CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF PATRICK H. ELA

by Joan M. Benedetti

Patrick H. Ela
November 18, 2008

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Patrick H. Ela was born June 20, 1948 in Oakland, California. His family lived in Berkeley until he was five or six when his father got a job at Ryan Aeronautical Company in San Diego. Ela graduated from Occidental College with a double major in studio art and art history. Later he obtained an MBA in arts management at UCLA. After working at Gemini GEL, the Bavarian State Collection in Munich, and the Kohler Arts Center in Wisconsin, he took a position at the L.A. County Museum of Art as an Education Specialist. In 1975, he was hired as CAFAM's Administrative Director. When the Founding Director, Edith Wyle, retired in 1984, he was appointed Executive Director, a post he held until June 1996. He worked closely with both the board and the staff for 21 years. He was responsible for expanding CAFAM's program to include design. He also oversaw the renovation and expansion of the museum in the early nineties. 18 months after Ela resigned in 1996, CAFAM closed. However, it was due to Ela's efforts that CAFAM was able to enter into a partnership with the City of L.A. Cultural Affairs Department, which enabled CAFAM to reopen in 1999. At that time, he was appointed CAFAM's Board Chairman, a position he held until the end of 2002. During the search for a new director in 2002, he also served as CAFAM's Director. He remained on the CAFAM Board until July 2005. He is now an Accredited Senior Appraiser in the American Society of Appraisers and the Principal and owner of Contemporary Art Services.

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 Interviews

Place: Session 1 and 3 took place at Benedetti's home in Santa Monica; Session 2 took place at Ela's office, which at the time, was inside the artist Frank Romero's studio in Los Angeles.

Dates, time, length of sessions, and total number of hours recorded: The first two sessions (October 13 and October 17, 2008) took place in the morning; the third (November 18, 2008) in the afternoon. The first session was slightly more than two hours; the second was slightly more than one hour, fifty minutes; the third was slightly more than one hour, fifty-four minutes. A total of five hours, forty-four minutes, forty-two seconds was recorded.

Persons present during the interview: Patrick Ela and Joan Benedetti.

Conduct and Content of Interview: To prepare for the interviews with Ela, Benedetti reviewed the CAFAM timeline developed while working on the CAFAM Records at UCLA. Her knowledge of the CAFAM Records, her experience with the other CAFAM oral history interviews, and her personal knowledge of CAFAM during her 21-year tenure there, assisted in her preparation for the Ela interview.

Of the three sessions, only the first one is more or less chronological. Ela was involved in virtually every aspect of the Craft and Folk Art Museum's organization and activities during his tenure as Administrative Director (1975 – 1984), Executive Director (1985 – 1996), and then again after he had facilitated the reopening of the museum and served (1999 – 2004) first as Board Chairman and then Acting Director. Therefore, there are a number of topics that we revisit, rather than proceeding chronologically.

Editing: The transcript was edited by both Benedetti and Ela. Ela was given the opportunity to supply missing or mis-spelled names and to verify the accuracy of the contents. Ela made minor changes. Benedetti added full names and opening dates of CAFAM exhibitions in brackets where appropriate. She also added in brackets further information for clarification and deleted with ellipses 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.

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INTERVIEW OF PATRICK H. ELA

Session 1 (2:00:27), Monday, October 13, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: Today is Monday, October 13, 2008, and I'm here in Santa Monica with Patrick Ela, who was with the Craft and Folk Art Museum for 21 years. He started out in 1975 as Administrative Director, working alongside the founder, Edith Wyle, who was the Program Director until she retired in 1984, at which point he became Executive Director, in charge of both Programs and Administration, and he held that position until he resigned in 1996. Today we're going to talk primarily about Patrick's earliest experiences at CAFAM, but also about some of his personal history. And my name is Joan Benedetti. So, let's start with you. Can you tell us when and where you were born?

PHE: I was born in Oakland, California in 1948, June 20, at Kaiser Permanente Hospital, one of the earlier Kaiser hospitals—and I weighed 10 pounds (laughing)!

JB: Wow! Impressive (laughing)! So tell us something about your family and your early childhood—just a little bit.

PHE: My dad was a mechanical and chemical engineer and he was studying in a doctoral program at UC Berkeley and teaching engineering there. And my mom was a mathematician and she was—I think she had her master's degree when she was 19 from the University of Maine—pretty good in math. I have five brothers and sisters—three boys, three girls, and we . . . [lived] in Berkeley, just north of the campus on Colusa [Avenue], which is north of Solano, up by where Chez Panisse is, north of the campus. But my dad became disenchanted with academia, so he went to work at Lawrence Livermore Laboratories--

JB: Oh, uh-huh, which is . . . [about 40 miles southeast of Berkeley].

PHE: We never quite knew what he did—and then he decided he would go into aerospace and so we all moved to San Diego, where I grew up. [Ela's father worked in San Diego as a senior group engineer for Ryan Aeronautical Company.] I mean I grew up until I was five or six in Berkeley, and then we moved to San Diego. . . . And so I consider myself a pan-Californian, having gone to school in L.A. and spent time in the central valley in Northern California.

JB: Well, it's a great state.

PHE: Great state.

JB: Were there—I'm just wondering where your interest in art came from. Were there any collections in your family or . . . ?

PHE: When we were young, my mother sent all of us to art lessons, art—taking [oil] painting--

JB: Was this in San Diego?

PHE: In San Diego. Margaret Gornick was her name. She was our teacher, and she had a studio and we drove over. It was quite some ways, you know, and there weren't that many freeways then, but we took about a half-hour on surface streets, maybe forty minutes, and [most of my siblings] all took painting lessons . . . for a good five or six years. And I have no idea why we did that, but [we did].

JB: She didn't have any—your mother didn't have any art background, particularly?

PHE: No, none whatsoever. I mean, my grandmother—her mother--taught French. She did have a background of academic accomplishment because my grandmother graduated from Colby College in Maine in 1919, which, for women at that time, was quite—you know—progressive—and she taught French in Presque Isle, Maine, where my mom grew up. And so there was academic strength and pursuit in our family, but not, really, aesthetic or artistic. So I don't know why we ended up going to those classes, but I did some art work in high school. You know, I was like [an editor] on the annual staff.

JB: The yearbook?

PHE: Yeah, the yearbook staff. But I was more . . . [into sports at the time] . . . I was a . . . three-year letterman **[5:00]** in two sports and (without trying to sound self-aggrandizing) I was athlete of the year and I was all-league, and my younger brother was all-CIF [Collegiate Interscholastic Federation] in San Diego, so we were pretty athletically-oriented, had athletic scholarships to college, and stuff. And when I decided to go to college [at Occidental], I took some art classes as electives, and by the end of my sophomore year, I had basically completed a major because I had a lot of previous training. So then I decided to get a double major in art history and studio art and this was in the sixties, where being, you know, a business major, or something more practical, was akin to being a prostitute of the military-industrial complex--

JB: Especially if you're from Berkeley, huh (laughing)?

PHE: Right. So I ended up with a double major in art history and studio art. Now, a lot of people who didn't live through that time may not be aware--or may have forgotten--that many colleges and campuses were shut down for a good period of time in 1968 and 69 and into 70 and so sometimes they [the administrators] would just take all of the classes you'd started to take and if you showed up you would get a pass—as opposed to an

incomplete. And so a lot of people, I think, fell into their majors in those two years almost by default, because there was such societal uproar over the Vietnam War and on-campus demonstrations, and for those--

JB: But did you feel like that's what happened to you?

PHE: Well, in a way, maybe. You know, I—as I said at the beginning—my parents are no longer living, but they were both mathematically and scientifically capable, and I have those genes and I don't have any problem with math or science. You know, I might have studied medicine or something [like that] at that time, but--

JB: But something drew you to art, or at least kept you there once you had started.

PHE: I think it was the path of least resistance, you know, and so when I got out of Occidental, I got a California state [graduate scholarship] to study in a doctoral program in art history at UCLA. And so I went there, and I really, really didn't like it. And I didn't like looking at slides and all that stuff that you have to do in graduate school. But I did take a seminar with . . . [Maurice Bloch], who was the head of the Grunwald Center for Graphic Arts at the time, and we were doing an exhibition called "Made in California." Other institutions have subsequently used that title for shows, but I think we were the first to do that, and we studied and did an exhibition on the major lithographic publishing houses, collectors, presses--Cirrus Editions Press, Tamarind, and Gemini G.E.L. [Graphic Editions Limited]—and I got to do Gemini. And I just went over there to start my interviewing process and I said, "This is pretty cool, and do you have any work?" And I was given a job, and I dropped out of graduate school, which was boring, to go to work at Gemini. And that was at a very, sort of, hot time for Gemini. Everybody—you know, Johns, Oldenburg, Lichenstein, [Frank] Stella, . . . Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly—all these people—Noguchi—all kinds of people were working there and I got to work with them.

JB: Who was the head of Gemini at that time?

PHE: Well, the founders were Ken Tyler, Sidney Felsen, and Stanley Grinstein, and when I was there Ken was still there, but then he and Stanley and Sidney had a parting of the ways and he [Tyler] went to Mt. Kisco, New York, and created his own atelier called Tyler Graphics, which no longer exists, but [he] worked with most of the east coast guys. Hockney went there to work; Motherwell, who used to work at Gemini; Kelly, a lot of people stayed with Ken, and I'm still very close with Sidney and Stanley at Gemini.

JB: It just occurred to me that with your parents' background in science and so on, that maybe **[10:00]**—well, I should ask you—when you were in college, you must have taken some science courses if you got a B.A.--

PHE: I took physics and other things like that and I also got A's, you know, [but mostly courses for non-majors].

JB: Well, . . . the area of printmaking certainly draws on both sides [of the brain].

PHE: Oh right. [Yes], it's wonderful. [Printmaking] is still one of my favorite areas [of art] and . . . this is fast forwarding, but I'm [now] an accredited appraiser with the American Society of Appraisers and a lot of the collections I appraise . . . [include] prints. Some people are intimidated by . . . [printmaking] because they don't understand the various processes. . . . The connoisseurship derives from the knowledge of the process . . . so I worked at Gemini, and I got . . . to play tennis with Frank Stella all the time, and Claes Oldenburg and I would go hang out in [their] warehouses and talk and--

JB: Wow.

PHE: And these guys were at the top of their game at that time. . . . I remember one time we--after only five years--there was a retrospective of Gemini at the Museum of Modern Art. This was in 1970 [or 71], I believe, because Gemini was founded in . . . [1966], and I was already involved enough where I got invited, as did most of the other employees, to go there, and we-- [This MoMA exhibition was called Technics and Creativity II, May 5 – July 6, 1971.]

JB: Oh, how marvelous.

PHE: We went to a big party at [Robert] Rauschenberg's house. He lived down in . . . SoHo on 14th Street. He had a big old church that he'd converted to his house. I remember--

JB: This was pretty heady stuff—how old were you at this time? You were still in your twenties--

PHE: In my early twenties . . . . But I remember, we went to parties while we were there—and . . . all the doors were open--you know, at the Museum of Modern Art--and I remember we went to a party at Merce Cunningham's studio, and . . . . This will show you how long ago this was--John Cage was on stage making music and Merce Cunningham was doing some type of movement, and Andy Warhol had a Polaroid camera and he was coming around offering to take your picture and sign the back of it for $25. And we declined because we thought it was a rip-off!!

JB: And you probably didn't even have $25.

PHE: No, I didn't have $25, but that's--

JB: Oh God!

PHE: That was a missed opportunity, but who knew that at the time? . . . But I saw all the same people in New York or San Francisco or L.A. And I felt kind of constricted by the contemporary art world. It was very . . . precious—not unlike the glass collectors . . . [were in the eighties and nineties]. And so at that time I decided that I'd better consider some other options. And that's when I applied to the—what's now the Anderson School of Management at UCLA, and I got admitted to study business, but with an emphasis on cultural or arts administration or arts management—as opposed to finance or accounting or corporate mergers. You know . . . mergers and acquisitions [or] something [else]--it was in effect a major.

JB: Yeah, they did have people actually teaching arts management, per se?

PHE: . . . There are [basically] two types of business schools. There are schools of business administration: USC and Wharton are more quantitative; Harvard, Stanford, and UCLA are more managerial. So what . . . [UCLA] really emphasized [at the time was] . . . decision-making and [having] enough knowledge about a particular subject area to know when you need to bring in an expert . . . So, like a regular undergraduate curriculum, there were general courses that every person had to take: macroeconomics, micro economics, accounting, marketing, statistics, all those things. And then you had, in effect, your major courses—so my arts courses were taught by either managers or practicing arts professionals and my general courses were taught by hard-core . . . business professors. . . . Each of the majors had its own specializations and its own courses, and we had ours in the arts world.

JB: Let's see, was that—that was a two-year program, I guess, wasn't it?

PHE: . . . . Yes, it was a full-on MBA program as opposed to an Executive MBA or a non-resident or a working MBA. There are lots of different derivatives of MBAs now, but there weren't at that time.

JB: And at that time, what were you thinking about in terms of your long-range goals or your ambitions?

PHE: I had no idea. I really didn't. I just—I figured it would be practical to have an MBA . . . if I wanted to do something in business. And the other thing—just as a book-end to that statement I made earlier—when I was an arts major at Occidental—studio and art history—I enjoyed it, but I found the business curriculum equally creative and interesting. So I really enjoyed the business school as well. It wasn't dry or stale or anything. It was very helpful, and one thing I came away from that program with was that a lot of business people may seem sort of straight-ahead but the fact is that they think about things that make sense before other people do--

JB: Which is a creative process--

PHE: Yes. And so once you hear about it, you say, well, what's the big deal? Well, the big deal is you didn't know about it until it's pointed out that this is how it is. . . . And so I found that to be very stimulating.

JB: I was curious in looking at your résumé—I knew that you spoke Spanish fluently—you certainly used it a lot while we were at CAFAM, but I guess I didn't realize that you were—also are—fluent in German, and I wonder when—was that partly through courses that you took in college?

PHE: I took German in high school and then I decided that I really should go though it again in college to get strong foundations, so I took it again. And then as part of my undergraduate curriculum, I applied for and was awarded a sort of a year abroad in Germany--which I didn't take--

JB: Oh you didn't?

PHE: No, because my girlfriend at the time became ill and I just didn't want to do that. And so then when I was in graduate school I did spend six months in Munich at the Bavarian State Painting Collections. . . . [Bavaria is] a state of Germany. They have a centralized administration, which governs about forty-five museums throughout Bavaria, and I was working at the Central Administrative office in the education wing. [laughing] Want me to say it in German?

JB: Well [laughing], I . . . have it written down here, but you--

PHE: It's Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in the Muzeum Pedagogische-Centrum . . . . Museum Education Center . . . .

JB: So this was after you had—you'd begun to take some graduate courses in art history--

PHE: No, no. I [had already taken] graduate courses in art history. I left UCLA, went to work at Gemini, got disenchanted with the contemporary art world. Then I went back [to UCLA] and was matriculated in the Anderson School of Management or, at that time it was called the Graduate School of Management and in my second year of business school [in 1972]—Management School—I went to Europe. . . . And at that time I actually did a study of comparative museum education approaches in the State of California and the State of Bavaria. So, I went to San Francisco, Santa Barbara, L.A., and San Diego and interviewed people in museums, and then [in Germany] I went to—not only Munich, but to Nuremburg and Berlin and other German cities—Cologne—to see what their approaches were, and then I did a study **[20:00]** on museum education.

JB: So you had a good chance to practice your German while you were doing that.

PHE: Yeah. Well--and I learned more while I was there.

JB: And was that—the fact that you focused on education—museum education—was that sort of happenstance . . . or did you [already] have a growing interest in education?

PHE: Well, I've always had an interest in education. And I applied to different cities and I was accepted in Bremen and some other place. But the one in Munich—and I was interested to go to Munich because . . . the Olympics [were going to be there] in 1972. And that [job] was in the Museum Education Center and so I decided to take it. And that probably pushed me a little more in that direction than I might otherwise have gone.

JB: So you were there for six months, and then you came back to California and finished your study [at UCLA]?

PHE: Right.

JB: So where did the job at the Kohler Art Center—how did that come about?

PHE: Well, when I was getting out of school, I sent letters around. You know, because I wanted to--

JB: Oh right. You still had at least a year to go to finish your MBA--

PHE: No, six months. I finished in—I got back in December and I graduated in June.

JB: Oh, OK.

PHE: So I graduated in [June] 1973.

JB: . . . So, then you were looking for a real job.

PHE: Yeah, I was looking for a job, and I got this job in Wisconsin and—which turned out to be a very interesting job and the Kohler Art Center has grown in prestige and some of the programs for which it's best known I helped to start back there--

JB: Like what?

PHE: Like the art and industry program at Kohler.

