project for the high-rise building. When that fell through was when we leased the building and began to use it as part of the museum.

JB: Yes, that building really was very practical and very useful.

FW: That's right and we had redeveloped part of that building to build galleries downstairs and to build offices upstairs and that's where your office was for many years--

JB: Yes, that's where the library was [from 1993 through 1997] and that space was used also for meetings as well as for the library and all of the [museum staff] offices were there. So the final product that was reopened in 1995--which of course included that wonderful parking lot out in back--was a rather fabulous thing. We, I think--for the first time--the staff felt like we really had enough space to accomplish what we needed to accomplish.

Well, I'd like to go back—well, quite a ways, actually, to the beginning of the museum [in the mid-seventies]. You mentioned Ruth Bowman. I was interested, when I interviewed Ruth Bowman, to find out that she didn't meet the two of you at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, or in Los Angeles even, but at MIT. She had met you originally at--

FW: That's right.

JB: --a committee meeting at MIT.

FW: Yes, yes.

JB: And then her husband, Wally [Wallace Bowman], at that time, ended up going to L.A.

FW: He became part of Tosco Corporation and worked for Mort Winston.

JB: And Ruth went to work for LACMA in their Education Department. I think she was actually head of the Education Department for a while and she had a young assistant, **[30:02]** who had just finished his museum and master's training in business [administration—MBA from UCLA].

FW: That was Patrick Ela.

JB: And that was Patrick Ela. And so you were looking—this was in 1975—you were looking for someone who could work with Edith, I guess, at the museum, with Edith serving as the Artistic Director—the Program Director—and--

FW: That's right. And Patrick, in effect, became her assistant. [Patrick Ela was hired as Administrative Director.]

JB: Do you remember when you first met Patrick?

FW: Yes, but I don't remember the details.

JB: Well--was it at a board meeting or did you meet informally or--?

FW: We were introduced by Ruth Bowman and liked him and hired him.

JB: Well, Patrick--

FW: He subsequently spent, I think, 18 years--

JB: Actually, I think it was something like 21 years all together. And we—he oversaw a great many changes to the museum and I think it was very exciting to him [as well as] everybody else that, you know, he was in on the ground floor, so to speak.

FW: Well, it was during Mort Winston's term as chairman that he pushed for Patrick to become the [Executive] director of the museum and eventually Edith retired from that spot and we held a big retirement party.

JB: But you and Edith and Patrick really became very close.

FW: That's true.

JB: And really worked in tandem for all of that time. Patrick, of course, as the Execu—well, first as the Administrative Director, with Edith, and then as Executive Director after she retired [in 1984]. He attended all the board meetings and was responsible for budgetary matters. Just talk a little bit about how that evolved over time.

FW: Well, as he took over, I never was too much involved in the actual operation of the museum. I was more involved on the financial end. So that between Patrick and Edith, they really ran the museum, and I helped with the funding.

JB: I remember Edith saying one time that the way it was supposed to go was Edith was the accelerator and Patrick was the brake [laughing].

FW: [laughing] Well, Edith had more ideas than anybody could accomplish!

JB: She certainly did. It was quite amazing.

FW: And she put on wonderful shows and directed the museum in very interesting directions. Of course, we haven't talked yet about the Mask Festival.

JB: No—I was just going to ask you about the Mask Festival.

FW: Well, the members of the L.A. County [Parks and Recreation Department] came to Edith and said we have, I think, something like 22 recreation centers in the county and isn't there something we can do together. So Edith came up with the idea of having a mask festival with a parade down Wilshire Boulevard and utilizing all of the recreation centers with help from the museum to encourage kids to make masks and to enter the parade. **[35:00]**

JB: Now, I'd like to know if you know how the idea for the mask as a central focus—how did that idea come to be?

FW: I'm sure it came from Edith. I don't remember--

JB: You don't remember going to any similar events or--

FW: No. And it started as a one-day affair in the park—with the parade. I'll never forget--

JB: Well, the first year [in 1976] I think it was only the parade except for some things that went on on the sidewalk out in front.

FW: The—I remember the first parade was led by a group of motorcycle policemen. And we had an orchestra--

JB: Oh, the Gamelan Orchestra from CalArts--

FW: A gamelan orchestra from Indonesia that played on the sidewalk. And the police came and said, “You can’t occupy the sidewalk during this event.” And we had a big hullabaloo about that. And I don’t know how it was finally resolved, but it was crazy [laughing].

JB: [laughing] I think they finally figured out that it wasn’t—you know—that it was OK. But I wanted to mention something else that happened [at the same time as the mask parade . . . .] Edith had curated an exhibition called “Devils, Demons, and Dragons.” It was a folk art show focusing on devils and dragons. And I read somewhere that you helped—there was a fellow named Roman Janczak, who was the preparator, and I don’t know whose idea it was—probably Edith’s, again—to use the canopy on the front of the building to create a dragon head [entryway]—and I believe you had something to do with that.

FW: Probably. I remember using plaster of Paris to build up the shape of the dragon. And we became heavily involved in the community to help accomplish it.

JB: Well, I remember that very well, because that was when I started in the fall of ’76 and that exhibition was up at the time. . . .

FW: What year was the Olympics?

JB: The Olympics was ’84.

FW: OK.

JB: Yeah, ’76 with this [exhibition], “Devils, Demons, and Dragons,” was the first Parade of Masks—and then the next year, in ’77—and by that time Shan Emanuelli had come along—and she coordinated what became, really, the Festival that took place in Hancock Park and was this amazing carnival and performance place and—well, why don’t you talk about what the Festival was like then?