JB: Oh! Yes--

PHE: It was pretty cool. Not only did I get to run the exhibition program and install and things like that, but I also—you'll get a kick out of this—I was in charge of summer theater—and so I--

JB: Good lord!

PHE: I hired producers and directors and made sure all the staging was under control.

JB: I guess I didn't realize they had a theater--

PHE: Oh yeah, they had a very active [program with] three or four plays a year. And we had a film series and I was in charge of that. And, you know--

JB: You got to do a lot of things there.

PHE: Yeah, I did. It was fun. And I learned a lot about exhibition organization and installation techniques and--

JB: And at that time, had they started what's now become a rather famous folk art collection?

PHE: They [had] . . . . At that time Ruth Kohler, who is still the director, if you can believe that--

JB: She must be in her nineties--

PHE: No—she's probably in her--

JB: Eighties?

PHE: --mid-seventies, I'd say. Her brother, Herb, is chairman of the Kohler Company and he and his wife—which number I don't know—Natalie—Natalie's a friend of mine. She was married to a good friend of mine at that time. She went to Stanford. And Herb and Natalie have gone off building golf courses—all over the world. I mean in England—everywhere. Ruth Kohler is particularly interested in a guy named Fred Smith who did concrete sculptures--

JB: Oh yes!

PHE: And so we were documenting Fred Smith back in the early seventies—[it's a site] like Grandma Prisbrey's Village or Watts Towers.

JB: Well there was that famous exhibition, which I happened to see at the Walker Art Center about that time, which included--

PHE: Fred Smith--yeah, so she was into that. But we were into . . . [a lot of different things]. I guess it's Sarasota, Florida—the Ringling Brothers--

JB: Oh yes—yes [the Ringling Museum is in] Sarasota.

PHE: And so there's a Circus World Museum in Baraboo [Wisconsin] and we used to go down there and pick out things to show, old eight-sheets and 16-sheets—these incredible lithographs and they had early lithographs by Alphonse Mucha and all kinds of [other artists]. . . . It was really fun, you know.

JB: Well, I was always—since I first heard that you had worked at the Kohler, I thought it was really a wonderful happenstance because of what you did [later] at the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

PHE: And my first wife, who is now the Registrar at the Getty Museum--

JB: Sally [Hibbard]. **[25:00]**

PHE: --and has been for many years.

JB: She's still there? Oh.

PHE: . . . . I'm not in that close touch with her right now. But she was homesick for Los Angeles. So, after a couple of years in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, I was—I was offered a job at the County Art Museum—Los Angeles County Museum of Art. And partly at her insistence I decided to come back to the west coast, but I was enjoying Wisconsin. And I'm a native Californian, so it was a little bit—you know, it was a little weird, but I enjoyed the Midwest. They have very interesting accents. Phyllis and I are always talking about Sarah Palin's accent and I think it's very upper Midwest, but she says, no, it's Canadian, but it's obviously Alaskan, but, you know--I think her dad was from the Midwest, and I think that would have an impact on it. . . .

JB: No, I was just going to say--as one who has lived on the east coast, the Midwest, and Canada, I think she has more of a Canadian accent, but I don't know (laughing).

PHE: Well, I'll tell Phyllis that.

JB: So—you went to LACMA.

PHE: So then I went there and I worked in the Education Department and I was one of five or six people when I arrived, and they—due to the internal politics of that organization—when I left, I was the only person in the Education Department.

JB: Oh my goodness. Well, you were working for--

PHE: For Ruth Bowman.

JB: Yes.

PHE: Who was on the board of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and she was the one that recommended to me that . . . that I go over to the Craft and Folk Art Museum. But, you know, I had a good run at LACMA. I enjoyed the people and I still have some lasting friendships with some of the curators, most notably Pratapaditya Pal. He's a good friend. And we have lunch every now and again. Had lunch a couple of months ago. So—and I knew, I knew various people over there. And Ruth Bowman ran afoul of the very powerful Museum Service Council and the Educators and so it became dysfunctional.

JB: Yes, she doesn't describe that as her happiest time. But I guess the Craft and Folk Art Museum was a bright spot for her—and she had just become involved because the first [board] meeting of the museum, which had, of course, just been transformed from The Egg and The Eye gallery . . . the first board meeting had just happened in June of '75.

So—I'm wondering what you know—either what people have told you or you've been able to surmise--was the reason that . . . [CAFAM] created the position that you took?

PHE: One of the chairpersons of the [CAFAM] board, Mort Winston, once characterized Edith as an accelerator and me as a brake, and so I think that Frank Wyle and other more practical people, less maybe inspired [by the museum's mission] in certain ways, but no less creative, thought that it would be a good way to sort of counter-balance Edith Wyle's creative inclinations—and maybe that was apparent early on based on the five-year history they had had at The Egg and The Eye.

JB: Yeah, well, actually, ten years at that point. The Egg and The Eye [gallery] started in 1965.

PHE: Oh, yeah, ten years. I was focusing back on Gemini . . . . At that time, Frank basically--Frank Wyle--had the control, the monetary control as an owner--and partially relinquished that as a board chair because—as you know, ideally, the board hires the staff and the staff runs it and if the board doesn't like the way the staff's running it or the top management's running it, they get a new manager, but they don't mix it up with daily operational issues.

JB: Ideally (laughing).

PHE: And that's not always the case at many institutions. **[30:00]** So I--based on [Frank Wyle's] ten years of experience with Edith in this capacity (of being a program director, or a director) he probably felt, as did others, that they needed someone to administer and . . . keep everything under control.

JB: And do you remember—can you . . . tell us the story of, you know--how it all came about? Did Ruth [Bowman] just mention a possible position to you and then at that point did you—? Tell us the story.

PHE: Well, remember I said I was the last person in the Education Department [at LACMA], and while I had a lot of friends at LACMA, not only in the programmatic area, but in the administrative areas, my future was somewhat uncertain there, given the fact that the Education Department had fallen on hard times.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And its relevancy was questioned. I mean I don't think anybody really doubted that there had to be public programs, and of those, you know, a variety of workshops and docent tours and so on needed to be provided, but they had sort of separated a lot of those functions, so the docents [who were volunteers] were under a lady named Barbara Rumpf, who worked at the—in the slide library--and Eleanor Hartman ran the library

[which was also at that time under the Education Department] and so there were . . . functions that were being performed, but the overarching public programs or Education Department was basically eviscerated. It was basically cut up and . . . thrown into different places.

So, I didn't know where I was going. And I think Ruth said, well, you know, "I think these people over at the Craft and Folk Art Museum are going to need someone with administrative capabilities. Why don't you go talk to them?" And so I did, and I remember thinking, "Boy, going to that little place after being at LACMA is like out of the frying pan into the fire." Because there was really no certainty associated with that institution, and LACMA had the weight of the County of Los Angeles as well as the Museum Associates behind it. So, it was a little dicey.

JB: Appearances can be deceiving though.

PHE: Yeah, they can be. They can be. But still, I mean, in all of the time I was at the Craft and Folk Art Museum--and by the way. . . there were another two or three years [later on—(1999 – 2002)—actually four years] when I was [at CAFAM] when I was the chairman of the board and an acting interim director, so it's more like . . . [I had] 24 [25] years of service toiling in the [fields of CAFAM].

JB: I should have included that in your introduction--

PHE: Well, no, it's not a big deal, but it's just--

JB: But we will definitely get into that in a later session.

PHE: But I guess--so in effect, I was recruited by Ruth to go over and talk to them, and I didn't know that much about folk art or crafts at the time. I did know about exhibitions. I did know about education. I did know about public programs. I knew a bit about grant writing, you know. And I remember, I was invited over to Frank and Edith Wyle's home and at that time they lived in a temporary situation over on Wilshire Blvd., east of where the museum is now, and they had a house . . . . I came in and we talked and they had Japanese prints and I liked Japanese prints and they had [interesting] rugs and different things and we chatted, and I remember he offered me some rum. . . . He said, "What do you want to drink," and I said, "I don't know, some rum."

JB: [laughing] What time of day was this?

PHE: Oh, this was in the evening.

JB: Oh.

PHE: He said, "I'll give you some rum, but you've got to drink it straight because it's really, really good rum, and so I said, "O.K. Whatever," you know, and we drank the rum, and

had a nice visit, and they offered me a job. And we negotiated a little bit, and established my responsibilities vis à vis those that Edith had. And I think that one of the most important things about my ongoing relationship with them **[35:00]** was that we were friends. . . . It was just—some people don't understand this—but it was just a good friendship. I had—there wasn't any quasi-parental thing, quasi-mentor thing. I love my parents. My dad and I had a great relationship. My mom and I had a great relationship. I never thought of Edith and Frank as, you know--

JB: Mom and Dad.

PHE: --ersatz parents. But just as good friends—of an older generation . . . Frank and I used to do all kinds of stuff together. We'd . . . go to sporting events. We'd build things together. We'd do carpentry together. We'd just--

JB: And you never felt like there was—that that [friendship] made your professional relationship less—more difficult?

PHE: Compromised?

JB: Whatever. Did it change--

PHE: Well, I mean it did . . . a couple of times. I mean—maybe, as you said earlier, there are a couple of things that are better left [unsaid].

JB: Oh.

PHE: . . . [Just briefly,] two or three times . . . [there were attempts to recruit me] away from the museum for interesting positions, some of which I wonder if I should have taken, but my friendship with them was one of the factors that kept me there. Because from a professional development perspective, it would have been possibly more to my advantage to have taken these other positions that I was offered. So—my friendship . . . affected my professional relationship, or my professional life in that sense.

JB: Well, we can talk about that later. I just thought I'd bring it up since you mentioned that you were such good friends.

PHE: Yes, I mean, like when we went to their ranch, and I eventually bought some property up near the ranch that they had--and, unfortunately, [I] had to sell it. But there was a rule, you know, never talk about anything museum-related at the ranch.

JB: Well, I can remember Edith saying—and I think she meant even beyond the ranch, but especially at the ranch—she said, "People would be surprised to know that Frank and I really don't talk about the museum very much when we're away from it." [Laughing.]

PHE: No, exactly. Nor did I.

JB: Just before we leave this subject of your first impressions, I wanted to ask if you had known anything about—well, you were obviously at LACMA for almost a year--

PHE: Oh yeah, I had gone to The Egg and The Eye before it was the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

JB: Maybe even when you were in college or--

PHE: I may have. I don't remember. . . . But I—I could well have gone over there. I remember doing a lot of things, you know, gallery-wise, museum-wise, and so on, when I was in college, and I probably went over there, but I did certainly go over there when I was at--

JB: --at LACMA.

PHE: --at LACMA, and I thought it [the Egg and the Eye gallery] was incredibly expensive. . . You know, it's a gallery—oh yeah, I just—I thought, my God, how could anybody pay [that] for that. . . . So—because these were objects that I--

JB: Oh, the objects—I—oh, yes.

PHE: Yeah, the objects that they had in their shop and--

JB: Yes, I remember thinking that too, yes.

PHE: They seemed a bit precious and a bit expensive and I didn't have a sense of relative worth, you know. . . . I knew how much a Frank Stella lithograph cost or an Claes Oldenburg sculpture, and somehow, given the fame associated with those people and the prestigious institutions and collectors who had them in their holdings, I just didn't get it. Now that's when I worked at LACMA, and over time, I certainly understood the different markets that exist for all these things. But at that time I didn't. I thought it was a little precious when I was at LACMA—and a little self-absorbed—The Egg and The Eye.

JB: I want to ask you something. I'm not sure how to phrase it. I'm just wondering—I remember getting that sort of [patronizing] attitude from some others in the so-called fine arts world--and I wonder if that was a kind of (I'm generalizing of course)—if that was a kind of **[40:00]** attitude about craft--or contemporary [craft] at the time?

PHE: Well, I think that at the time, I think that the vast majority of crafts were associated with functionality. This is in the late sixties, early seventies. . . . And--you know--the studio crafts movement, in glass and the other media, over time, established itself as a different art medium, basically, or art media [from sculpture, painting, etc. in different media] because there were people like Peter Voulkos in clay or [Dale] Chihuly in glass, who established themselves as basically sculptors—artists who used traditional media. But--

JB: Yes.

PHE: --but it's still—there's still a lot of back and forth about that as you know.

JB: Yes.

PHE: I know Carol Sauvion did her program--

JB: Yes [the PBS film series], "Craft in America."

PHE: I was a part [of the planning for that] a little bit. And—I don't know. That whole thing—[the place of craft within the larger art world] is a big can of worms.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: But I don't think that when I went to The Egg and The Eye [gallery]--before I was recruited to go over there and work--there was any bias that I had about—oh, this is craft and [that is art]. I wasn't even aware of those things. I just thought--

JB: Which was good.

PHE: And I thought, you know, "This little glass salt and pepper shaker—" Remember, I didn't pay $25 for an Andy Warhol Polaroid. When I saw a little glass thing for $40 or $50 bucks, I thought, "Geez! You know, that's really expensive."

JB: Yeah.

PHE: So, it was a different time, and--

JB: Yeah, of course.

PHE: And money was worth more [then than now].

JB: Yes.

PHE: It wasn't as inflated—devalued--as it currently is. So it was [worth more] in monetary terms than it was in terms of relative value [of] one form to another.

JB: Right. And also I think at least some of the prices reflected, at the time, Edith's intention for what had been The Egg and The Eye gallery to be an *art* gallery, not a shop, not a—certainly not a gift shop.

PHE: I agree with you.

JB: So--

PHE: I agree with you, but I think a lot of prices were inflated at that time. I mean—and this is probably inappropriate for me to say, but I remember, you know, like Harry Franklin had an African gallery, and a lot of those prices were just through the roof--through the roof. And I don't know if all of those pieces that had the through-the-roof prices then would

fetch those prices now. Some of them certainly would probably--and more--but others might have been marginal.

JB: Well, and you have the knowledge now of the appraiser to--

PHE: Well, thank you. Well, appraising is a different kettle of fish.

JB: So—you knew a little bit about the history--that it had been a gallery, and had just recently turned into a museum. So what were your first—you've talked about this a little bit—but, I'd just like to know a little bit more about your impressions of Edith and Frank. Did you meet them for the first time when you went to their house or--?

PHE: I met Frank for the first time then. And I think I met Edith once before. I think Edith—I think Ruth Bowman invited--

JB: Maybe you went to lunch at The Egg and The Eye?

PHE: Yeah, I think maybe we went to lunch. I don't remember exactly, but something like that. And I thought—I thought, "They're nice people." I thought, "It's an attractive, sort of embracing building." And I thought that--it had a little bit of a transitory feeling. It didn't feel like really solid, particularly in comparison to the County Art Museum at the time.

JB: Which was a little scary, I suppose.

PHE: Yes, it was. I mean, considering . . . , I had a mortgage to pay, and I wanted to earn money, and—I mean—obviously if I were—even at that time I knew that the art world is not the best place to earn money, **[45:00]** although, for certain people it is. [CAFAM] just . . . seemed a little dicey, and a little bit risky, but I figured, OK, I'll just do it.

JB: So—there wasn't really a formal interview, as such, for the job.

PHE: I didn't submit a résumé and I wasn't sort of like . . . . Frank and Edith were more instinctive. And they knew me fairly extensively from whatever [Ruth had said about me].

JB: They must have seen a résumé and heard Ruth talk about your background.

PHE: I think [Ruth] vetted me, basically, to them. And, then, they probably invited me over to their house to see if we were compatible, just as people. And Frank and I liked each other, and Edith and I liked each other, and it was just--

JB: It seemed natural.

PHE: Yeah, and then--I got to know their kids over time and became friends with them.

JB: Did you—let's see—from the board meeting minutes that I read, you, I think, the first [CAFAM board] meeting you attended was August 28--

PHE: '75?

JB: ’75. You were introduced to the board then. And I think that you were—that the board essentially—you may have met some of them—besides Ruth and the Wyles--before that, but that was essentially your introduction as the future--

PHE: . . . . Administrative Director.

JB: Yes, I did notice that the first introduction—I think it was at that August meeting—Edith was still being described as the Director and you were described as the Administrator. Now that changed and was clarified--

PHE: Well, that was one of the negotiating points. I had already been the Assistant Director of an arts organization [at the Kohler Arts Center] and, just in terms of my professional growth, I didn’t want to have the same—it’s like in the film world, you know, you don’t want--

JB: . . . . to go backwards.

PHE: [--to be] the Assistant Director. You want to be the Director.

JB: Sure.

PHE: So my progress was actually from Administrative Director to Co-Director to Executive Director [to Director]. I just dropped the “Executive” and was the Director. At the end.

JB: So that was basically—the fact that Edith was going to be primarily in charge of the program aspect of it: exhibitions and other kinds of programs.