FW: Well, the Festival—first of all—there were many dance groups that did ethnic dances and we had—I think we started with one stage and eventually, as the Festival grew, we had two stages, and had programs going on both, plus maskmaking teaching sessions for small kids in another part of the park, and the community pitched in and each one of the ethnic communities had a food booth. For instance, they served Greek food; they served Chinese food; they served all kinds of ethnic foods. And they became—these booths became the fundraisers for those communities. They put it on and the museum got a cut, but I think we rented the space to them and so in addition to the performances on the stages, there was all kinds of food service. In addition to that, there were many booths **[40:00]** of vendors who sold ethnic materials. And so that it became fundraisers for them and the thing kind of grew. It was a very pleasant day. We had thousands of people show up, and there were never any disturbances or other problems. It was just a joyful

day for families to come and participate and we grew to where we attracted, actually, thousands of people.

JB: Yes, from a one-day—I think Saturday—it grew to be both Saturday and Sunday. And for a while there you also had a Maskerade Ball either Friday or Saturday night--

FW: I think so.

JB: --which was fabulous! Everyone was in costume and it was just a great kick-off to the Festival. And those food booths were just terrific. This was back in '77, '78. People at that time in Los Angeles, at least people from the West Side--a lot of them--had really not visited the different ethnic neighborhoods and so this was a big, wonderful surprise for them to be able to sample all these different foods and so you really, you know, you kind of just were able to dive in to the different cultures with the performances and so on.

FW: I always looked forward to it. It was a very, very pleasant day, full of interesting things--

JB: A family day too.

FW: I remember we had special dance groups from UCLA; we had an Eskimo group; we began to have--foreign countries would send groups of their own to the Festival, and it became kind of an international event.

JB: Yes, well, a couple of things happened. As the Festival became more complex and involved more people, we did need to have staff on location for a longer and longer [preparation] period before [the actual Festival]. The Festival, we should say, started out as kind of a Halloween event, although at some point, it was decided that it was more, I suppose, politically correct, to not exactly associate the Festival with Halloween, but it always was toward the end of October.

FW: But leading up to the Festival, there were community meetings that had all of the participants of the different ethnic communities . . . represented and the vendors were represented, and they, in effect, laid out the plans for it over a period of several months, meeting once a week to organize it.

JB: Yes, I think that eventually it may have been as much as five or six months ahead of time, that you at least had the coordinator on staff and, you know, one or two assistants, and then, of course, there were zillions of volunteers who came on to help the museum. But then, I guess, we should talk about what [was] a very special happening in connection with the Olympics. And I think that came about in part because Bob Fitzpatrick, who was the President of CalArts—and Edith was on the board of CalArts for a while and Bob was on the board of the Craft and Folk Art Museum—Bob was appointed head of the Arts—

the Olympic Arts Festival—the part of the Olympics that was devoted to bringing arts events from all over the country. **[45:05]**

FW: Well, I know that the museum decided that they would have a mask exhibition in the museum--

JB: Oh yes.

FW: --during the Festival. And invited some eighty different countries to submit masks of their own cultures. Because there was a mask tradition in almost every culture. At the same time, the Russians, I believe, had attacked Afghanistan [the Soviet-Afghan war began December 24, 1979 and ended February 15, 1989] and the relations between the U.S. and Russia were not the best and the Russians actually pulled out of the Olympics [on May 8, 1984] and didn't participate, but the interesting thing was that all of the Iron Curtain countries that were to send masks said, "We're not pulling out. We want to be represented in the Mask Festival. And almost 100% of these countries sent masks to be part of it. So that [exhibition, "Masks in Motion,"] was really the only representation [at the Olympics] of what was the Russian sphere.

JB: Yeah, that was a very big exhibition, very complex. It happened that at that time, in addition to the galleries at 5814, we also had gallery space across Curson at—we called it the Annex, but it was the third floor of this carpet store. And so the . . . exhibition was [both] there and in the original building. Do you remember how the designers of the Olympic Arts Festival had these huge stars, stars that were—oh, they must have been at least six or seven or eight feet—that were put on, they were placed on the front of all of the different venues? So we had a big star on the front of the 5814 building—and one on the Annex building. It was a very exciting time. The Festival itself was much bigger also that year. . . . It was very different also because the Olympics were happening in, I think it was July, and so we couldn't really have our Festival when we usually had it at the end of October. So the Festival was in July and it was determined that we were going to have so many bigger crowds that they had to find a different venue. And it was [decided it should be in] Pan Pacific Park, which had just been opened. It was off of 3rd Street, up in the Fairfax area, so it was bigger in every way. There was even an Olympic torch relay that came through on, I think, the first day. Now there were some difficulties with that new site. I think one of them was that the decision was made to charge admission and that had not ever been done before. But in order to do that, a fence had to be put up around the Festival grounds, so that was an expense that had not been anticipated at the beginning. So there were, you know, there were some--

FW: Logistics problems.

JB: Yes, logistics problems, and some financial problems. But there's no doubt that it was a tremendous public relations and publicity [coup] for the museum. Do you have any other memories of that particular--?

FW: No. Except that the--

JB: That was the year you retired!

FW: Yes. They anticipated enormous traffic problems in Los Angeles, which really didn't materialize.

JB: Yes, it was very strange. **[50:02]** In fact, it was quite pleasant traveling on the freeways [laughing] that summer.