PHE: Well, I didn’t—one thing you may not know is that Hy Faine and Ichak Adizes--who were the founders of the Arts Management Program at UCLA--or Arts Administration, whatever you want to call it—always had as their ideal model the idea of a co-director. So you would have an administrator who--

JB: So that was in your mind--

PHE: Yeah. I mean that was the model that they thought would work because they didn’t think that necessarily everybody that was talented administratively or managerially and who was attracted to the arts would have the rest of the package—you know, the creative--

JB: --and vice versa.

PHE: And vice versa, yeah. So that’s why they reasoned that would be a good mix.

JB: So that was important--

PHE: Yes, it was pivotal to that program. And I think a lot of the people who went through it then, went in and out of either creativity in the arts, programmatic creativity, or managerially, managerial creativity. I mean, a person who was in the same program that

I went through a couple of years later was one of the two people who ran the Olympic Arts Festival with Bob Fitzpatrick—Hope Chopik Schneider.

JB: Oh yes, I remember her, uh-huh.

PHE: And a lot of people went on to become movie people or--or heads of operas or whatever. I mean, if you were skewed a little more creatively—and remember I had both studio art and art history—so I was interested in it and **[50:00]** . . . initially, I was, in effect, implementing the model that I had been taught academically.

JB: Yes, and I think that's very important to know.

[recording interrupted]

JB: OK. We took a short break and we're back. Had you met any of the board members before the August [1975] meeting?

PHE: Not that I recall. . . .some of the ones that I remember from that period of time would be Daniel Selznick and Proctor Stafford (who's no longer living) [and of course] Ruth Bowman. I don't think Ron Katsky was involved at that time.

JB: Not yet, I don't think.

PHE: Frank and Edith, and I don't think Mort Winston was involved at the time, but he came in subsequently.

JB: Yes, we're going to get to that in just a minute. So I believe the board was introduced to you, and it was said that you were going to start at the beginning of October— I think October 6 was actually--

PHE: Really!

JB: --your first day.

PHE: Wow, good memory!

JB: Well, no, this is based on—[I've been reading], you know--the board meeting minutes, probably, or some other documents in the Craft and Folk Art Museum archives, which I'm still working on.

PHE: You're a saint for that activity for sure.

JB: Well, it is a very interesting project. [And] at that time—I also know this just because of the archival documents—Frank had said that he didn't want to be president.

PHE: Frank Wyle?

JB: That's right—[president] of the board. Bernard Kester, who was also at one of those first June meetings--

PHE: Right. I remember Bernard Kester from that time. Also—somebody else you just mentioned—I think Bret Price's dad was on the board. [Bret was a ceramic artist whose thesis exhibition was at CAFAM: R. Bret Price, an M.F.A. Exhibit; opened 11-25-75.]

JB: Oh yes, Buzz Price. I had forgotten that. . . . He was on the CalArts board too.

PHE: Right, I remember. And then there was one other person you just reminded me of, but I've forgotten again.

JB: Well, I was just going to say—those first June meetings were really done more for the legal process of converting what had been a commercial gallery into a non-profit museum and Bernard was one of the people that was there.

PHE: Was Tomi Kuwayama on the board at that time?

JB: Tomi was also there—and I'm trying to remember if she subsequently became a board member . . . . She certainly was shortly thereafter. [Tomi was elected to the board on November 23, 1976.] But what happened with Bernard was that he was elected board president in June.

PHE: Right. I remember.

JB: But he didn't want to do that either, and he consented, I think, just as a legal formality, so he resigned [shortly after the June meeting], and there was no new president elected until November, and at that point Frank said, well, he would—he would take it on temporarily. And he served for less than nine months.

PHE: He wanted to get the monkey off his back.

JB: Yeah, yeah. So when you were first hired in October there were board meetings to attend and I assume other board—there were a few committees. But Edith presided at those first meetings.

PHE: In fact, I remember that those first meetings were held in what became your library, that sort of back room.

JB: In the cottage--?

PHE: No, no—upstairs, on the third floor [of 5814 Wilshire], what would be the southeast corner, there was a room that was at one time your library and—and that's where—[the board met]--on the third floor.

JB: Oh!

PHE: Remember that room?

JB: That clos—that sort of overgrown closet—yes!

PHE: That's where the board meetings were held.

JB: Oh my goodness, that was such a small room.

PHE: Well, it was a small board. That's where your first library was, if I'm not mistaken.

JB: That's—yes. Oh, **[55:00]** that's interesting. Now that's a new nugget [of the CAFAM history]. That's very interesting—[where the CAFAM board first met]. So, I guess I'd like to know at this point just what [was] your understanding of [your position]. You've said (and I've heard that before--in fact I think Edith told the staff at one point) that she was the accelerator and you were the brake. But in terms of—other than the most obvious—I suppose the budget, and maybe development, what were your duties? For example, vis à vis the board at that point?

PHE: Well, . . . if I remember [correctly], I tried to create an organization in ways--in areas--where I perceived none existed; or existed only in a rudimentary form. And that entailed, you know, projections, and I remember, it entailed personalities too. I think, you know, somebody like John Browse, who was very powerful [at the time]. He ran the shop/gallery, and could be very imperious, as you [might] know. And I think he and some of the other people—Dorothy Garwood—thought [about me], you know, "Who the hell is this guy?" You know, some young, green, kid who went to graduate school and now he's our boss and you know--what the hell--sort of [thing].

So I tried to build an *esprit de corps*. I tried to be respectful of everybody's position. And collectively make the transition from what had been a gallery-based, entrepreneurial attitude on the part of a lot of people, to one that was more interested in—or more focused on--education and collecting and more . . . museum-like. You know, the more hallowed museum things that everyone [who works in a museum] needs to engage in, in order to have credibility [as a museum] because it was—I mean, well, I won't inject politics into this, but certain things are assets and liabilities, and, yes, there was a set of assets that [had] accrued to the museum because of its tenure [and] its history as a gallery, but there were an equal number, if not a greater number, of liabilities associated with credibility and stature and [lack of] academics and motivation and self-aggrandizement on the part of the board members and the "owners." That [situation] haunted the museum for many years, because a lot of people had the early idea that Frank and Edith owned [the museum], and so—"why the hell should we give them money."

JB: Yes. I think that lasted a very long time.

PHE: A long time, long time. That's part of the bad will, as opposed to the good will of The Egg and The Eye. And even the name of the museum for many years was the Craft and Folk Art Museum Incorporating The Egg and The Eye.

JB: Yes. That's right. That's what it legally was for the first—couple of years anyway.

PHE: So [a major part of my job was] to build an organization, to facilitate the transformation from a commercial gallery into a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt educational institution—and what that entailed. That's what I was trying to do, and I knew more about that stuff than many of the people—not all of them--but many of the people there. So that's what I set [out] for myself [to do]. And I didn't always tell people that. I just did it, you know.

JB: That's what they expected you to do probably.

PHE: And I remember Dorothy Garwood fell by the wayside.

JB: Well, I was going to mention that she did resign in November of '75, and I was wondering if you could talk about that a little bit?

PHE: Well, she was talented as a curatorial type, but I don't think she fancied the new regime and the new concept, and I think she probably felt **[1:00:00]** [the specter of frustration]—whether she actually felt frustrated by it--I think she anticipated that she would eventually feel frustrated by it.

JB: Now by new regime, do you mean yourself as . . . [Administrative] Director, or do you mean the fact that it was now a museum as opposed to a gallery?

PHE: Both, both, I mean both. And I don't know; that's just my hypothesis, you know. . . . It was a new organizational structure, and both Dorothy and John had had—and I consider John to be a good friend—I don't see him enough, but, you know, I really like him and I think we have a good rapport--but they had [had] direct access to Edith and they could do things--and now there was this intermediate layer—my organizational, managerial, financial, programmatic [layer] in the sense that I--where they used to be able to say, "Well, let's do this, let's do that," I would say, "Well OK, why do you want to do that? What are the costs and the benefits? And what--you know--what is the impact?" So there were certain other things that they had to process in order to get from point A to point B and maybe they didn't like it. I don't know.

JB: Well, I do know, just from talking to John [Browse], that financial matters were always an issue and--

PHE: They were. They were. And over time--you asked me in an earlier conversation if I remembered curating or installing or designing certain things, and I remember several--but over time, my art-related, my craft-folk art-design, aesthetic-related activities gave

way to almost exclusive fund-raising and managerial issues and organizational issues and it just changed over time, as it often does in non-profits, and so that was one of the reasons I decided to cash in my chips when I did [in 1996]. Jumping ahead a bit.

JB: [laughing] Well, I think it's amazing that you didn't cash in your chips sooner than you did.

PHE: Well, I think that's partly because of my friendship and my sense of obligation to the Wyles and--to my detriment or to my benefit, whatever--that's what it was.

JB: Did you realize when you [started]—I mean, I guess obviously, you couldn't have realized completely—how big a gap, say--looking at your perception, your impressions of the museum when you started, and maybe what they were a year or a year and a half or so later--did you have any idea when you started--how needy the museum was going to be?

PHE: No, I sensed it, but I didn't know. I sensed that, like I said, it was getting out of the frying pan and into the fire, and—but--on the opposite side of that, there was unbounded enthusiasm and excitement and everybody . . . believed that it could happen. And so that was, that gave all of us, I think--

JB: Energy.

PHE: Energy to move forward. Now [then], we started the Mask Festival [in 1976] and we started these international programs. And we started . . . tour programs. And we started having some critical recognition in the paper—in the *L.A. Times*—and it was like we could sort of see that it could work, you know, and so that, I think, empowered a lot of people—and energized a lot of people, as you just said.

JB: Yes, it was really a big, you know a B-i-g (capital B) idea kind of thing, and I think that all of us that worked there--even much later--felt that. I really think that most people that **[1:05:00]** came in contact with the museum [were energized]—but especially in the early years—because there were a lot of firsts, or at least firsts in terms of the west coast. . . . CAFAM was bringing a lot of new ideas to California.

PHE: Right. And we had corollaries: the Renwick, the Museum of American Folk Art, the Museum of American [sic—Contemporary] Craft, the Museum of International Folk Art. Eventually up in San Francisco there was a [Craft and Folk Art] Museum. But that [was] totally different than the energy that—and the identity that the museum has now. I mean I don't really even have much to do with it—honestly--right now. . . . It's a different sensibility [at CAFAM now]. It [strives for] a different set of criteria. I don't really understand what the mission is now. But that's just my addled, historical point of view [laughing].

JB: Well, there's no—I think there's no doubt that what it was at the time [when we started working there] had a lot to do with Edith's personality, but it also had to do with the fact that--aside from Edith--that these were issues: the issue of promoting "ordinary" objects to the status of art. There was never any doubt but what the gallery and then the museum was an *art* museum—an *art* gallery, an *art* museum--and things were put on pedestals and they were—the exhibitions were installed in a gallery setting--

PHE: Right. I agree. I think the world--

JB: --rather than a shop. And that was a very—it's hard [to remember] because it's so common now—it's hard to remember how it was at the time.

PHE: I think Edith was very fundamental to all of it, as you say, but I don't think her vision alone is what realized the institution. I mean—you mentioned Bernard Kester, you know—Mary Jane Leland, Gere Kavanaugh, Charles and Ray Eames, who were involved, [who were influential]. I mean, there were a lot of people who--

JB: Josine [Ianco-Starrells].

PHE: Josine Ianco-Starrells, [who ran the Barnsdall Municipal Gallery at the time], yes. There were a lot of people who concurrently had a similar response to the truth of it and carried the ball—and I think all of the staff did. And I think that—so, it's hard to say, and I'm not in any way minimizing Edith. It's just that her initial vision was not--

JB: --the only thing.

PHE: -enough to sustain it as well as it was sustained. Certainly her facilitating it was [critical], but there were a lot of other components to the mixture, in my opinion anyway. Does that make sense?

JB: Oh yes, yes, absolutely, I agree completely.

I wanted to ask you about—if you can remember—I've been trying to figure it out from the staff rosters and the lists of staff in the catalogs that were published early on—just who was on staff, other than John and Dorothy, who was on staff at the time that you started--and then I'd like to also ask you, if you can remember, who were some of the first staff that you hired?

PHE: Jorge Casillas [who was the maintenance person—and sometimes did exhibition preparatory work]. . . . He was on the staff.

JB: He was on when you started.

PHE: Right. And Joaquin, who at that time was known as Timoteo, [who helped Jorge and later did most of the physical work] came a little later. I think Marcie Page was there.

JB: How about Karen?

PHE: --or close to it. Karen Copeland wasn't quite there yet, I don't think.

JB: Do you think you hired her then? Or were part of the hiring of her?

PHE: I'm not sure.

JB: How about Roman [Janczak]?

PHE: He . . . [had already been] hired. Lorraine Trippett was hired by me.

JB: That was a year or two later—Lorraine.

PHE: Gail Goldberg was hired by me.

JB: Now Gail was, I think, one of the first publicists [before Nina Greenberg], isn't that right?

PHE: And also Volunteer **[1:10:00]** Coordinator [before Suzi Ticho].

JB: Ah-h-h. OK. I wanted to ask you about publicity. One of the points that John [Browse] made—and I've heard other people say this—was that during The Egg and The Eye days the *Times* and the other media came to them—I mean they didn't really have someone sending out press releases; they didn't have a publicist as such, and I asked John, I said, "How did you get all of this great publicity?" And it is amazing to see the [number of] newspaper articles—and especially in what used to be the *Home Magazine* section of the *L.A. Times*. John said, "Well, if we weren't in there—it was a weekly, [on] Sunday—and if we weren't in there at least once or twice a month, we--you know--didn't understand, because we always were." So did that kind of the thing continue? And at what point did you—I guess I'm assuming that you had something to do with getting someone to actually be a publicist and begin to write press releases—or maybe that's something that you did at the beginning?

PHE: Well, I think we all got involved a little bit. We became aware of the fact that we needed it. I mean, if you think about it, when the place was The Egg and The Eye, it was trying to always do new and exciting things, and at that time probably some of the programs and activities, fashion shows, whatever they did, could be considered newsworthy, whereas most museum things are more feature—I mean hard news as opposed to feature news? It would be interesting—and probably very laborious—but it would be interesting to do an analysis from 1965 – 1975—how much PR The Egg and The Eye got in relationship to how much PR other museums got—large and small—to see if everybody got more coverage at that time, or if it got more coverage because The Egg and The Eye was ground-breaking and commercially interesting and did exciting, newsworthy events. And it was much more in the commercial arena [than were museums at the time].

JB: Yes.

PHE: So, I don't know the answer to that question. I know that I've written press releases and other people did and that getting press coverage took on an important role, not only in terms of building attendance and hopefully membership, but also in substantiating grant applications that were submitted to various governmental entities.

JB: Yeah, speaking of membership. When did the whole membership program [begin]—was that part of--

PHE: Well, when The Egg and The Eye was a commercial gallery, they had 400 members.

JB: Oh, they had [The Egg and The Eye] Association!

PHE: The Associates. [The group was called an Association; the members were called Associates.] And then they grew—then when The Egg and The Eye became a museum the members sprang forth--like Venus [on] the Half Shell. They just sort of converted everybody from Associates to Members. [In 1980, a "higher end" support group called The Associates was formed that had no relationship to the previous Association members.]

JB: It was just a natural transition.

PHE: Yeah. And then they started to make [the museum concept] grow.

JB: Probably some of those—a lot of those people were the first volunteers too. I guess I want to just go back a little bit. I don't know if it's back or forward. I am—this will be a recurring theme—the neediness of the museum and Frank Wyle being presumably, at least at the beginning, the primary donor, contributor, to the museum's financial stability. It must not have taken you very long to realize that you **[1:15:00]** both had to find other sources of revenue, but also that it seemed, inevitably, you had to go back to the original source too. And that--that must have been difficult to--

PHE: Well, it was difficult, but I mean, I also tried to make sure that everybody got paid on time.

JB: There were times [when we didn't get paid on time].

PHE: There were [cash flow] problems, and [the accountant], and others didn't [always] do things they were supposed to do and some of these things--were . . . [less transparent than desirable] and I didn't even know about it. And I'm not casting aspersions on anyone. I'm just saying that there were some issues that arose—and I remember I tried to make them work out. I always tried to [plan and realize] a balanced budget, you know, and to raise money. And Frank Wyle had as a management style—if he could—he would play out all his options before he would write a check . . . . It was always a hustle, and over time it--I guess it was stressful.

JB: Wearing, I would think.

PHE: It would wear you down—over time . . . . But [CAFAM] was always needy. And there were certain times when [it got better and easier]. I remember asking for a million dollars from somebody and I got a million dollars for the museum—[that was rewarding]. A couple of times . . . there were half a million dollar [donations]—so, over time it got easier as our credibility--and the economy improved.

JB: Yes, we went through a couple of recessions during the history of the museum.

PHE: So—it was all—it took a lot of time and a lot of commitment and a lot of inventiveness to try and shake loose money, but I remember when Mort Winston came--

JB: Yes, we should talk about him--

PHE: One of the things we did—sometimes we would—there would be these windfall things where [Mort Winston's company, Tosco—The Oil Shale Company] would get credits and they couldn't take advantage of them, so they would give the museum these windfall oil profits.

JB: Oh-h-h, yes.

PHE: You know, and sometimes we would get . . . 500 barrels of oil or 200 barrels or 800. And we'd sell them and get the spot price, and that would be a welcome addition to our budget.

JB: Well, I'm torn. I do want to talk about Mort [Winston] because he came on as chair [early on in 1977].

PHE: He came on—he would only come on the board if he was made the chair. That was his deal.

JB: Oh, yes, yes. I think Frank mentioned that. I guess before we go on, though--I do want to just talk a little about your impressions of the shop and the restaurant, which we haven't talked about except to say that you had been there [during The Egg and The Eye days], but if you could just—as if I didn't know anything about it--just describe the shop and the restaurant from the point of view of someone from the outside, or someone very new to the organization. Because I think you could say that they were of more importance than those same facilities were at some other museums.

PHE: They were dominant. . . . I remember somebody [maybe Edith or maybe the chef, Rodessa] said The Egg and The Eye was "a feast for the eye and the palate." And the impression one had when arriving [in 1975 when the Gallery first became a Museum, but before any renovations had been made]—if you recall--there was a big central staircase, and you came in through the front door and there was a shop up on your right, and a

shop on your left—and behind the staircase there was a little step-up that covered up some electrical things. And it continued in the back. And then you went up to the middle floor and both sides of the middle floor—the mezzanine—were restaurant. There was the bar side and the dining room side. And Salvatore and all of these people were cooking. And then when you get up to the museum—it was [on] the third floor—and in addition to the gallery up there, **[1:20:00]** there were offices. And so, the credibility of the place [was tenuous and] the . . . claims that the institution made about being a museum--were belied by the physical space. . . . And the amount of time and physical space that were allotted to the shop and the restaurant [were out of proportion to the space allotted to the museum].

JB: Let me ask you—because what you're describing—of a shop being both to the left and the right of the staircase is a little—is different from when I started, which was not until the following year in '76. At that time the right—the west side—was a gallery, a museum gallery. So in '75, when you started, it was still shop on both sides?

PHE: That's what I remember.

JB: Was there an attempt to maybe, even though the west side was part of the shop, was there an attempt for that to be more of—you know they had the "shop shows"—they continued to have these mini-shows or shop shows—was that where that took place most of the time?

PHE: I don't remember [exactly]. But I do remember that I . . . was instrumental in gradually getting the museum to have a presence on the lower floor.

JB: Well, that's very interesting. I didn't know that.

PHE: --because of the credibility issue.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And to the extent that may have been foreseen or foreshadowed in early staff meetings, that may have caused consternation to John. It may have caused consternation to Dorothy. I don't know, but it was like--

JB: Oh-h-h, interesting.

PHE: It was a thing that needed to happen, just in terms of the organizational building blocks. . . . in making a transition from the gallery to the museum. That needed to happen physically. So early on, early on in my tenure, that change was facilitated.

JB: Yeah, yeah, that was important. And that's a big change. So—when you went up the stairs, you went to the restaurant.

PHE: You had to go through the restaurant. You couldn't get to the museum without going through the restaurant.

JB: That's true, and that remained the case.

PHE: For a long time.

JB: Although there were some little niches in the stairway walls.

PHE: Yes, there were. And most of those niches belonged to the shop—until the museum encroached on the shop's turf. I mean, that's what it was like—it was like--it was like an ebbing and flowing of the shop gradually receding over time for the museum to, you know, take over its space . . . [appropriate it].

JB: Yes. I—later, when I was there—again, I don't have a lot of records of the restaurant—or the shop for that matter--in the archives, in the CAFAM archives--which are at UCLA. So part of my goal in the oral history is to try to bring those aspects to life and . . . I'm wondering about the restaurant. I guess the sort of "glory" days of the restaurant—everybody says—[were] when, at the very beginning—in the early days--

PHE: When Rodessa was there.

JB: Yeah, Rodessa Moore.

PHE: I never met Rodessa.

JB: I never did either.

PHE: Well, let me tell you [about another relevant and] functional reality. When The Egg and The Eye was a gallery, it was a taxable entity. . . . It got money from the shop and it got money from the restaurant.

JB: Right.

PHE: The reason we went from owning the restaurant to **[1:25:00]** [renting or] leasing the restaurant facility to an outside vendor--was that if we would have run the restaurant, we would have had to pay tax on the property.

JB: On the restaurant property.

PHE: On the restaurant portion—and we would have had to pay unrelated business income tax on any profits, because running a restaurant is not part of the mandate of the museum. It's not an educational activity. Renting is exempt from unrelated business income tax. So one of the recommendations I made—and other board members probably made—was to divest ourselves of the management [of the restaurant] and rent to various people—there were corporations: Ian Barrington ran it for a while. And that's why that

happened. . . . We did not, as a museum, have to pay unrelated business income tax on the proceeds from the restaurant.

JB: Yes, well that makes absolute sense.

PHE: But we still always had to pay property tax to the County of Los Angeles on that portion of the building, which was the museum shop, because that was a commercial activity.

JB: Oh-h-h.

PHE: But we didn't have to pay income tax on it to the federal or state government.

JB: Huh! Boy, I didn't know that. That must have been kind of complicated to figure out.

PHE: It was. But it's just a matter of square footage.

JB: Well, so the restaurant was--you know--had maybe passed its heyday, but it was still a big attraction.

PHE: It was a big attraction, and we got . . . cash flow, so we had a minimum monthly rent versus a percentage of the gross sales—whichever was higher--we got every month. And so—that's what we did. Do you remember that guy Casey?

JB: No--

PHE: I mean, you know, there were various [people in the restaurant over the years]. You remember Nate, I'm sure--

JB: I think so. . . . Ian was really the first one that I knew on a personal basis.

PHE: Well, there were two or three before him.

JB: I do want to talk about Ian in another session, but I just wanted to get your [first] impressions of the restaurant.

PHE: Well, my impression was that it was disproportionately large—and the shop was disproportionately large, and over time and with great friction, we had to change that.

JB: Well, that's very, very interesting, that is understandable that there would be a power—a certain amount of a power struggle there. So then early on in March—I guess we mentioned that Dorothy Garwood had resigned in November of '75 and in March of '76 John resigned. And I guess he had hired Ann Robbins sometime before as his assistant, but she became the shop manager [after John left] and I'm not clear who hired Susan Skinner; I think Ann hired Susan. But at any rate, there was a new regime in the shop.

PHE: Right. And by that time, the shop was of reduced size. It was confined to the left-hand side as you come in.

JB: Yes, yes. Would you talk a little bit about Ann and her management of the shop?

PHE: Well, I think that Ann was very well-liked, and she did a very good job, you know. And she had her vision. I would characterize her strengths were probably more in contemporary crafts and John's were more in tribal arts and ethnic arts, . . . although both of them were comfortable to a degree in the other arena. And then I think that Susan learned the business and then took what she learned and went off to start her own [shop], New Stone Age.

JB: Ann was always very much a supporter of the artists. I believe that they were before, under John also, but as you say, Ann—Ann was herself an artist—a ceramist, **[1:30:00]** and so she really made a big point of continuing the mini-shows and supporting—but she seemed to be able to do that within what was I guess a reduced space.

PHE: Hm-huh. Well, at that time it went all the way back. I don't know if you remember, but they had books way in the back on the left.

JB: Oh right. Well I think there was a little room--

PHE: Was it a closet?

JB: --where they could wrap and mail things, but, yeah--

PHE: And the rest rooms were back there. And they had that--for a while--that little platform area that went back and forth between the shop's use and the museum's use depending on the particular show. Do you remember what I'm talking about?

JB: I'm not sure.

PHE: OK, so like if you're going down the—I don't know—can I write on this?

JB: Sure.

PHE: OK. So at that time if the museum [Patrick is making a drawing of the ground floor] this was the back—there was a little corridor with restrooms here.

JB: Oh yes. And there was even a little dressing room in there at one point.

PHE: And then there were steps here.

JB: Right.

PHE: But on the ground floor, this area was a platform and you could go over and through. And so, depending on a given show, the museum—this may have been museum—or another time this could all be shop. It went back and forth. We had this wall that we would construct and move laterally to—I remember during the French Folk Art show, for example--

JB: But structurally it was open?

PHE: Yes, it was totally open structurally. I remember in the French Folk Art show I put some [objects] up in there. I was drawing a little (for you "radio" listeners) diagram of the original floor plan.

JB: So that continued to be like that at least through French Folk Art, which was '78? At what point was it—well maybe it never was really closed up.

PHE: It went back and forth for a long time.

JB: I hadn't realized that.

PHE: And then we put in some permanent display cases on the museum side and let the museum have a good part of it [and] the shop have a good part of it. So ultimately it was a hybrid until it was done away with.

JB: Well, that's interesting. OK. [Now] I'm just going to mention a few sort of highlights—these are mostly taken from that timeline that I sent you of the museum. In September '76, Mort took over as Board Chair. So what was it like [working with Mort]—I mean Mort was a different kind of person—and he was chair for, I think, about 11 years--a long time.

PHE: [He was] a very creative guy. He was a lawyer by training, clerked for Felix Frankfurter, who was a Supreme Court Justice.

JB: Oh.

PHE: Got into the oil business and at that time, if you think about it right now—and the whole dialogue about drilling [oil shale] and dependency on foreign oil and all that—he was dealing with this stuff in the seventies with The Oil Shale Corporation—that's what Tosco means—that's the acronym. . . And he was involved in theater--

JB: Oh—TOSCO stood—it was an acronym for The Oil Shale Corporation--

PHE: The Oil Shale Corporation.

JB: I didn't know that.

PHE: And they were trying to extract oil from shale, [somewhat like fracking now]. He was a high-flyer. I went to his home once for breakfast and the French actress, Dominique Sanda, was there, and I mean--he hung out with musicians and, you know, various international creative types. And at the same time he had a very progressive corporation--and he loaned the museum often the facilities and attributes of the—of Tosco—so we could have our board meetings in a proper corporate board room. He loaned his assistant, Mark Gallon, who was a publicist, basically, and a lobbyist in many ways—

[Mark] went to Stanford Law School. And he was the guy **[1:35:00]** who did one of our first fundraising dinners.

JB: Yes, I've always thought of him as having been the one that—I'm sure that you started it, but [he] really got the development [fundraising area] of the museum going.

PHE: Yes, he was assigned basically by Mort Winston as part of his corporate responsibilities to facilitate the growth of the [CAFAM] institution.

JB: You must have been relieved to have someone like that.

PHE: I was surprised. I remember when we had that first dinner and we—remember Darcy Gelber?

JB: Oh yes. . . . Let me pause it. [recorder paused]

PHE: I don't know if that last little bit actually went through--

JB: I think you were saying, "Remember Darcy Gelber. . ."

PHE: Yes, Darcy Gelber, she [organized] a lot of the performances associated with those first fundraising dinners.

JB: She coordinated and got the performers [hired]--

PHE: [And she started] Las Primaveras . . . that was the support group for the annual dinner, [which was called "La Primavera"]. Anyway, Mort added a lot of gravitas, weight, and substance because he came from a corporation that was very timely and cutting-edge. . . Its whole culture, its halls, were filled with art work and quilts and, you know, all kinds of artifacts that were akin to the museum's interests.

JB: I think he gave a collection of quilts at one point.

PHE: Yes, he did. And anyway, he was a good guy. And he really worked hard on behalf of the museum, and then when his company started having difficulties and Matt [Talbot] . . . He replaced Mort and he became the chair of the museum for a while. Remember Matt Talbot?

JB: No.

PHE: Matt . . . he was an accounting type.

JB: I don't remember that. Was he on the board?

PHE: He was on our board and he became our board chairman. And he was the Chairman of Tosco for a while.

JB: Oh OK.

PHE: Or did he become our board chairman? Maybe not. Maybe he was Tosco's board chairman. But I know there was awhile in between Mort leaving and Frank Wyle resuming—I think for a while he was an interim--

JB: OK.

PHE: I may be wrong. But he was on our board. If you look through the board minutes, you'll see his name. And I think for a while he was the chair—and then we had some other types and then, you know, Bud Knapp came in.

JB: Oh yes.

PHE: And then—and you know, [Knapp is] from *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit* and *Knapp Communications* and then, you know, other types like Fred Waingrow, who was high up in Peterson Publishing. I guess Fred Waingrow just made a $5,000,000 contribution to LACMA or something?

JB: Oh, wow.

PHE: Big. Anyway, lots of people came through the museum's board because, for its size--at certain points--it had a credibility and a cachet and a certain hipness that other museums had—Bill Norris, for example--he was one of the founders of MOCA. He was on our board and learned a lot from his board activities. Now he's on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. But we have had some pretty interesting people on that board.

JB: Yes, absolutely. But Mort did seem to really enjoy being the chairman.

PHE: He loved it, yes. He did, he did. And . . . he was a big fish in a small pond.

JB: Sure!

PHE: But that pond was located in Los Angeles and the fact that the Craft and Folk Art Museum had a presence on one of the main Los Angeles thoroughfares [Wilshire Blvd.]--

JB: Oh yes.

PHE: --and adjacent to the La Brea Tar Pits and the County Art Museum--at the time . . . the Petersen Automative Museum came in. There was a Museum of Miniatures for a while, which was a for-profit entity, a German Cultural Institute—lots of different activities in addition to film—ultimately a lot of film companies and TV companies moved over just east of the museum.

JB: Yes, well, at the beginning, though, LACMA was the kind of overwhelming presence and there was certainly a love-hate relationship there with LACMA, **[1:40:00]** although I don't think it can really be argued that it didn't help the Craft and Folk Art Museum to have that presence.

PHE: Right.

JB: I'm sure that you had—and probably took part in--these conversations about how . . . people would come to The Egg and The Eye [Restaurant] for lunch on their way to LACMA—or vice versa. And there was a lot of, I think, resentment [on the part of some CAFAM people] because of that—that our galleries were not really even—that people were not even aware sometimes that [CAFAM was a museum].

PHE: Right. And that's why publicity—going back to that earlier point—was so important, you know. That was an uphill battle all the time. It really was. But it was one that everybody, I think, for the most part enjoyed waging. You know, this uphill battle.

JB: Well, there was always a sense, wasn't there—I know this was true throughout the staff--. . . that, you know, we were sort of the David against Goliath.

PHE: Yeah, I think so.

JB: But that we had this worthy--worthy cause.

PHE: Right. Yeah, there was that. I agree with you.

JB: Now, I want to talk about two other things. In October of '76, just about a year after you had started, was the germ of something that became very, very big. It was just a parade in that [first] year--

PHE: The Festival of Masks? Right.

JB: Can you tell—do you remember how that idea came to be? What—do you have any idea why the focus on masks?

PHE: Well, I think at that time people were becoming aware of how very many cultures existed in Los Angeles. And how many languages. And I think Mayor Bradley's office—I think he was the mayor, I don't think it was Yorty at that time—but anyway, Bradley's office said over "x" number of languages.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: And of course, Edith Wyle--with her propensity to exaggerate--tripled the number and . . . then I think Edith had the idea of celebrating the cultural diversity through a common medium, and they settled on the mask, and they started with a parade. And one of the reasons there was—that it turned into a festival--was that they wanted to have vendors and performances and Willow Young and Katie Bergin and Sharon Emanuelli—Shan—you know, Shan and I went to college together—I don't know if you knew that.

JB: Oh I guess I—yeah--I do remember [hearing that].

PHE: Yeah, so [Shan] did some internship activity with me, and then she came in and started working there, but the point was that the first deal was a parade. I remember Roman Janzak and I—he constructed that dragon's head on the awning.

JB: Yes, that wonderful—I had just begun to visit the museum and think about volunteering and here was this fantastic dragon head that was an advertisement for the show, "Devils, Demons, and Dragons."

PHE: And I remember almost falling down when I was helping him put it up. And you may not have known this, but the CalArts Gamelan Orchestra came and they were arrested!

JB: Yes, tell about that!

PHE: They were arrested--

JB: Were you there when that happened?

PHE: Yeah, I was, and I talked to the police and told the police to back off, and it was just—it was very sort of happening-like—like in the sixties--like an Alan Kaprow thing, you know--

JB: Yeah, it would be wonderful if there was video of that. I think maybe there might be a photograph somewhere of . . . them sitting on the sidewalk.

PHE: I have a picture of me in front of that Gamelan [Orchestra], that Edith gave me, haggling with the police.

JB: Oh, I would love to see that.

PHE: I'll show you. I have some pictures.

JB: Well, what—was there a problem?