Yes, [and] that year, I believe both you and Edith retired and Edith stepped down and Patrick became Executive Director of the museum in '84. Let's see—did you both think at that time that you were going to be quite a bit less active with the Craft and Folk Art Museum?

FW: I had hoped so.

JB: [laughing] I kind of suspected that.

FW: [laughing] I had hoped so.

JB: That didn't turn out to be the case because—I guess primarily because of this big idea to collaborate with the Ratkovich Corporation on this tremendous development. Tell us a little bit—I know we've already talked about that development. But tell us a little bit about how that idea came about. I understand that it was partly conceived after you had visited the opening of the new American Craft Museum in 1986 and saw how the air space rights had been used for the expansion there.

FW: I don't know. I don't recall now exactly, but we kind of came up with the idea, and when I met with Ratkovich, he really liked the idea and wanted to be part of it. And he had a reputation of restoring buildings and building things in the city. And he really encouraged me to go forward, thought it was feasible and could happen, and it's interesting—I met with him recently.

JB: Oh did you?

FW: And we reminisced about this and the fact that, had we built it, it would have been very successful because--

JB: Oh yes.

FW: --our idea was the right thing to do, but our timing was off.

JB: It was way before its time—the idea of a mixed-use—I don't think we mentioned that—it was to be a mixed-use development, which is all the rage now. But at the time it was really before its time. We were going to have condominiums above the museum and retail shops on the first floor and I guess, really, it was the recession, the worldwide recession, that was taking place [that made the financing impossible]. If it hadn't been for that, if you had gotten the financing, it would undoubtedly have been a tremendously successful project.

I wondered--now, Mort Winston did resign about the time that that project was—well, actually, you did announce the project right after his resignation. Was he—did he just not want to pursue that--

FW: No—I believe the Tosco Corporation got into some difficulties. And I think he left the company and I think that was—it was his own--

JB: It was a coincidence.

FW: --transition that caused him to resign.

JB: So--

FW: What year did he resign?

JB: He resigned in '87. But it was—it was after you had started your talks with Ratkovich, but it hadn't been publicly announced. **[55:04]**

FW: I see.

JB: And--

FW: When did we hire the next—when did we get the next chairman—Bud--

JB: Oh, Bud Knapp. Well, that was—oh, that was—after the building—the Hodgetts + Fung renovations were done and the grand reopening in 1995 happened. And that was when, I think you were hoping you could hand off the chairmanship at that time—and you did—to Bud Knapp—but that was aways down the road. And I did want to talk a little bit about, you know, the process that we went through. At some point, you did make an offer on that building on the corner and you were not able to—well, I guess that happened a couple of times—but didn't it, wasn't there a time before--

FW: I don't remember ever making an offer. I know that at one time we could have bought the building for $300,000. But that--

JB: That was a long time [ago]—yeah, that was back . . . in the mid-seventies. I did want to just talk a little bit about this press conference that was held. And I do have a date for that: May 9, 1989. This was a big deal for the staff anyway. There were many, many

dignitaries. I don't remember if it was Judith Teitelman or Sue Sirkus--I think it was Judith Teitelman--who organized the press conference, and Mayor Bradley was there, Councilman Ferraro, Rusty Powell from LACMA, Al Nodal, the architect, Richard Weinstein . . . . And there was a cake in the shape of the model [of the Museum Tower] and many pictures were taken, and so it was--the development was publicly announced. And I also just wanted to say that that really energized the staff—that the whole idea that we would finally have a space that really accommodated the many ideas, that not only Edith, but the staff had, following her vision, of course. But I know that Patrick at one point, when he first told us about it [the idea of the Museum Tower], asked us to come up with ideas that would fit into this expanded vision. And the thing that I came up with was the Center for the Study of Art and Culture. And we hired a consultant, Marcy--

FW: Page.

JB: Not Marcie Page—the woman who was hired to actually work with the staff to write the program for the building [Marcy Goodwin]—she worked with us and with the board for several months and, you know, got all of our space needs [gathered into a building program] and, you know, figured out the things that should be contiguous to each other and so on. And so that was a very exciting, a very exciting time. And then we suddenly had to deal with the earthquake retrofitting problem in the middle of all this. And I remember going around different places with Patrick to look at different possibilities of spaces, but the May Company, which was just down the street, still functioning as a-- **[1:00:00]**

FW: --department store.

JB: --as a department store. I guess it was a little run down. People seemed to think that it was a little run down, but it still got a lot of trade, and it had a wonderful tea room on the top floor, where a lot of people from the—LACMA, from the L.A. County Museum and other places went to have lunch. Suddenly they offered—free—I don't know how much square footage it was—but it was on three different levels in the May Company. So that's what we went ahead and did—primarily because we had to get out of that building--

FW: --to vacate our building, yes.

JB: --because of the earthquake retrofitting. Do you want to talk a little bit about that time? What did the board think about that at the time? There was some controversy, wasn't there, about how--

FW: Well there was some controversy about the whole project. I know that we lost Ron Katsky over this. He resigned. But that's the only real controversy that I remember. We then

hooked up with the Van Holland Company to do the construction. Van Holland was the contractor that had done many jobs for Wyle Laboratories, and we knew him well.

JB: Wasn't he on the board for a while?

FW: No, no. And he was a very able builder and one whom I had worked with many times before, and his prices were much lower than others—excuse me, I have to get some water.

**[Recording interrupted.]**

JB: OK. All right, we're back. Well, one thing that I remember about the May Company—the move to the May Company—was that there were some people I think both on the board and the staff who were worried that we were gonna just kind of get swallowed up there and not—people wouldn't know that we were there, and—do you remember anything about that?