PHE: They didn't have a permit.

JB: . . . . That's what I was wondering.

PHE: You know, the parade **[1:45:00]** had a permit.

JB: Oh, the parade did have a permit.

PHE: Yes. We closed Wilshire Boulevard. . . . And then it grew, and one of the reasons it went to a two-day Festival was that the vendors, once they set up, they didn't want to have to--it was uneconomical for them to not have two days to sell.

JB: --to do it for just one day, yeah.

PHE: So that's when that started. And it spawned symposia on masks, you know, and ultimately the Olympic Arts Festival and other things.

JB: I mean, in a way, what happened with the Festival of Masks, which eventually became the International Festival of Masks, is kind of a metaphor for what happened with virtually everything at the museum.

PHE: Right.

JB: It was like a demon seed that was planted and then sprouted.

PHE: Well, like the PET Project. I remember the PET Project.

JB: Yes—which went on for four years . . . .

PHE: Protect our Ethnic Traditions.

JB: Yeah--to begin with, it was just the Community--Community Documentation Project--and then somebody had the idea of calling it the PET Project—Preserving Ethnic Traditions. But it went on for as long as there was funding for it—[four years from 1978 – 1982]. Which was of course the way a lot of things were. [All of the PET Project documentation (slides and reports) is included with the CAFAM Institutional Records (the CAFAM Archives) in the UCLA Research Library's Special Collections.]

But the Festival was very successful at getting grants I guess, at least in-kind grants, from the County and the City.

PHE: Right, exactly.

JB: And I think maybe from the NEA too. Well, talk a little bit about the Festival, about what it really was like, and anything in particular that you remember.

PHE: Well, I guess—and this is looking backwards obviously--

JB: Sure.

PHE: I think that the message of the museum—the goal as I came to know it--was that there was--first with regard to cross-cultural awareness, you developed knowledge of the existence of something and the similarities between the cultures—in this case the mask—different mask forms, different mask traditions, but still the mask was there. And so you started out with awareness. Then you developed mutual understanding, and ultimately, the goal would be to establish mutual respect between the various cultures, thereby causing animosities or polarizations to--

JB: --dissipate--

PHE: --dissipate. And so I think--

JB: And that was by showing—through performance and through interchanges--

PHE: --exhibitions—essays—catalogs, whatever. That was to show these realities—the . . . commonalities and thereby, it was a bridge. And I think that was also implicit in a lot of the folk art--and maybe less so in craft and design--but still it was implicit in a lot of the folk art activity. You know, developing mutual respect through mutual understanding back to awareness and introducing the concept, and I think that that was probably the most compelling thing about the Mask Festival and, you know, it was celebratory. There was music, there was noise and hoopla, and lots of great performances--

JB: Yes, and it was free—at least admission was free.

PHE: Right.

JB: So it was a great family thing. Maybe it would be appropriate [now] to just fast forward a little bit. I didn't want to go much beyond 1984 [today], because that's when you—[when] Edith—retired and you took over as director, but **[1:50:00]** in 1984, that was the [year of the Summer Olympics in L.A. and the] Olympic Arts Festival, [which was run by Bob Fitzpatrick] and he was on our board, and I don't know whose suggestion it was, whether it was Bob's or Edith's or mutual, but they had the idea of the Festival [of Masks] being an Olympic Arts event, and that [made it] a much larger [arena] than it had been before. It was in a different venue—the new Pan Pacific Park.

PHE: It rained, I remember, during the parade. Can you believe that?

JB: Oh! I had forgotten that.

PHE: In the middle of summer it rained.

JB: It was on the first—or no, it must have been--

PHE: --tail end of July—beginning of August. [The 1984 International Festival of Masks ran from July 20 – 22.]

JB: Yeah, so it was at a different time. It had always [before] been near Halloween, the end of October. Can you just talk about how that [the 1984 Festival] was different? There were some financial issues too.

PHE: Yeah, I mean, one of the big problems with that whole thing was Peter Ueberroth and Harry Usher and the Arts Festival and everything.

JB: Peter Ueuberroth was the overall Olympic chairman.

PHE: They ended up with something like a $200,000,000 surplus and a lot of the—maybe it was $20,000,000--but it was a huge number. And a lot of the participants in the Olympic Arts Festival—the Craft and Folk Art Museum included--lost money and were not made whole, despite the fact that they did their best to make this an international celebration.

And that was a cause of friction. That was a cause of friction. And the whole [Mask Festival] was uprooted in a way, not only physically, but in terms of [its] timing . . . . A lot of people who would normally have participated in the fall had to . . . jump through all kinds of hoops or contortions to get there.

JB: Well, we decided not to hold the 1983 festival in October. There was one in ’82 in October and then at some point in ’83 the decision was made to do the Olympic Festival in July so the decision was made not to hold it in ’83 and that was somewhat unsettling probably for [all the participants].

PHE: Yes, it was. It was. And it was just—I don’t know if it had the impact—certainly I think the exhibition did—I think the exhibition was really well done. But I think the Festival itself maybe didn’t live up to everybody’s expectations. At least I don’t—I don’t even remember it that much.

JB: Well, I volunteered—I think most of the [CAFAM] staff did work the Festival, and it was very exciting. The torch came through on the first day, I think, and that was fun.

PHE: I remember the torch and I remember the blanket toss of the Indians. You know the people from Alaska came down and they did the Eskimo blanket toss.

JB: Oh yes.

PHE: There were good things about it. I remember some of it and I remember it was down in that depression--

JB: That sort of hollow--

PHE: That 100-year flood hollow [flood control water cachement]. But I think my recollection of it was overshadowed by the inequities of the finances.

JB: At the end.

PHE: Yeah.

JB: . . . .Another big difference was that the decision was made to charge admission, which would not have been so much a problem, but they had to put a fence up to keep people out, and the cost of the fence was prohibitive.

PHE: Yeah, I mean all of these different things conspired to make it more difficult.

JB: Yes.

PHE: So I don’t have fond memories of that, I must say--

JB: Well, I can certainly understand that, absolutely, and like we were saying—it was so different--not in terms of the program, but in terms of the venue and the time of year--that

it was a little unsettling. As a consequence, we [also] didn't have a festival in '85 either or '87. It was essentially made into a biennial rather than an annual for a few years. So that was too bad . . . . [Nevertheless], I think everyone loved the Festival. One of the worries that I had, **[:55:00]** even about . . . [all the others] that were right across the street [from the Museum], was identifying the Festival with the Craft and Folk Art Museum.

PHE: Right. It actually took on its own personality. I remember we used to harp on that a lot, but . . . probably a lot of people never did end up associating it with the museum and that's one of the issues in terms of publicity that the museum [had] across the board. I mean, a lot of its programs we did in different venues.

JB: Yes!

PHE: Like the Egypt Today and Scandinavia Today and Japan Today and the Korean American—we were good at organizing and coordinating city-wide events, but we didn't get the recognition for those [that we should have] and had we, we would have probably been better off. Interestingly, you look at Susan Skinner and the New Stone Age or you look at Aaron Paley and Katy Bergin and their organizations—CARS (Community Arts Resources)—those are all basically just riffs on what those people did at the museum and then they took them on to the private sector.

JB: Yes, yes. Well, I think CAFAM was a real breeding ground for ideas and for talent.

PHE: . . . . Right. I agree.

JB: And that's . . . flattering to CAFAM, but it's also—it is too bad that CAFAM didn't always benefit [from all the talented people it nurtured and their hard work].

PHE: But I mean, if you think of—and I'm not making this comparison—but if you think of some other seminal institutions--like in the Los Angeles art scene—the Ferus Gallery [1957 – 1966] had a lot of early L.A. people . . . like Billy Al Bengston and Peter Alexander and Andy Warhol, Ed Rusha--lots of people showed there and then it went out of business, but it's legacy lives on--

JB: Yes.

PHE: I think that the Craft and Folk Art Museum, in its former state--and I don't know what the . . . current state is, but the earlier iteration of it, I think, is similar [to the Ferus Gallery] as a seminal institution.

JB: Yes it is, and I think that there are still plenty of people around—less and less every year I guess--but still many who do remember and respect the former CAFAM.

PHE: Right.

JB: When I first [went] to the Oral History Program at UCLA and talked to [its head],Teresa Barnett, and mentioned that I was—at that point I only wanted to get her advice—and I said that I was going to do a Craft and Folk Art Museum . . . oral history, she said, "Well, I certainly hope you're going to donate it to UCLA." I didn't have to tell her—she is, I think, certainly younger than me and I think younger than you too, but she had a very vivid memory of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and its place [in history].

PHE: That's good.

JB: Yes, that made me feel really—

PHE: No, that's good--

JB: --wonderful, and consequently they [UCLA's Center for Oral History Research] offered their support in terms of equipment and so on—so yes, that . . . was a rare time I think. I think we were both lucky to be involved.

PHE: Well, yeah, I agree, I agree. And it was one where a lot was attempted and a lot was accomplished and, you know, certain things weren't [accomplished], but it wasn't for lack of trying. . . .

JB: One more thing I want to talk about—at the end of '76--the Wyles had owned the 5814 building—the original building—and they did donate it to the museum at that time. Was the mortgage paid off at that point?

PHE: I believe so.

JB: I think so too—I wasn't certain. So that was a pretty big deal.

PHE: It was a big deal. And there may—there may have been reasons that that happened in that year—tax reasons, whatever.

JB: Nevertheless--

PHE: And we can talk more about that at a later time.

JB: Oh, absolutely. Well, it seems to me that we have talked enough for this first session--

PHE: OK.

JB: And I'm sure that we're going to have a couple of more and thank you so much for taking the time.

PHE: No—it's a pleasure, a pleasure.

[End of Session 1-- 2:00:27]

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF PATRICK H. ELA

Session 2 (1:50:08), Friday, October 17, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: Today is Friday, October 17th, and I'm with Patrick Ela in his office in Los Angeles. At our last session, we talked about the early days of CAFAM--but before we continue, I want to make a correction. When I introduced Patrick last Monday, I said he had worked at CAFAM for 21 years, but, in fact, after nine years as Administrative Director and 12 years as Executive Director, he came back to CAFAM in late 1998 as Board Chairman under an arrangement with the L.A. Department of Cultural Affairs, which had agreed to a merger proposal instigated by Patrick. He [then] served as Board Chair for four years until the end of 2002, and--from April 2001, when then-director Joan de Bruin [resigned due to illness], through the end of 2002, while he was still CAFAM Board Chairman--he also served as . . . Director until a new director was hired. So, he actually was with CAFAM for at least 25 years. We're going to talk about those last few years at our next session.

During his tenure, [Patrick] was involved in virtually every aspect of a museum whose size belied its complexity and level of activity. Today, I'd like to take on some larger topics, and not worry too much about the chronology, though I would like to stop today, approximately, at the end of 1992, when we moved out of the May Company [Department Store]. And my name is Joan Benedetti.

So, Patrick, it's been difficult to decide how to frame these questions, because you were involved in just about everything. So, I decided that, today, as I said, we won't worry that much about chronology, and we'll just tackle some of the larger topics.

PHE: OK. Sounds good.

JB: I thought we'd start by just talking about the many support groups that the museum had. As you know--I'm sure you can comment on this--the support groups are a blessing and a challenge. (laughs) And as administrator, you had to at least be aware of what was going on and, to some extent, make sure that they weren't bumping into each other and overlapping. The volunteers, of course, were there pretty much to begin with when you arrived. I thought I'd just mention a few names of people that were involved. Eventually, the volunteer group became an actual council, a Volunteer Service Council. Gail Goldberg, I guess [was the first Volunteer Coordinator]. Did you hire her?

PHE: Yes, I did.

JB: And so she was a paid, at least part-time, staffer at first?

PHE: Right. Mm-hmm. We had the Volunteers, we had the Contemporary Crafts Council, we had the Folk Art Council, we had the Museum Associates, we had various groups affiliated with the Festival of Masks over the time that it ran, and one of the things that I tried to do to--you know, when you're a volunteer, you get psychic satisfaction, or spiritual satisfactions, or the sense that you've done good deeds and good works, and that is typically what drives people. However, . . . it's also a passion and a love for the art form, or the hospital, or whatever nonprofit one is affiliated with--church, whatever. But also in addition, there's a need for formal recognition.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: And for a sense of worth, and a sense of gravitas, of weight. So one of the things I always tried to do was to integrate the volunteers **[5:00]** into the fabric of the museum. And to that end, the Folk Art Council chairperson was made an *ex officio* member of the board of directors.

JB: Yes.

PHE: Same with the Volunteers [Council], same [with] the Craft Council. And so, by doing that, they all felt that they had--and they have literally--a seat at the table, and their needs, wishes, accomplishments, whatever, could be made known to the larger board. So that's how I tried to bring them into the fold and to make sure that their work would be optimized, and they would feel good about [it].

JB: Oh, yes. And that was really appreciated, I know. I just was thinking--when you were talking about gravitas--and that was important--but we also had a lot of fun.

PHE: Oh, yeah!

JB: At times, I thought, any excuse for a party! And I'm realizing, talking about these groups, that a lot of the time it was parties [that they were involved with], of one kind or another.

PHE: Well, it could've been an opening, it could've been a reception at someone's home, it could've been a trip. I was just thinking about your library and your archive, and you had, you know--like remember Judith--you had a lot of different volunteers who were--

JB: Judy Clark?

PHE: Judy Clark--wholeheartedly dedicated to you.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And that made your work easier. And they just toiled in the fields of the library, you know?

JB: Well, I'm glad you mentioned Judy. She just passed away --

PHE: No, I heard that. Right.

JB: --last Thanksgiving. Oh, that's right, we did talk about that.

PHE: Right, right.

JB: She was 96 years old.

PHE: Wow.

JB: But every one of the departments of the museum had volunteers to one extent or another, and I think they all, you know, gravitated to whatever they loved best.

PHE: And attended whatever party was being thrown.

JB: Exactly! (laughter) Yes, some of us more than others.

PHE: Well, I think the fact that for many years of the museum's existence, there was a restaurant right in the middle of it, with a full service bar --

JB: Yes! (laughs)

PHE: --before it turned into just wine and beer only.

JB: And cappuccino.

PHE: Yeah, and cappuccino. So . . . just even on your way out the door you were in a celebratory environment, where a lot of people came to just hang out, you know. That was early on, anyway. Later, as the place evolved physically, that changed a bit.

JB: Yes. Before the restaurant closed, I used to think that that place right there at the railing overlooking the gallery was the best place to be. It was really in the middle of things--

PHE: Yeah, exactly.

JB: --and kind of was a metaphor for everything that went down.

PHE: For food looking down on art? (laughter)

JB: Well, you know, we just said we wanted to feed all the senses.

PHE: Right.

JB: So, let's see--is there anything else we want to say about the volunteers other than...

PHE: Well, . . . you mentioned . . . that I hired Gail Goldberg because I wanted the volunteers not only to be organized and made accountable, but I also wanted them to know that they were important to the museum, so much so, that we would pay someone to help them with all of their various issues.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And so, I think those organizational commitments to board positions and to staff support served to make them work better and optimally.

JB: Oh, absolutely. I think there were a few years when the museum couldn't afford to pay that individual, at least for a while.

PHE: Mm-hmm.

JB: But, yeah. Having the liaison, or the position on the board--

PHE: Right.

JB: --certainly added to its importance, or its gravitas. The two councils that represented, at least at the beginning, the major interests of the museum, Contemporary Craft and Folk Art, **[10:00]** were very important. There [are] several aspects . . . that I wanted to . . . [talk] about. First, I'd just like to mention that the . . . Contemporary Craft Council was organized by a group of people, Bernard Kester was one, Suzy Ticho, Dora Delarios, and then Shan Emanuelli [were the others]--this was, by the way, in 1979, that both the councils were organized. And Shan was on staff by that time. In 1989--which of course was after you had become Executive Director [because] Edith had retired--they did change the name to the Contemporary Craft and Design Council.

In 1980, all these groups seemed to have some sort of major event. I guess quite a few of them were fundraisers for the museum, and the Contemporary Craft Council had the Contemporary Craft Auction. I was trying to remember, I guess I should call Shan and ask her--the Contemporary Craft Auction was first held in 1980, but I don't think she was married to Mike Kaiser yet at that time.

PHE: I'm not sure.

JB: I know that eventually he served as the auctioneer for the Contemporary Craft Auction.

PHE: Right, right. He did several auctions, not only for the museum, but for other places.

JB: Oh! I didn't realize that.

PHE: Yes, and then I got into it as well for different organizations . . . . So, often, it was either Mike or me as the auctioneer.

JB: Well, I can understand that. Now, the Folk Art Council, organized also in 1979, organized I guess by Jane Ullman, Tomi Kuwayama (who is still involved), and Joyce Hundal, with Willow Young being the staff liaison. A few years after that, in 1983, they had the idea of organizing a folk art market.