FW: No. I remember building a fair structure inside of the May Company--

JB: Oh yes.

FW: --to really make it a museum entrance [designed by Charles Moore's firm] so that you didn't look like a department of the May Company. But I really don't recall too much of that period. I do recall that after the Ratkovich project failed, we re-examined what it would take to re-build the building [at 5814 Wilshire] and found out that it was quite doable and that's when we got hooked up with the Van Holland Company, and with Hodgetts + Fung and really started to re-design that space and make it a viable building, which we accomplished.

JB: Yes, I know that the staff was—disappointed that the Ratkovich development didn't go through, but at the same time I think there was a certain sense of relief that—because we were a little bit concerned about just how the museum was going to be able to support this much larger facility that the Ratkovich development would have been. And the new idea, which was to combine the building on the corner [at 5800 Wilshire] with the existing building just seemed so much more practical to us—and was still—with the building on the corner—allowing us a great deal more space than we had **[1:05:03]**—really enough space for all of the projects that we had then. And I also wanted to say since you mentioned the Van Holland Company that that corps of guys that actually did the construction was wonderful to work with. They actually helped with the renovations that were necessary in the May Company as well, so we had gotten to know them during that period. And then--

FW: If you recall, Wayne Ratkovich—or not Wayne Ratkovich, but Marvin Van Holland, and his key guy moved trailers onto the courtyard and lived there because their home was somewhere--

JB: --in Riverside or something--

FW: --in Riverside. So they were on the job at seven every morning regardless.

JB: Yes, they just—they had a tremendous work ethic and yet they were so pleasant to deal with. It was really delightful. They did all the build-out that we needed in the 5800 building and they had to do that pretty fast because we had to move out of the May Company pretty fast, and so that was done, and then they proceeded to do the earthquake retrofitting and then, finally, the redesign that Hodgetts + Fung were the architects for.

So—the May Company experience was kind of a mixed bag. We—I think that the staff enjoyed being there, but there were some problems in getting people to know just where we were. Part of it was because we were on three different levels and I don't think the May Company employees—although the May Company administration kept assuring us that they were, you know, going to give us plenty of—that they were going to communicate with their employees and so on—but there were many times when people looking for the museum would come in and were directed to either the mezzanine, where the library was, or to the fifth floor, which was where the offices were, rather than to the beautiful gallery, which was on the fourth floor. The gallery was in what had been their furniture department. I guess—well, this was probably a symptom that the May Company was not, in fact, doing that well, because they more or less did away with their furniture department and that allowed us to have that beautiful hardwood floor gallery in that space. And then the Charles Moore Company designed that entryway to the gallery, which was gorgeous. It was expensive, as I recall, but it was beautiful.

So, then we did move back to our—to 5800 [Wilshire], which was next door to the original building, and we were essentially closed. The museum was essentially closed [to the public] for over two years. Actually, there was a lot going on, but the public didn't generally know about it. There were some exhibitions at some of the different—some venues at the Pacific Design Center—and even Patina [Restaurant], I think, put on one or two exhibitions. And we had that show which went to the Smithsonian during that period of time. It was part of that Language of Objects project that Marcie Page was involved with and it traveled to the Smithsonian Experimental Gallery and it was there held over, was there for quite a few months. So there were a lot of things going on, but the original building, you know, was still under construction.

And of course, the restaurant **[1:10:01]**—you know, one thing that we have not mentioned was that when the museum moved to the May Company the restaurant could not go along. And I did want to ask you, in retrospect, how important do you think that was?

FW: Well, there isn't a day goes by that somebody doesn't come in and say, "My mother brought me to The Egg and The Eye when I was in high school. When are you going to reopen the restaurant?" The problem was to restrict the space in the original building. We really needed the gallery space for exhibitions and it was considered more important than the restaurant. Whether it truly was or not, I don't know. But my dream, of course, has been to put a glass roof over the courtyard, and to use that space partially as a restaurant and partially as a gathering space, and all we need is money! [Laughing]

JB: Yes [laughing]. So what else is new! Well that [courtyard] is a lovely space. That space is what used to be—long ago—the Craft and Folk Art Museum parking lot. And when the Ratkovich plan was active, it wasn't something we worried about because we had that big parking lot out in back, that went with the corner building. But—but the new courtyard is a beautiful space. The original design included a water feature, which I guess never really worked properly, but it was lovely too.

FW: It worked properly, but there are winds that come in there, and--

JB: Oh--

FW: --and on windy days, you couldn't use it and so--

JB: Yeah, well, it was lovely, and we did have a gala opening in 1995, when the new [renovated] museum reopened and it was a whole weekend of wonderful events. Do you remember how you and Edith were feeling about that at that time?

FW: Oh—we were very up at that time. I mean, we were kind of "home again."

JB: Yes. Yes, in fact, I think we called it the "Homecoming."

FW: Yeah.

JB: Yeah, there was a wonderful—the museum had continued to have these annual fundraising dinners every year ever since Mark Gallon started them. And even during that [opening] year it was planned, only it was planned to be the opening event [of the renovated museum], and that was on the Friday and then I think there was a day on Saturday, which was--

FW: Did we have a tent for that?

JB: Yes, it was in that big parking lot out in back, and then we had the next day, Saturday, was the—for the membership—and—wonderful exhibitions, the opening exhibitions, do you remember the Warmbold collection—the Mexican folk art collection?

FW: Yes.

JB: It was given by Ted Warmbold's widow. Yeah, that was a very beautiful and poignant exhibition. And the show that was in the new gallery in the 5800 building was basically a history of the museum.