PHE: Right.

JB: Which turned into a very big deal. I guess--I don't have the figures, but my assumption is that they were able to contribute a lot of money.

PHE: Right, and they're still doing it.

JB: Well, they were. I understand from Tomi that last year was the last.

PHE: Really? I didn't know that.

JB: Well, I just heard this from her. They had 25 folk art markets, every year. Even including the years that the museum was closed, they had their folk art market.

PHE: Yeah. They were great.

JB: They're going to continue as a council, but they're not going to do their market, and I was very sad to hear that. Now, the Associates--why don't you tell about what the Associates did. They got started in 1980.

PHE: Well, they were principally focused on--all of the groups, the Craft Council, later to become the Craft and Design Council, the Folk Art Council, the Associates--they all wanted more of what the museum was doing, but was not financially, organizationally, able to provide. And so, in a way, they were all augmentations, and they grew out sort of concentrically from the museum's core missions. And the Associates would basically go on trips, principally domestic trips.

JB: Generally, on weekends, I think.

PHE: Like four-day trips. Once in a while, they would go on international trips, but they would go to, like institutions, or like collectors, or like organizations—or museums and so on--in different cities.

JB: And you went on some of those.

PHE: Some of them I went on, yes. There was an assistant to our then-chairperson, Mort Winston, called Mark Gallon, and Mark Gallon really liked the idea of . . . the Associates. And so they paid $500 a year over and above **[15:00]** their museum membership to be an Associate Member, or maybe it was the museum membership, that was with museum membership at that level. And by so doing, earned the right to pay additional money--

JB: Yes! (laughs)

PHE: --to go on trips. But the trips were pretty gourmet, high-end, you know, good food, good wine, . . . and in the travel--in the institutional travel world, which I know a little bit about--having a strong affiliation with an institution like a craft museum or a contemporary art museum in one city, unlocks the doors to that similar institution in another city. And so you get to go to collectors' homes, you get to go behind the scenes, go through the vaults

of museums, the collection's storage areas, and meet with craftspeople, or designers, or folk artists in their studios, or ateliers, or whatever. And so that sort of institutional imprimatur, or "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval," opens doors that a non-affiliated group might have more difficulty opening.

JB: Sure. And all of these things were--in I suppose both general and specific ways--good promotion for the museum.

PHE: They were. And then the other corollary is that programmatically, the museum was--particularly with folk art, but also with design and craft--it was international in its scope. And so, that gave rise to international travel programs that were either for the Associates or the broader membership. But we also served--as you probably remember--on a number of occasions as the coordinators for a variety of international symposia.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: Japan Today, Egypt Today, Scandinavia Today...

JB: "Today" shows.

PHE: Yes, the Korean-American Centennial Celebration. As we talked in our last interview, the Olympics [Arts Festival in 1984] made the Mask Festival international, and so there were a lot of international activities [associated] with that. I mean from the Craft and Folk Art Museum to the related institutions in different countries: related . . . folk artists or craftspeople.

JB: Yes. I think you were--well, you were involved in all of them--but I think Edith was the principal person, or the chair, at least, for the Japan Today.

PHE: She was the chair . . . for Japan Today, and then I did Egypt Today, and . . . we were co-chairs of Scandinavia Today.

JB: Yes, that's my understanding, too. I wanted to ask you particularly about Egypt Today, because in connection with that, you went to Egypt at least once, and maybe...

PHE: A couple times. I led a museum tour there once, as well. And it's pretty interesting. I probably wouldn't recommend going there right now with a group, but at that time it was relatively safe.

JB: In 1981--and interesting because we had the visit from Mrs. Anwar Sadat--

PHE: Jehan Sadat, right!

JB: --just before her husband was assassinated.

PHE: Right, exactly. Yeah, [the vist] was pretty . . . [interesting to be in Egypt then]. And I remember when I was going there to coordinate the [program]--see, I was a part of a

national team. There were two ambassadors, [Joseph] John Jova and [L.] Dean Brown--they had been ambassadors to various countries in the Middle East and South America, and then Janet Solinger, who was the head of the Smithsonian Institution Museum [Resident] Associates . . . [program]. So, the four of us would meet with all these people--cabinet-level ministers, you know, ambassadors --

JB: Wow.

PHE: --whomever--to plan all of these exhibitions and visits and so, subsequent to that . . . when I went back to Egypt to lead a tour for the museum . . . it was [helpful] . . . to have that type of entrée.

JB: Oh, yes.

PHE: I remember one time we were drinking scotch in the American Embassy [with our] . . . ambassador to Egypt, [a former] ambassador to the Organization of American States **[20:00]**, and [a former] ambassador to Jordan, [right in the heart of Cairo]. And we were talking about politics, and it was fun! It was sort of a heady experience, you know.

JB: Well, it seems to me that there were many occasions when CAFAM [made an impact], relative to its size--of course, it did grow!

PHE: It grew, right.

JB: Over the years--but still, relative to LACMA [the L.A. County Museum of Art]--it was relatively small, and yet it did attract major figures [from] both political [spheres] and, you know, the movie industry of course, but also [many other] people . . . who were quite well known.

PHE: Right, well, I think the museum--it was not as much focused on collecting, due to its size and budget constraints as some place like LACMA. But I think it was more attentive to, programmatically and institutionally, . . . the idea of a museum as a tool or an agent of improving life in Los Angeles and beyond. And I think one of the great things that we tried to do was to promote cross-cultural awareness, understanding, and hopefully eventually a mutual respect among people.

The different exhibitions, the Mask Festival, the international symposia, the collecting activities that existed, those were all sort of geared toward . . . a yet more transcendent potential that the institution has--and all institutions have, but a lot of people just get stuck on themselves and they don't go outside the box. And I think one of the good things about the Craft and Folk Art Museum was it did go outside of the box, at that time, anyway.

JB: Well, it did. Because its focus--in a very natural way--because its focus was, as you said last time, for the most part the functional, or dealing with materials that, in the traditional context, are very everyday.

PHE: Right.

JB: So even within the so-called contemporary craft world, the issue of the material would come up, and its relationship to today. To whatever was going on today. I just wanted to mention--as we talk, so many memories come up, and this is going back a while--but the very first Primavera ball, which I believe was in 1977, each of those balls, as a fundraiser, had an honoree, and the honorée in that year was . . . Joan Mondale, [wife of Vice-President Walter Mondale].

PHE: Oh, right. I remember that.

JB: I don't know how many people even remember who she is at this point, but at the time, President Carter was in office, and Fritz Mondale, [who had been a Senator from Minnesota for 12 years], was the Vice President, and Joan Mondale [was known as "Joan of Art"] because of her great interest in art, and particularly in crafts. She was a ceramicist, I believe. So she had a major interest in it. I'm not sure how the connection [with her] was made initially, but she became our honorée that first year, and not only came to the ball, but visited the museum.

PHE: Well, I think there were two ways that connection was made. One is that at that time, a great friend of the museum and one of its early supporters [was] Elena Canavier--

JB: Oh yes!

PHE: --she was a native of Los Angeles, a resident of Los Angeles, anyway. She was the . . . [Coordinator] of the National Endowment for the Arts Craft Program [1974 – 1978] before somebody like Eudora Moore [Moore was Craft Coordinator 1978 – 1981] , for example.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: She had regular entrée to Joan Mondale, and, you know, they commissioned these--

JB: Yes!

PHE: --stemware glasses and plates and flatware.

JB: "[American] Crafts in the White House" [was the name of the exhibition those commissioned pieces were in; opened August 16, 1977].

PHE: "Crafts in the White House," right. . . .And they commissioned all these artists to have American craft works used in various dinners at the White House **[25:00]** and eventually, we as an institution acquired one of those [place settings]. But the other entrée was

[through] a former trustee, Ed Sanders, who was . . . [Senior Advisor on the Middle East to President Carter, 1978 – 1980] . . . .

JB: Oh!

PHE: And Ed Sanders was a very old friend of the Wyles [as well as] their lawyer. And I remember going to the White House with Frank and Edith Wyle, at his invitation, and meeting Rosalynn Carter and going inside the Oval Office and having lunch--

JB: Wow!

PHE: --at the White House Mess, and all that stuff. [President] Jimmy Carter wasn't there at the time, but Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter--just to continue--they were also interested in the crafts [and] they were very good friends with Sam [and Alfreda] Maloof.

JB: Ah. **[overlapping dialogue; inaudible]**

PHE: And they have several pieces of his furniture that they've bought, both subsequent to the White House, and I guess during their time there. Reagan has one of his rockers, Al Gore has one of his rockers, I think Bill Clinton does--

JB: I think so, too.

PHE: So, you know, [Maloof's] had quite a run. So, we had Elena Canavier, Ed Sanders, Sam Maloof, and others. . . **[Recorder paused.]**

JB: OK, we took a short break. There was so much going on [in the early days of CAFAM]. I guess I'd [like next] to try to get a sense of the kinds of things that you had to deal with--every day, it seemed. There were many decisions to be made. Many things--I think we mentioned this last time--many projects that started out very small, [and then] grew, to some extent in unexpected ways. And I can't resist mentioning the library as one of them.

PHE: You shouldn't resist. You were the prime mover.

JB: [laughs] Well, that's what brought me to CAFAM. And there was already a library there. The Egg and the Eye Cultural Association, I guess, had a small library. There was even another librarian there before me, I wasn't the first one! (laughs)

PHE: Really? Who was that?

JB: Her name was Karen--oh, her last name has escaped me just now. [Cahoon]. But Judy Clark was there, too.

PHE: Wow, way back then.

JB: Yes, Judy actually started as a volunteer about the same time that you came [in 1975], and I didn't come along until a year later. I don't know exactly whose idea it was to go after grants for the library, I think it was partly my idea because I could see the potential. I didn't see that there was any other sort of information clearing house for folk art and contemporary craft on the West Coast. There were a few other organizations, but I could see that even if we weren't a research library to begin with, because of our size, that we could serve the purpose of having information files. Of course, this was way before computers.

But at any rate, Ruth Bowman was one of the people who encouraged me, and Mark Gallon. And after a couple of years, we came to the conclusion that we could write a feasibility study, and so I went off--actually, we got a grant to pay me to do the feasibility study over one summer, and then the feasibility study resulted in a grant from the [James] Irvine Foundation, the first of several grants from the Irvine Foundation. I really just wanted to [mention it] because it's I think typical of a number [CAFAM] projects: as long as we had funding for them, they tended to continue and to grow. I did **[30:00]** do some figuring, and over 18 years that the library was funded, we got almost $330,000 [in grants], which averages out to almost how much it cost to pay me, so (laughs)--

PHE: Right, well--

JB: --so I felt like, at least my salary was paid--

PHE: That's wonderful.

JB: --over those [21] years, [1976 – 1997].

PHE: Well, the library, and the exhibitions, and the various activities--the publications we made, the catalogs, our newsletters, newspapers, members' bulletins, all these different things--when you're the director or the head administrator, the decisions that you make are in the context of the overall mission of the museum, how the various programs--in the appropriate mixture--realize that mission, and then, within those, [there is] further prioritization of what the best aspects of each program area are . . . , you know, to underwrite, to pay for, and not, hopefully, to have the tail wag the dog.

JB: Yes.

PHE: So, ultimately, the director, who's hired by the board--the board makes the policy, the director and staff implement the policy through various programs--it's ultimately about decision-making and trying to--it's like a recipe in a way--like cooking something. You have to have the right mix, and if you have the right mix, it will come out well, and people

will like it, and it'll be saleable, and that means you'll get support, or they'll keep coming back to your restaurant, whatever. You know, and if you have a bad mix--

JB: That's a very appropriate metaphor.

PHE: --if you have a bad mix, then it doesn't work. Or things get out of whack. It's really about that--I made the reference earlier to the institution being a vehicle or a tool for social change, cultural change, whatever. And so you've got to think of it as something that you can sort of steer, and the way you steer it is by constantly fine-tuning. It comes down to who to hire, sometimes who to fire, what projects to do this year, what projects to do next year, what projects to do a planning study for--before you go whole hog to get a fully implemented program--and which programs to let go when it's time to let them go, and to try and do it in a positive way, you know?

One of the things that I was thinking about earlier when you were talking about the various councils, is that the whole arena of crafts, or design, or craft-as-art, has had a lot of identity issues. What is it really? Is it art, is it craft? That whole thing. The design functionality--I remember developing sort of a context [about] where . . . [types of folk art or crafts were] . . . in a fundamental way, . . . in stages of industrial development. A lot of folk art and folk objects were, in effect, pre-industrial; and some crafts are pre-industrial, or early industrial; . . . design was industrial, [was a product of] . . . industrial societies—[in] much of Europe, Japan. And then . . . we get into a post-industrial world, where most of us are involved in providing services or processing information--which the Computer Age was--and we continue to be **[35:00]**--rushing headlong toward. We're [now] in a very post-industrial society, all of our things we use, our cups and glasses and so on, are made probably somewhere else by machines or craftspeople, but the craftspeople are somewhat irrelevant to that process unless you're nostalgic or unless you gravitate toward art.

And so a lot of [crafts]people [in industrial societies] felt put out to pasture or something, or they felt like they needed to go in a different direction, whereas a lot of the folk art things just continue along in traditional--made by traditional people in traditional societies. And I think it's interesting that the Folk Art Council is still going strong--

JB: Yes.

PHE: --and the Craft Council--or the Craft and Design Council, long since, you know, went by the boards. It went belly-up.

JB: It did not last as long, no.

PHE: And I think part of that has to do with the whole ferment, lack of identity, confused identity, that [contemporary] crafts have. This is just not in LA or in the Craft and Folk Art

Museum. There used to be an American Crafts Council, which has gone through all kinds of convulsions.

JB: Well, they [the ACC] still exists.

PHE: Well, it still--but it's diminished. And the World Craft Council doesn't exist anymore.

JB: No.

PHE: I mean, there was a time in post-war studio crafts . . . . and world crafts where there was all--it was very exciting and there was a bunch of activity.

JB: They were sort of rediscovering all of it.

PHE: The great masters of craft--Marguerite Wildenhain, Bob Stocksdale, Sam Maloof--a lot of them are no longer alive, and a lot of them don't have very many heirs. There are certainly some heirs--you know, you have Dale Chihuly, but Chihuly's much more thought of as an artist than a craftsperson. Anyway, it's all sort of interesting, and I do think that still, there's a validity to . . . certain forms other than [just being] collectible, or nostalgic, or decorative, whatever.

JB: [overlapping dialogue; inaudible]

PHE: There's a relevance based on where in the continuum of industrial development a person finds himself or herself.

JB: Let me just make a little bridge here from one topic to the next. I just want to mention that . . . the library initiative that was part of the effort to build a new museum, and to go in a more enhanced direction for the museum, was what we finally called the Center for the Study of Art and Culture. And the bridge that I'm going to make is that the issues that you've just been discussing were a large part of what CSAC was supposed to be about, and we hoped that it would be a fellowship program, [though] we never had the funding for the fellowships. But it certainly was intended, and I think served for a while, at least, as a think tank, and--and as a place of ideas.

PHE: Yes, it did. I agree with you.

JB: And you attended, I think, almost all of those [CSAC] National Advisory [Board] meetings that we had when we were in the May Company. I just want to mention [that] in terms of folk art, versus [contemporary craft]--and I think you agree--to a large extent, it was almost a competition in some ways within the museum. [People used to question:] Were we having a balance between folk art and contemporary craft exhibitions? I think this still comes up occasionally. . . . And there really was--I can say from the staff point of view--there really was a concerted effort to . . . [achieve] that balance. . . . I always found it interesting . . . that the people who tended toward the Contemporary Craft Council, who

tended to have homes filled with modern or contemporary art and craft--also were **[40:00]** interested in folk art, to a large extent.

PHE: Many, but not all.

JB: No, not all. But, in comparison, to those--these are generalizations, of course, but--the folk art people that I have talked to, often were not really at all interested in contemporary art or craft. So in a funny way, I think that the contemporary art world was more embracing of all that the Craft and Folk Art Museum was doing--still, it didn't keep the Contemporary Craft Council from having a dwindling membership. The Folk Art Council still exists. I'm just wondering if you have any comments about that. Have you noticed those things?

PHE: Yes, I have noticed those things. I agree with you. And I think that, in general . . . that the traditional crafts and folk arts are experienced more on a visceral level, . . . maybe an emotional level, . . . [or] nostalgic level, and I think a lot of [contemporary] crafts and art, certainly those things exist in different parts of the art world, but I think in general they're more cerebral, and they're more--

JB: Cool.

PHE: --yeah, cool--more subject to [insight, perception, media] style and fashion. One of the things about folk art, and it's not--while there are innovations—[as quick moving], and I remember having big arguments with different curators about innovations and traditions.

JB: I bet some of those with were Laurie Beth Kalb.

PHE: And I remember thinking that a lot of people in the folk art world, [e.g.], Bess Hawes at the National Endowment [for the Arts Folk and Traditional Arts program], folklorists at UCLA--I thought that they were extremely doctrinaire.

JB: Mm-hmm.

PHE: And that they were very, very, . . . pinned down by their own definitions, and they had to make it all logical, and all--I mean, there was intellectual rigor associated with folklorists and folk art specialists, but when you get down to it, in general, the folk arts are more traditional, and crafts are more contemporary, and the more emotional, visceral things in my opinion are associated with folk arts, and more intellectual style things are associated with contemporary crafts. And, you know, some people are interested in both, and some people are interested in neither. And I don't think, even in contemporary art, I don't think a lot of contemporary art people respond to crafts or folk arts. But if--you know--if Bruce Nauman, or, I don't know, Damien Hirst, or somebody uses traditional media--

JB: Mm-hmm.

PHE: --then, they [appropriate] it as art. There's a lot of hype and BS in the whole art world anyway, whatever you are in it. And there are a lot of lemmings, and there are a lot of people who purport to know what they're talking about, but really don't.

JB: Certainly.

PHE: Don't get me started. (laughter)

JB: Well, I won't then! [But] if we can talk about some of it--because it underlies a lot of what the Craft and Folk Art Museum did --

PHE: Well, did it?

JB: I think that a lot of the excitement, underneath the superficiality of the parties and sort of glamour of some of the people that we dealt with--underneath, there was a controversial aspect to what we were doing, which lent a great excitement --

PHE: Right.

JB: --to what we were doing.

PHE: I agree. At the Craft and Folk Art Museum, and in **[45:00]** corporate venues, and other non-profit and for-profit galleries I have been affiliated with, probably, 400 - 500 exhibitions over the last many years--I've personally organized [or "curated"] a couple hundred and I've been affiliated with other ones. I work with a large number of people who are very sophisticated or very unsophisticated, and I'm constantly amazed at the misperceptions and lack of perception--and insights on the other end of it--that people have. And you find very knowledgeable people in very unlikely places, and people you thought would be very knowledgeable, and who aren't, in very prominent places. It's always an interesting mix.

JB: Yes, and I've found--because I have done a lot of thinking about this, as have you--that the topic of folk art, in particular--although this applies to contemporary craft also, but--I think for people who have not had to think about it, I think that the assumption is that it's simple, that it's--and I think to a large extent it's true, the entry [to the subject] is easy, it's easy to relate to these objects.

PHE: Right. Mm-hmm.

JB: But if you have to think about what these objects mean to us today, and why we're having exhibitions about them, and especially at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, why were we doing both--displaying and collecting both contemporary craft and folk art--what was the relationship of those two things? My point is that that topic, or topics, is much deeper and much more complicated than I think most people who have not thought about them ahead of time realize.

PHE: Are you talking about [this] from . . . an anthropological perspective, or--

JB: Well, I'm talking about from all of the perspectives. Certainly, yes. Certainly from a sociological perspective...

PHE: Well, I agree with you. However, I do still think that a lot of folklorists over-intellectualize things.

JB: Oh, I--

PHE: And I think that that's--

JB: They have to justify their [positions]--

PHE: A lot of things [I'm saying are heretical] are like--I'm sure it's heresy, but to me they're [often talking] like angels dancing on the head of a pin, you know? And that's fine for . . . intellectual . . . [dissertations], but to obsess about it--I think it takes it to [the realm of] esoterica. And then it becomes less relevant. It's relevant as, maybe, underpinning, foundations, and conceptual frameworks for an institution, but when you get to the reality of public programming--very quickly, it becomes unknowable to a large portion of the potential audience.

JB: For sure, certainly. I do think that the trend in museum interpretation, education, and display has been more in the direction that the Craft and Folk Art Museum was going.

PHE: Mm-hmm.

JB: I do think that in a small way, we were leaders--

PHE: Yes, I agree with you.

JB: --in that direction. That is the direction of giving more information, of getting away from the purely formalist idea of the white cube, that works of art, that no additional information--

PHE: But, see, the issue I'm talking about--I have no disagreement with you about that. What I'm talking about is more the nature of the "more information" given. Is it accessible information? Is it understandable, is it relevant? It shouldn't be just lightweight fluff. But if it gets to be too esoteric, too theoretical, too minute in the points it's trying to make--people's eyes will glaze right over and they'll walk right by. . . .

JB: Absolutely. Let's see. **[50:00]** There's so much to talk about. I want to be sure to mention a couple of things. Gallery 3.

PHE: Gallery 3--that was in Santa Monica?

JB: Yes.

PHE: I remember that.

JB: 1980.

PHE: Frank Gehry was doing Santa Monica Place, and we--

JB: Which is just now being torn down.

PHE: Are you kidding?

JB: No, no.

PHE: I didn't know that.

JB: It's being hollowed out and made into an outdoor mall.

PHE: Wow.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: Well, anyway, Frank Gehry also designed a space for us there, and we had an extension museum in this shopping center, which was a lot of work. I don't know, we thought that we would get better traffic, but we were way off in a corner, and I think we were across from the May Company housewares [department] or something like that.

JB: It was off in a corner, and it was hard to find [within the mall complex].

PHE: Yeah.

JB: And I think the consensus, at the end, after we had to close after just one year--

PHE: Right.

JB: --is that that was the primary problem.

PHE: Well, we were also trying to sell handmade objects across the mall from machine-made or production things. And so, instead of getting a hand-thrown, hand-glazed, unique coffee mug for $15 [or more], people would go buy a machine-made one for $3.

JB: Well, you said that when you first went into the Egg and the Eye gallery, or the early (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) . . . [days of the Museum].

PHE: I was outraged, yeah.

JB: --you couldn't believe the prices.

PHE: I was just--the prices were just through the roof, yeah. . . . For me, anyway.

JB: Well, I think for a lot of people it [was] hard to . . . [understand the different market that we, as an "art gallery" represented]. We did have some very interesting exhibitions there during that year--how many people actually saw them, I don't know.

PHE: I saw all of them. (laughs)

JB: Well, and I did too.

PHE: I'm sure. (laughter)

JB: But yeah, Ann Robbins and Susan Skinner--well, they were more or less in charge of managing that space and developing it, but Shan Emanuelli, . . . had more of a curatorial role.

PHE: Yes, she did. And she did a great job--all three of them did, but one thing you may not know, is that one of the employees there [at the time], a guy named Bill Sheehy, [who] was a tall young man. . . , he learned a lot [there] about exhibitions and display and all of that stuff. And [now] his gallery, right in the middle of Beverly Hills, is one of the most preeminent--it's called Latin American Masters. . . . It's not on Rodeo Drive, but it's on Canon or one of those. And he [did all] sorts of exhibition and organizational activities--at Gallery 3, and then went on to open his own gallery. [Sheehy closed his Beverly Hills location and opened an expanded gallery in Santa Monica at Bergamot Station in 2009.]

And as we [have] mentioned, Aaron Paley and Katie Bergen, who did CARS, Community Arts Resources, [were also very successful] after CAFAM. Largely predicated on the stuff they got from [working on the Festival of Masks], all that. Susan Skinner opened the New Stone Age gallery, she sort of left the shop, and took some people with her, and started a gallery. I mean, lots of people sort of used--the museum as a springboard, you know.

JB: Absolutely. And because of the museum's great reputation, in part, they were very successful. But also I think the staff of the Craft and Folk Art Museum, had, if they were willing to work hard--and they had to work hard!--and I always thought, you know, both you and Edith (this is going to sound like I'm suggesting it was very sexist), but the fact is that our staff was overwhelmingly young women.

PHE: Women. I remember that, now.

JB: There were a few exceptions, but I really believe that as young women in the '70s and '80s, we realized that we had, first of all, a golden opportunity here, because of the subject matter, and its attractiveness, but that we had to work very hard, because we didn't have enormous budgets, we sort of went from grant to grant in a lot of cases, and so we worked very, very hard. And my point is that those who went on to other things, for whatever reason, had **[55:00]** really good, varied, in some cases in-depth, experiences at the Craft and Folk Museum --

PHE: Oh, they did.

JB: --that they wouldn't have been able to have at LACMA or another [museum].

PHE: They did, and because there were so many women, I had--in my office, there was a closet and inside [the closet], there was a ladder, and I could go up into the attic, and get a beer, and when things got really, (laughter) really, intense with all those women, I could retreat--

JB: Oh, that's beautiful!

PHE: --into my lair.

JB: That is wonderful.

PHE: And nobody (laughs) could find me. I could hear people looking, but if I just quietly sipped a beer, and just mellowed out-- (laughs)

JB: From there I bet you heard some interesting conversations!

PHE: It was a good escape hatch.

JB: OK. Gallery 3 unfortunately closed after just one year. I loved the last show that was there--the Buster Simpson and Richard Posner [show], "Two Schools of Fish"?

PHE: Right, right.

JB: You know, Santa Monica Place had that atrium, and for that show, some of [Simpson's]--

PHE: Salmon?

JB: The salmon [were] floating in the atrium.

PHE: Right, and I don't know if you know this, but Buster Simpson has become an internationally renowned--

JB: Yes.

PHE: --public artist. He does a lot of architectural-scale public art, and I [believe] that [exhibition] was one of the formative--

JB: Yes, I know.

PHE: -- activities in his career, in that sense.

JB: You were talking about staff moving on and using CAFAM as a stepping stone, but there were quite a few artists in the early day, and I think Dale Chihuly was one of them--

PHE: Yeah.

JB: --who had some of their first exhibitions at CAFAM.

PHE: Well, I mean, in the bigger picture, as small as the museum is and was, it's on [Wilshire Blvd.], the Los Angeles thoroughfare, in Los Angeles, a major world metropolis, and you can't avoid the fact that Los Angeles museums have cachet, they have a lot of juice, you know? And people took advantage of that, [sometimes exploitatively, sometimes not and the CAFAM experience] . . . accrued to their benefit.

JB: Absolutely. Another project I just want to mention briefly was something called--well, eventually, it was called "Home Sweet Home"—it started out as a vernacular architecture project, kind of the baby of [Gere Kavanaugh's] as I understand it, and unfortunately the exhibition that she had in mind to do, a show about color in vernacular architecture didn't come about, I guess, because of lack of funding, but, the project, which was a citywide project--I guess the reason I especially wanted to talk about it [was] as another example of something that the Craft and Folk Art Museum took on that became much bigger than itself.

PHE: I remember that, and maybe ten institutions or so? We had a symposium--

JB: Yes!

PHE: --at UCLA with Reyner Banham and I met Cliff May at the time, he was still alive--grand style architect. Charles Moore was on our committee and we worked with him a lot.

JB: Yes, he and Gere, at least officially, co-curated the project as a whole. The person who actually did the legwork was Blaine Mallory.

PHE: Yes, Blaine did a lot of that.

JB: She was hired in 1981, and I just finished going through those files, and it was quite amazing what she was able to accomplish with the grants that she got.

PHE: I agree. I agree totally.

JB: Two and half years, it was (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

PHE: It was a great program. I remember, that's when we were, in part, over at that other building.

JB: Yes, the Annex.

PHE: The Annex.

JB: Talk about that--the Annex.

PHE: Well, there was...

JB: It was one of several facilities outside of 5814 [Wilshire] that we had.

PHE: On the--I guess it would be the southeast corner--of Curson and Wilshire, there was a building that had been occupied by Emser International--

JB: Oh, yes.

PHE: --which was a tile and rug place, and they were going to demolish the building. **[1:00:00]** J.H. Snyder was going to demolish the building in order to create the big center that he ultimately did.

JB: Yes, California Courtyard, I think, or something like that.

PHE: Well--something like that.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: Museum Square, I think it was called Museum Square. [It was called Wilshire Courtyard.] And anyway, in those interim years between filing for the building permit, and getting the entitlements, and design development, and plan check, and all that stuff--the second floor of this building was made available to us for relatively little money, and so we took that on and were able to expand our exhibition program, our library--

JB: Well, the library wasn't there, but there was room for all [the rest of the staff].

PHE: The library was at the cottage [across the street], right. So we had three buildings going, and anyway, our staff expanded. We had a larger [gallery there], part of the mask [exhibition]--that was during the Olympic Year.

JB: Yes, yes.

PHE: So, I remember Blaine was working on the[vernacular architecture program]--I think her office was over there.

JB: I think so, too.

PHE: And anyway, it was just another--I mean, the museum, periodically had to be and was opportunistic when these things came along, because it needed to grow but it didn't have all the resources to grow.

JB: Did we have a very good--did we pay rent? I guess we must've. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

PHE: We paid rent, but . . . pennies on the dollar for what it normally would have cost. So I think Abe Bolsky, president of Tishman Construction, one of our board members at the time, paid for all the renovations, and--

JB: Oh!

PHE: --you know, we put up walls, so we could have our exhibitions and we had a storage area there, and we had offices there, and--

JB: Well, it did see-- from a staff point of view--it was just a relief. As we've been saying, the museum grew, and the staff grew also--not, maybe, as much as some of us would have liked, but at some point--I've been trying to figure out when the sort of peak was, but I guess there was more than one, where each of the--they were departments of the museum: education, library, development, the administrative offices, exhibitions, or curatorial. For a long time, as you know, there was just one person who represented each of these departments.

PHE: Right.

JB: And there were even some discussions [as to] whether we ought to call them departments, but I was one of those that really thought that it helped to clarify what our jobs were, which often became somewhat confused.

PHE: Right.

JB: We all obviously had to pitch in to help each other a lot of the time. But at some point, at least once and maybe twice, each of us had at least a part-time assistant.

PHE: Hmm.

JB: And eventually at least one full-time assistant, in addition to volunteers that we would have. So, the pressure on space, seemed like it was always--

PHE: Right.

JB: --intense. And getting the Annex space, even though I think it was only two and a half years or so that we had that space, was a--

PHE: Yeah, it was a great blessing. And, you know, I think part of the major impetus for a new building and the whole Richard Weinstein high-rise apartment/condominium thing--

JB: I want to talk about that, for sure.

PHE: Yeah, well, I think part of that was our need to try and ultimately settle on an optimum space. And we came online for that building right at the--I mean, we're talking right in the middle of a housing downturn.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And that was the one in 1989, I believe, when just the whole market went south.

JB: Yes.

PHE: That's before--I guess that's in the first Bush presidency, ironically, and before Clinton was elected in the early '90s. And we were in a recession at the time, and we alienated a lot of funders who had given us money for the entitlements. It was, just, inadvertent. It was society, you know, it was well beyond our control, but it was a--difficult period, and if I look back on a low point, that was a low point in the museum's history.

JB: Yes, now--

PHE: But that was all in the same area, **[1:05:00]** geographically, you know.

JB: Yeah, yeah. And the space issue, in part, contributed to that happening. And I do want to get into that in much more detail, actually. But first, I'd like to talk a little bit more about the time when Edith decided to retire, I don't know when her decision was, but she officially retired around July of 1984, and that was at least formally the time that you took on both the program and the administration as--

PHE: Mm-hmm.

JB: --Executive Director. And I wanted to ask you a few things about that time. I wondered, first of all, when she first told you that she was going to retire. Do you remember?

PHE: Probably six to eight months before that. You know, she'd started the Egg and the Eye in 1965, that was basically 20 years [to that point], and I think she was . . . I think there were a number of things. She was probably getting tired. They probably thought I might [think] it was time to move to--you know--advance my career in the museum world if I didn't assume [the CAFAM directorship]. All those things. Her needs, her accomplishments--I think, her great love, in addition to folk art, was masks.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And, you recall that [exhibition in 1984, in connection with the Olympic Arts Festival] was like her *magnum opus*, that mask exhibition [Masks in Motion, June 5 – September 15, 1984]--

JB: Yes.

PHE: --which she worked on with both Willow and Shan.

JB: And Brenda Hurst.

PHE: And Brenda Hurst. And so, you know, I think after she did that, and she accomplished it, she didn't see anything else on the horizon that would warrant her having to drive in every day and be a worker.

JB: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

PHE: You know, I mean, she didn't have to do this if she didn't want to, really. Work-wise, I mean.

JB: Right.

PHE: She wasn't forced to work.

JB: And also--I hadn't realized this until I heard it from Frank Wyle, but he also retired in 1984.

PHE: Yeah. And she wanted to be ready to travel and go on cruises, and stuff like that.

JB: Yes, I think I heard something about that. So, I guess from what you've just said--my assumption is that you did want the directorship, and I'm wondering--it sounds like the Wyles also assumed that you wanted it.

PHE: Right.

JB: Did they ever ask you--I mean, did you have a discussion about this?