FW: That's right.

JB: That was delightful.

FW: I remember that also, yes.

JB: Edith had kept the front door of the original Egg and The Eye Gallery; I think [she had kept it] . . . in her studio, so she lent that for the exhibition.

FW: Uh-huh.

JB: And there were examples of objects from all of the different shows. So that was a big highlight. I should mention **[1:15:00]**—going back and forth here a little bit again, but I just wanted to mention [that] in January of 1994--which was before the museum reopened, but of course we were all working in our offices in the 5800 building—the earthquake retrofitting had been completed. And on January 17 there was a major 6.9 [actually 6.7] earthquake, which disrupted everything in Los Angeles. Major freeways were [collapsed]—where were you—do you remember where you were?

FW: I was in India!

JB: Ah! You were in India! Was Edith with you?

FW: I think Edith was with me, and I got a telex from my secretary saying, "Don't worry. Your house and everything is fine," but we didn't--

JB: But you didn't know--

FW: --we didn't know what happened!

JB: Oh no! Well, the earthquake retrofitting worked. I don't think we had any—certainly any major damage. There was no structural damage. There were some books that came off the shelves in the library, but that was easy to put back.

FW: There's more steel in that building than it has any right to expect!

JB: Yes.

FW: It was way over-built.

JB: Yes. And yet it's still, as far as I can tell, I've seen pictures of it before, you know--before The Egg and The Eye started--and it doesn't look that different. I mean it's really been remarkable. The design that Hodgetts + Fung did--

FW: Strangely enough, the building—the original architects for the [5814 Wilshire] building were the same architects that designed the Ahwahnee [Lodge]--

JB: Yes!

FW: --at Yosemite [laughing]. [The architect was Gilbert Stanley Underwood.]

JB: Yes, yes. Quite amazing. I have some of those documents in the archive. So we had, then, finally, the gala Homecoming weekend, and at that point, you were, I think, very eager to hand over the chairmanship. You had accomplished this great redesign and enhancement of the museum, but things sort of started to collapse very soon after that, and the upshot, as far as the staff was concerned, was that Patrick resigned in June of 1996. Is there anything you can tell us about that time?

FW: When did we make Bud Knapp chairman?

JB: Bud Knapp was chairman in—it was either the end of '95 or the beginning of '96 Now let's see [looking at the timeline], he resigned in August of '96 and I believe that he—it was less than a year that he was chairman. [Knapp took over as Chair in July 1995 and resigned in August 1996.]

FW: Well, Bud Knapp had sold his business, which was *Architectural Digest* and also one of the food magazines, *Gourmet* or one of those. And [he] had a lot of money. And at that time, I was contributing a lot of money to support the museum, and Bud's last act was he wanted to introduce me to a bankruptcy attorney and take the museum—make it bankrupt. And I refused to do that. And at the same time he resigned. And we subsequently decided to have an auction of our collection and to pay off—the museum owed several hundred thousand dollars. And we sold the cottage property [at 731 S. Curson]. **[1:20:00]** We sold the collection at an auction and paid off all the debts. And kind of shrank the operation of the museum to a more suitable size budget, which we could manage to fund. And so we emerged, essentially, debt-free. I had never allowed the major building [at 5814 Wilshire] to be mortgaged, and the museum still owns that free and clear today. And I guess that pretty much winds up that period.

JB: Yes. It was a very painful time for the—for everyone, I think.

FW: Well the problems with a collecting museum—we've been offered many collections, but you'd have to have room to house them. You have to have room to maintain them, and it's an expensive thing to properly maintain a collection.

JB: Oh yes.

FW: And we decided to become an exhibiting museum, and to, in effect, make our record in the catalogs and other things that we produce. And that's been the philosophy ever since.

JB: Yes, and really there was controversy for years about whether or not the museum should be collecting, because we didn't have the best situation in terms of space or in terms of staff. Marcie Page [when she was CAFAM's registrar] did the very best she could, but she never really had enough help to do what should be done.

FW: And to conserve a collection takes a lot of doing.

JB: Oh yes, yes. The sale [i.e., the auction] . . . happened, of course, after the museum closed. The museum did sort of stagger along for about a year before it actually closed at the end of 1997, and the library and all of the archives—we did get a committee together of board and staff. Elizabeth Mandell was on that committee. It was shortly before she died. She was so supportive of the library. And Edith was on that committee and we asked—we—I got on the phone, actually, and just called the people that I knew who were art librarians from all over the city, and we ended up getting eight different proposals for people—for other libraries to adopt the CAFAM library, and we ended up—Wally Marks was on that committee also—and we went around and looked at all of them, and we ended up at LACMA because of the proximity, and because they gave us money to move the library to LACMA. The other thing, though, that I think, in a way, turned out to be more important even than the library, was all of these files, which nobody knew about. People—all of the staff--including from The Egg and The Eye Gallery since 1965--when they left the museum, they left their files, and they would get squirreled away into various closets and cupboards and they were going to be tossed out. You know, Paul Kusserow and Martha Drexler Lynn were director and curator at the time, just before the museum closed, and they [the old staff files] did look like trash—the archives—what we call the archives today—were all of these files, which were just in transfer boxes and, you know, tattered old file cabinets, and somebody came to me and said, "What are we going to do about this?" So **[1:25:00]**—I certainly had no intention of being involved with anything like that. But everybody else was leaving. I was one of the last ones there. And so, little by little, we gathered all of the archives together and UCLA said that they were interested. And it turned out to be 250 transfer boxes worth of files, including, you know, minutes of the board and--as well as the files from all of the different departments, and

slides and videotapes and audiotapes that had been made, even films that had been made.

FW: Well, these are now at UCLA.

JB: They're at UCLA.

FW: And where's the library?

JB: The library is at LACMA.

FW: Still?

JB: Yes, yes, it's safely there, and it is part—it's cataloged as part of [the] LACMA [Research] Library. So it's not in any danger, and it's still in proximity to CAFAM. But, at any rate, there was a lot of work to be done to get the museum ready to be closed in an orderly fashion, and—at that time—I think most of us assumed that it was possibly the end of the museum. But that didn't turn out to be the case. Now, we could continue this at another time. This is probably a good stopping place, or you could continue a little bit longer.

FW: I'd rather continue it at another time. I've kinda run out of gas.

JB: OK. I understand. There's a lot—there's so much, isn't there? All right. We'll do that. And, again, thank you! [. . .]

**End of Session 2 (1:27:59)**

## CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
## INTERVIEW OF FRANK S. WYLE

**Session 3 (35:26), Monday, July 21, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti.**

JB: Today is Monday, July 21, 2008, and I'm once again with Frank Wyle in his Marina del Rey office. In two previous sessions, we talked about The Egg and The Eye Gallery, founded in 1965, and then about its transformation about ten years later, from a commercial gallery into a nonprofit museum called the Craft and Folk Art Museum. The museum had some amazing successes, but when our last session ended, we had reached the point in the story, at the end of 1997, where CAFAM had had to close, and it seemed likely that it wouldn't reopen. The library was given to LACMA and the archives were given to UCLA, and in an attempt to recoup some of its financial debt, it was decided to sell most of the CAFAM permanent collection at auction. And this took place at Butterfield's auction house in Los Angeles three months after the museum had closed. The auction took place on March 26, 1998.

So, that's where I'd like to start, Frank. What do you remember about the decision to sell the collection? That must have been a pretty big—after the [decision concerning] closing of the museum, of course—selling the collection must have been a very big decision.

FW: The museum had racked up a fair amount of debt, and the former chairman's [or director's?] last words of advice to me were to consider bankruptcy, which I refused to do, and made the decision to auction the collection, and then we also sold the cottage property that we owned, and essentially were able to pay all our debts. At that time, the one option we had, we still owned the building [at 5814 Wilshire] free and clear, so we decided to put the building on the market and to use the proceeds to establish a fund to fund the annual Mask Festival. We proceeded to put the property on the market and we had a bidder—I forget the amount--I think it was around a million five or a million six. When Patrick Ela approached the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department and told them of our plight, and they began discussions, which led to an agreement where the City agreed to fund and manage the museum as we had formerly managed it. And to continue operation in that vein.

JB: They were going to contribute some cash, I believe, and some staff. Is that right?

FW: Well, they were to provide—I forget the exact amounts, but in the order of . . . two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, plus pay for the staff. And we, in turn, agreed to raise, I believe—I forget the numbers now, but—the board agreed to raise $100,000 a year to contribute to the operation of the museum, and we moved forward. The first year, in lieu

of raising money, we funded through a gift of property, we funded the construction of an elevator to the museum.

JB: That was wonderful news.

FW: And also—I don't know what—did we talk about the reconstruction of the building? **[05:07]**

JB: Yes, yes, because that really—that happened a couple of years before the museum closed.

FW: Before that, OK, OK.

JB: But if you have anything further to say about it, go ahead.

FW: No—and everything seemed to be going along rather smoothly. At one point, the director [Joan De Bruin] left and they began to go through the process of trying to find a civil service kind of director and the board felt that we needed to go out for a wider search than that, and not restrict ourselves to those kinds of rules, and the city finally agreed that we should hire our own director, and that they would fund it—which we did.

JB: So that's when you did the search—a fairly wide search.

FW: We did a very wide search and had a lot of applicants and narrowed it down and finally selected one applicant who, at the last moment, declined the position, and we selected another applicant and began to move forward. As it turned out, the applicant that we selected, who had been a professor at UCLA--

JB: Peter Tokovsky.

FW: --Peter Tokovsky—turned out not to have the greatest of people skills and as a result we finally ended up in rather a bitter departure from him. And I say bitter because he had split the board and we lost a couple of board members over this thing, but in the end it seemed to be the best option for the museum. And rather than go on another search, we decided on an interim operation in which we hired Mr. [James Goodwin]--

JB: Goodwin. Now was Patrick—excuse me—but I'm a little confused. There was a time, I believe when Patrick was kind of filling in—was that as an Acting Director or on the board?

FW: I don't recall.

JB: OK.

FW: I don't recall. [Patrick Ela was Acting Interim Director on a consultant basis from April 2001 to April 2002. He was also Board Chair from 1999 to 2002. He then stayed on the board until Maryna Hrushetska's tenure began at the start of 2005.]

JB: But James Goodwin followed Peter Tokovsky

FW: He did follow and did a pretty good job of pulling the museum together and then eventually he decided to move on and we hired Vincent Beggs as a consultant, who had considerable experience in the museum world and assisted us in selecting a—we had a corporate committee and they selected Maryna Hrushetska. And she has done very well by the museum as a continuum. We operated under this vein for a couple of years and then the city ran into rather severe budget problems and cut us way back in their financing and—but we managed to struggle through this period and to stay on a more or less even keel in spite of the fact the city's funds eventually were cut to $90,000 a year.

JB: Wow.

FW: So, the board had to step forward and help raise the additional monies.

JB: Well that's a very good overview of quite a lot of years. **[10:08]** I'd like to go back a bit [to] when, really, it was the darkest days, when you were really considering not only had you made the decision . . . to close the museum, but also to sell the permanent collection. There had been a controversy about whether we even should have had a collection, but nevertheless a collection grew and a great deal of it was personally selected by Edith—or had been given—there were certainly some wonderful donations in that collection. And I'm just wondering—I know it must be difficult to talk about it, but--

FW: It was difficult because there were many collectors who would have liked to have used the museum as a repository for their collections, but to undertake a collection means a lot of storage work, maintenance, just taking care of a collection is a big deal.

JB: It certainly is.

FW: It seemed to us that we could serve the community better by presenting a wide variety of shows and make, in effect, that and our catalogs, a contribution to the city.

JB: Which you certainly have done. I remember going to one of the preview days of that auction. My husband and I did go to the auction, but we [also] went to one of the preview days before, and it was quite amazing to me because I don't think any of us had ever seen the entire collection out on display at one time and it was a wonderful collection. I really think that we need to, you know, say that, for the record, because so few people had ever seen the whole collection. And it was not only a broad collection, it was—some of—many of the pieces were exquisite examples of both folk art and contemporary craft.

FW: I think I should mention that while I was the chairman of Wyle Laboratories and Wyle Electronics, I had instituted a policy many years ago of buying a work of art every year and to reproduce this work of art in the form of a "seasons greetings" card, with a picture of it--

JB: Oh yes, I remember those cards.

FW: I spent anywhere from, oh, ten to thirty-five thousand dollars a year on these [art objects] and we had quite a wonderful collection, principally of African art, but also of textiles and some paintings and at the time that Wyle Electronics decided to sell the scientific services and systems division, the [art] collection was given to CAFAM and these items, of course, were part of the items that were sold during the auction.

JB: Oh, of course, I'm glad you said that . . . . So, with that collection and the collection that had accumulated over—well, at that point, over twenty years—it was a pretty amazing collection. **[15:10]** I looked up the figures that I had from the results of the auction. I think the amount of money made was almost $250,000. It was about two hundred and forty-five or -six thousand dollars.

FW: Yes, and that went a long way towards paying our debts, and kept us from the need to go through a bankruptcy procedure. That plus the sale of some of the real estate--

JB: The cottage where the library was for a long time and some other offices—that little cottage was used by a lot of people and was very fondly remembered. I felt very badly when I went by a few years ago and saw that it had been torn down by the new owners.

FW: It hadn't been torn down; it was rebuilt.

JB: Well, the cottage itself is gone now. I don't know how long ago it was—yeah, the duplex has been renovated, but the cottage is not there—not where I remember it.

FW: The cottage and the duplex are the same structure.

JB: Oh, well, we—the duplex—oh well—the staff always thought of them as two separate structures. The duplex is the two-story structure [at 725/727 S. Curson], which was just south of [the corner building at 5800] Wilshire on Curson, and then just south of that was this little Spanish-style cottage [731 S. Curson], where the library was and the Mask Festival was, and [laughing]—there were—there were several pieces of property that—it would be easy to get confused after such a long time . . . .

FW: I originally had purchased the cottage, which we—Edith and I--donated to the museum.

JB: Yes, yes, I remember that. So, the duplex, then, you also purchased later? Is that what you're saying?

FW: Now my memory fails me.

JB: . . . I know that both you and Edith attended the sale, the auction, and I was just wondering—you know, how did you cope with that? And were you able to bid on anything yourself?

FW: Later on, some of the art pieces that I particularly loved, that were in the Wyle [Laboratories] collection were not sold at the auction because I think the people that went to the auction were more interested in folk art than they were in what I would consider fine art and I later purchased from the museum one or two or three pieces that I particularly favored.

JB: Oh good.

FW: So those are now in my offices.

JB: I remember just a few months later being invited to a wonderful eightieth birthday party for Edith. This was in 1998 and I think your children organized that. I know Nancy or maybe it was—well I can't remember if Frank Romero was involved at that point **[20:01]**—a wonderful invitation arrived that had obviously been custom-made with a Japanese tiger [on the cover] and that was [the party invitation for] Edith's eightieth birthday.

Now even though the museum had closed at that point, I know that the CAFAM board continued to meet fairly often—not every month, but about every other month through 1999. Can you tell me what was going on? Had you--I mean how did you feel—at that point the [former] staff, I think, was assuming it was closed forever--

FW: There was a fairly short period between the time that we made the decision to close and the time that we made the deal with the Cultural Affairs Department. I don't know how many months it was—

JB: It was about 14 months that the museum was closed. Of course, I don't know exactly when Patrick or--

FW: I don't remember exactly, but I know that part of that time, of course, was taken up with the negotiations--

JB: Yes, of course.

FW: I don't recall the details.

JB: So, Patrick was certainly involved in terms of making the contact with, I believe, it was Al Nodal at Cultural Affairs?

FW: That's correct.

JB: And did he continue to help with that?

FW: Yes, I met with the Cultural Affairs Department with Al Nodal and helped negotiate the agreement, which we finally signed.

JB: So then in April 1999—and I think it may have been around the time of Edith's birthday again—the museum did reopen, and that must have been a wonderful present for her, although I know that she was ill by then.

FW: That's correct . . . .

JB: I don't know just when she began to be sick, but the party—her eightieth birthday party, which Beny and I did attend—she seemed fine.

FW: Well, she was. She was at that time.

JB: And it was really a very joyous occasion and I do remember that very well—and it was 1998, and she was born in 1918, I believe—isn't that right?—and I still have that wonderful card . . . . and then a year later, the museum was able to reopen and I'm sure that, you know, as sick as she was--

FW: Oh she was very happy that it was going to continue. Very happy.

JB: I would think so. [Edith Wyle died October 12, 1999.]

So, at that point, were you still wanting to continue as board chair? You--

FW: I did it by default. I mean it seemed after we had gone through all the problems that we had that—I think the people on the board felt that I represented a sort of continuation, which was important at that time. **[25:04]**

JB: Well, I was wondering about the board. The board that existed when the museum closed at the end of 1997, of course I would assume that quite a few of those people stayed on. But you did, I think, reconstitute the board, and had some new members?

FW: I don't recall too much of that period. It seems to me that there was pretty much of a continuation of people on the board that stayed with us during this period.

JB: Oh, that's good. And, I guess the funding and the staff provided by the city was pretty much sufficient, at least for the first few years.

FW: For the first few years it seemed to be working fine.

JB: Now it's my understanding that what happened was that a woman named Joan de Bruin, who was head of the Folk Arts Program in the Cultural Affairs Department, took over as director of CAFAM.

FW: That's correct.

JB: And I think that that was about the same time that they were having to move out of City Hall, so her ability to take an office at the Craft and Folk Art Museum was a plus for the Cultural Affairs Department.

FW: We looked at it as a mutually satisfactory conclusion. In other words, it provided for continuation of the museum and with funding coming largely from the city.

JB: Yes.

FW: And we operated in that vein for quite a few years.

JB: Yeah, I have from 1999, April of 1999 through 2002, so that's almost four years that Joan was the director. And so is there anything that you'd like to say about her tenure? About that time? It was certainly a transition time. Were there difficulties in terms of just making the membership, the museum membership understand--

FW: It worked actually rather smoothly. I mean the—most people were really unaware—other than the name change--

JB: That's right. For a while, it was the L.A. Craft and Folk Art Museum, wasn't it?

FW: Yes.

JB: But it has changed back now. It is simply the Craft and Folk Art Museum as it always was.

FW: Yes.

JB: Well, I was going to just go through the list of other directors. I guess you've already done that. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about--Peter Tokovsky was there for a year during 2003 and I guess you've commented on his tenure? And then James Goodwin—again for about a year in 2004.

FW: A year—or two?

JB: Possibly a little more than a year. But Maryna started, I think--well, she started in early 2005, so I'm pretty sure it was January or February of 2005, so she's going on to her fourth year now.

FW: That's correct. That's correct. And she has done a remarkably good job of producing interesting programs and reconstituting the education department.

JB: She's hired some terrific people.

FW: She brought in practically all new people and just recently we began to get some significant grants. We received a grant from the Parsons Foundation **[30:00]** for $50,000 for support and from the Annenberg Foundation for $40,000 for education. In addition to that, we got an earmark from the government for about $80,000, which hasn't been paid yet, but it will be paid probably in the next few weeks.

JB: And the Institute for Museum Services also, I think, gave--

FW: Some yes--

JB: Well, that's a real vote of confidence in the stability of the museum--to get those kinds of grants.

FW: Yeah, that's correct. And I've continued to support in a major way, which has helped to bridge this period.

JB: So, the museum really has a whole new life—and has had for the past nine years. It's stumbled a few times, but it now seems to really be on course.

FW: Well, of course all museums are going through rather difficult times. Changing of directors seems to be the norm [laughing], rather than long-term directors. And funding has been difficult for small museums, but we've managed to hang in there and to prosper and it has been due to a lot of very nice work by the board of directors and by Maryna and her staff.

JB: And by your hanging in there too, I think.

FW: Well, that helped. I finally gave notice—**[Recording interrupted.]** Where were we?

JB: Well, you were talking about what a good job Maryna and the board of directors has done in just stabilizing things.

FW: Yes, and we're beginning to add some interesting new directors, which bodes well for the future.

JB: Oh good.

FW: I gave notice at the last Executive Committee meeting that I was not standing for reelection for the position of chairman. It's time that we got a younger and more energetic chairman, and--

JB: Well, that's very big news!

FW: This should be known at our next meeting, which is in, I believe, the 7th of August, at which time, hopefully, we will have a brand new and more energetic young chairman.

JB: Oh Frank, that's quite amazing news, and I certainly wish you well. I do want to ask you one more thing, and that is, if you—as you look forward to the future of the Craft and Folk Art Museum—you won't be as directly involved, but—are you planning to stay on the board?

FW: I'll stay on the board. There's no reason to get off

JB: But as you look at the future, how do you envision the museum going forward or evolving?

FW: It's entirely a function of whether the board steps forward and takes the responsibility to keep it going. It—you know, like all public institutions, at some point it has to run on its own.

JB: Yes.

FW: And we've run for a long time, we've stumbled, we've recovered, we've stumbled again.

JB: Yes.

FW: But all in all, we've continued to make a contribution to the life of the city.

JB: Well, it has been such a basically wonderful idea—the basic concept that started with The Egg and The Eye Gallery and then flowered with the Craft and Folk Art Museum. Everyone, I think, who has been involved in any serious way with the museum feels that. And of course that's due to you and Edith and--

FW: And many others.

JB: And many others, yes. Well, I want to thank you very much for participating in this oral history of the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

FW: You're very welcome.

JB: Thank you.

**End of Session 3 (35:26)**