PHE: We probably had several discussions about it. And, you know, what I would do, and what I would—again, without being self-aggrandizing . . . I was involved with a lot of programming at the Museum much earlier than that, and decision-making about what exhibitions to have, and so on. So it wasn't like some big abrupt deal. It was more--

JB: Gradual.

PHE: Yes, it was more gradual. And I also had different perspectives that she did, and--

JB: Well, talk about that.

PHE: I felt it was important to--I think the whole thing about the interrelationship between crafts and folk arts, and the natural inclusion of design as part of that continuum--I mean, I had sort of formed that intellectual construct, and a lot of people--over the years, as I would go to conferences, or I would be making a pitch to some foundation or something, I would be asked to explain, "What is this about? Why are these things together?" And so I had to formulate what I believed made sense for those things. And I think Edith, to an extent, instinctively knew that there was a relationship and just . . . [acted on] it. I mean, she was brilliant, and certainly very capable intellectually, but I don't think she over-intellectualized that stuff.

JB: No.

PHE: And I don't think that she was **[1:10:00]** all that interested in it. I mean, she was interested in that it had to happen, and she knew in her heart it had to happen. But I don't think she needed to write long papers about it, you know.

JB: Well, she had kind of, I think, a *gestalt*. When she would hear something that she recognized as what she felt to be true, she appreciated hearing that. But she didn't need to analyze it a great deal herself.

PHE: Right, and so to the extent that I knew I would . . . be responsible for the program activity as well as the other things, I felt that I needed to make it a little bit more succinct and cohesive and describable verbally. And so that was what I was interested in.

JB: Yes, and I think that it was an important direction to take the museum in. I looked at the list of exhibitions, the chronological list, and I believe that "Sidecar," which you were very involved with--it wasn't actually mounted until about a year and a half later, February '86, which is not a long time in terms of exhibition organization, but it was a very interesting show, it showed--well, why don't you tell about "Sidecar"?

PHE: Well, yeah, I think [the subtitle was] "The Process of Design in Contemporary Lighting." And my friend and a very well-recognized designer, Ron Rezek, and some of his associates--

JB: Who worked with Artemide.

PHE: And he worked with Artemide--and were in turn associated with the Memphis [design] group through some of the members.

JB: Yes--which was very hot at the time.

PHE: Yeah, very hot. And it was an illustration of how the unique handcrafted prototype could be turned into a production model for the manufacturing community. From the context of the discussion we've been having, it was a very direct illustration of the idea of the individual maker, or craftsperson, coming up with different concepts that he or she could make as a unique, one-of-a-kind object, or that in turn had the potential to be manufactured and then distributed. And so I think of the 20 or 30 designs, four of them were actually produced, and then I think we sold some of those in the museum shop.

JB: I think so, yes.

PHE: Yeah.

JB: I have a couple of lamps from that [exhibition].

PHE: It's not a far jump from that to Isamu Noguchi's Akari light sculptures--

JB: Oh, sure.

PHE: --which are the traditional paper [lamp] forms in Japan, that were--some were sculpted, and on stands--and they're still in production, even though he's no longer living.

JB: And [there are] knock-offs at IKEA.

PHE: Yeah, and knock-offs at IKEA. And, again, it's the idea of the traditional folk art, or unique craft, coming into the industrial world and having a resonance--either nostalgic, or aesthetic, or whatever. And then being made available for a lower price than it would be if it were a unique paper sculpture by one of the world's great artists.

JB: And that's a familiar arena in the fine art world.

PHE: Right.

JB: Not only in printmaking, but certainly in printmaking.

PHE: In printmaking and multiples. And then you get, you know, the other thing that is a fact, is that--you know, you mentioned Bernard Kester, who [designed] many, many shows at LACMA--

JB: Yes. He still is doing it, yeah.

PHE: --and I think still continues to do so, and was the head of the art department at UCLA, but some of the other design titans who were involved in the museum, Charles and Ray Eames, for example. We did a show [in 1999], working again with Gere Kavanaugh—[about] Cranbrook--you know, people from Cranbook--one of the premier design **[1:15:00]** colleges. Like there were audiences for folk art, and audiences for craft, there were audiences for design.

JB: Yes.

PHE: That just added to the competitive nature of [working with your constituents]--well, you're not spending enough time on design, you're not spending enough time on craft, on folk art, and so you had to even slice and dice a little more. . . . I was interested in that stuff.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: That's where I was. I was more interested in that stuff.

JB: Yeah. Yes, and--

PHE: The nexuses, the interrelationships between the different forms.

JB: Yes, and I think everyone that heard about it--to begin with, really, had to have it explained to them. I felt, personally, that it really contributed to my wider understanding of all--you know, of everything that we had been doing up to that point.

PHE: Well, that's nice, coming from you. I'm glad to hear that.

JB: Aw-w! (laughter) No, it's true, I've always thought that was a major contribution that you made programmatically, and we had several [design] shows over the next few years. Of course, "Alvar Aalto: Furniture and Glass" came from MoMA [the Museum of Modern Art].

We weren't really that involved with the organization of that show, but we added a lecture series, . . . [and] there were a lot of education programs [in connection with that show].

PHE: It... oh, excuse me. **[Patrick answers his cell phone; recorder paused.]**

JB: No, go ahead.

PHE: I was going to say, incidentally, I was asked to attend a [1986 UNESCO meeting]—an Asian Crafts Conference in New Delhi--and I gave a lecture on this idea of traditional and folk crafts, and production crafts, and industrial crafts, and craft as art [all being related to the level of industrialization where they were made]. So I gave that in New Delhi, and I was asked for an article for *Museum Magazine* [the UNESCO magazine, #157, #1, 1988] on that. Yeah, and so, I felt like I had an opportunity to at least share that construct. And, I still think it's--I haven't heard [of] any big holes in it, you know, I haven't--again, the traditional, the folkloric society, doesn't buy that idea very much, but--

JB: But I don't know that they don't buy it. I think that--just to play devil's advocate for a minute--I think it's just not their thing, you know? Their thing is traditional folk art.

PHE: Right.

JB: They're not even interested in that other kind of folk art that the Craft and Folk Art Museum was interested in, which--

PHE: The outsider, or self-taught, or whatever.

JB: Exactly.

PHE: Yeah, because it doesn't conform to their theories.

JB: You certainly could look at it that way. Academics, as you know, have a very narrow focus, no matter what their focus is. They go deeper and deeper, rather than wider and wider. And I think to the Craft and Folk Art Museum's credit, we did go wider.

PHE: Well, actually, it was to our credit and to our detriment, because the people who controlled the purse strings at the National Endowment for the Arts Folk and Traditional Art program--

JB: Oh.

PHE: --would not support something that didn't comport with their worldview. And I always felt that the museum was discriminated against by the folklorists. And so--some of my dearest friends are folklorists, but as a body of academics, they're very limited in their perspectives.

JB: Yeah, I can certainly see why that kind of an agency would be perplexed with the range of material that we've dealt with.

Quickly--I'd like you to comment about the Craft and Folk Art Museum's permanent collection. When did you first become aware [of it]. Did Edith show you some of those things when you first were hired?

PHE: Well, I don't think at the time I was hired, they were in the permanent collection.

JB: Oh.

PHE: I think they were in Edith and Frank's collection, and over **[1:20:00]** time they gave some of them to the museum. I certainly went to their home during my interview process, and saw several things. And, I think, you know, most people felt that in order to ensure, or to facilitate, institutional permanence, you needed to have a permanent collection.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: Yeah, no, people would just think, "Oh, well, you're just a gallery, or you're a *kunsthalle* or whatever." I think it was in the institutional interests of the museum to actually have a collection. And after I left the museum, and I don't even know who directed it, actually, after I left, I forget.

JB: Paul Kusserow.

PHE: Paul Kusserow, right, a friend of John Walsh's from the Getty.

JB: Yeah.

PHE: But anyway, you know, several of the key players--Edith and Frank--I don't know who led [the effort]--maybe Dan Greenberg--either became disinterested or became ill, or whatever, and they decided to close the museum and sell off the collection at . . . [Butterfield] and Butterfield's [in March 1998]. And that was a very sad day.

JB: It was very sad.

PHE: Very sad, and I don't know if I would have taken that same decision, I don't know if it was, you know, [a wise step]. I always look back at it and could second-guess it. It's sort of like a great taboo to de-accession the bulk of [a museum's] things, especially when some of them are just front and center, within the museum's purview and mission. And so it took a while for the museum to recover from that, if it ever has, [as] you know. [Of course, I never knew all of the facts because I was no longer in the mix at the time.]

JB: Yes, well, of course, at the time, they thought they were going to make a lot more money from the sale than they actually did, and there was debt to be dealt with. But I thought it was a very sad thing. And one thing that really struck me was--did you go to the auction?

PHE: I went to the preview. I went to the preview, and I think I went to part of the auction. I was there because I know one former trustee who was disgruntled, wanted one particular

piece, and I was sort of there to see if he actually got it. And he did. But he had to pay dearly for it! [It was poetic justice!]

JB: Oh, good. (laughter)

PHE: Anyway, that was funny.

JB: Well, Beny and I did go to the auction, and in some ways it was more like a wake than an auction. But I also went to at least one of the preview days, and I was struck, because--for a number of reasons--primarily that we didn't have the best storage space for the collection--for a whole range of reasons, the staff, by and large, [never did] get to see the collection as a whole. Of course, a lot of it was packed away in trunks and flat files, and other containers, but at the preview to the auction it was all out there.

PHE: Right, I remember that.

JB: And I know that not everyone agrees with me, but I was very, very impressed.

PHE: Yeah, I agree. There was a lot of quality, and a lot of diversity, and a lot of depth.

JB: And such a range—a range of material. And it was very sad, as we've said.

PHE: Right, I think it was sad. I don't question the judgment of any of those people who made that decision, but I don't know, if I had been there, if I would have done it. And I found out about it after the fact.

JB: Oh, you did.

PHE: I wasn't part of the [planning process] --

JB: [You found out about it] after it was planned.

PHE: Yeah, after it was planned. And I remember, then, they were going--what year was that? It was in the '90s?

JB: It was '98, April '98 is when the [auction took place].

PHE: And that's when I started to wonder if something might be done, and sort of hatched this idea of maybe having a merger with the city cultural affairs department, and that's when I approached Al Nodal. But it was after the fact of the auction and the reality of the imminent demise of the museum.

JB: OK, [because we started talking about the permanent collection, we skipped ahead to the temporary closing of the museum and the auction of its collection, but now] we're going to [go back and] start on sort of a new subject **[1:25:00]**, although we've alluded to it. Starting in the summer of 1986, Frank and Edith attended the opening of the American Craft Museum in New York...

PHE: Mm-hmm. On 56th, or 57th, wherever it was, yeah.

JB: Well, they've just opened another new one, but that was--their first new building. . . . [The new American Craft Museum (formerly the Museum of Contemporary Craft) building that opened in 1986 was located in Manhattan at 40 West 53rd Street; in 2008 it closed at that location and reopened on Columbus Circle as the Museum of Arts and Design.]

PHE: I was there. I was at the same opening [in 1986].

JB: You did go.

PHE: Yes, I did.

JB: OK. Then, why don't you tell the story about how the germ of the idea for a new Craft and Folk Art Museum came about--according to legend, it happened as a result of Frank and Edith's visit, and your visit, to the American Craft Museum.

PHE: Well, essentially, the concept at the time was [the sale of] air space, and this is before the crash of '87, you know? And at that time, there was frenetic real estate activity, a boom period going on, and various non-profit institutions that had small buildings in urban areas, that were in desirable locations, came upon the idea of selling their air rights, and in the process, either building an endowment, or building enhanced physical space, or things like that. [We take a break; recorder paused.] Do you want to start over?

JB: No, that's fine.

PHE: All right, sorry for the interruption. Anyway, so--as you said--we were in New York at the opening of the American Craft Museum. I believe it was [William] Paley and CBS--I think they were the people that wanted to build the high-rise. In exchange for the high-rise being built above them, the American Craft Museum got a three-story or four-story space, including one subterranean story, or sort of a step down, maybe step down two floors, which had their temporary and permanent exhibitions. In fact, I think Shan Emanuelli, our former curator, was one of the research associates for Paul Smith, [their director at the time]. [He was] doing that inaugural exhibition which was called, "The Poetry of the Physical."

JB: That's right, yes.

PHE: That was the inaugural exhibition at the [new building].

JB: They [Shan and Mike Kaiser, her husband] had moved to New York, and she was working there for a while.

PHE: Yeah, [at the] new facility. Basically, the idea was that you get both capital investment, and you get income, both, and so they approached [the developer], Wayne Ratkovitch, who--

JB: Frank and Edith did.

PHE: Yes . . . [Wayne Ratkovich] had developed a number of historical properties: Chapman Market, the Wiltern, and the Oviatt Building, and places like that. He worked with Brenda Levin, who's a lighting specialist and architect. She recently has redone the City Hall and--

JB: Oh!

PHE: --Union Station, and I don't know if you've seen them light it up at night, but they're--

JB: I think I have, yes. They're attractive.

PHE: Anyway--and then there were a couple of different ideas about how to go about it, and I think Wayne [Ratkovich] was on the board of the Friends of the UCLA School of Architecture, and they tried--they thought Richard Weinstein, who was the new dean, would be the appropriate architect. And again, a lot of those decisions, I think, were sort of influenced--that's the most politically correct way to say it--by the personalities involved, and in a more objective context, maybe there would have been different developers, different architects, different this, different that, but that's the package, the hand we were dealt --

JB: Right.

PHE: --and that's what we dealt with. And the long and short of it **[1:30:00]** was that we were fully approved by the building department, the Department of Building and Safety of the City of Los Angeles, to do the first mixed-use building in the history of Los Angeles.

JB: Yes. It was certainly before its time.

PHE: Yeah, there were a lot of places who did that on the East Coast, but we were going to combine retail with museum, with residential.

JB: Yes.

PHE: On the corner of Curson and Wilshire, and we had a really hard time buying a piece of property adjacent to us, and we lost it at the last minute--

JB: What was the story about that?

PHE: --by $25,000 dollars and it was a real disaster.

JB: So, were you at the meeting at which . . . the attempt to buy that building happened? Or--

PHE: Well, the attempt to buy that building--we were offered that building several times over the years.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And never took it, at what was a really good price.

JB: Oh, you were actually offered? Because I know that Edith--I have a memo that she wrote back in 1975 [that] at the time that building was about $325,000.

PHE: That's correct. It was owned by Thrifty Oil.

JB: She really wanted it.

PHE: Yes, and they didn't buy it, and they could've had it for that [amount] for a long time.

JB: Mm-hmm.

PHE: Anyway, long story short, it got up over a million dollars, and we kept bidding, and we finally lost out--the museum lost out by a mere $25,000 to the ultimate buyer, who were Lena Longo and Roy--what's his name?

JB: Ventress.

PHE: Joseph L. Roy Ventress. Nice guy. And so we became partners. But the problem was, that [then, during the recession of the early nineties]--like now--exactly like now [in the 2008 "great recession" climate]--Ratkovitch, neither domestically or internationally, could . . . get the financing to build the building. And because he couldn't get the financing, we couldn't go forward, and so we rented that corner building, and sort of integrated it into our rehab of the 5814 building, the original museum building, because at the time, prior to that remodeling, it was non-compliant with earthquake safety standards.

JB: Yeah, now--let's just slow down a little bit here. There was the recession going on, so the construction couldn't go forward, but then to complicate things, the original building at 5814 Wilshire, was not earthquake compliant. I guess it hadn't been for a while, but the city had not been really insisting.

PHE: No, that's not quite accurate.

JB: Oh.

PHE: What was accurate [is]--it was fully compliant with Phase 1, which was--anchoring the walls and the ceilings.

JB: That was done a few years before.

PHE: But it wasn't compliant with Phase 2, which required all kinds of other stuff. So, because we were considering demolishing the building to make way for the new high-rise construction--

JB: Right.

PHE: --and [since] all of that was in process, we decided to shutter, for the interim, the existing building [at 5814 Wilshire], and due to our very, very good relations with the May Company Foundation and Jim Watterson, to move over to the May Company.

JB: They really made us an offer we couldn't refuse.

PHE: It was a great offer, and so, while we were in the planning stages of that high-rise, we made plans to relocate [to the May Company department store] rather than go to the expense of totally rehabilitating the [5814 Wilshire] building, which would have been, maybe, a couple hundred thousand, maybe more. You know, in retrospect, maybe it would have been a better thing to do that. But we didn't know at the time that we weren't going to be able to build the . . . [high-rise].

JB: No.

PHE: And so on. And so, so it all got sort of confusing. Chronologically, we started with the idea of the [high-rise] building concept; Phase 2 requirements [for our original building] were getting too expensive; [in August 1989] we took advantage of the May Company's very generous offer; we move over there, which now, by the way, again--we were trailblazers--because it [now] houses--

JB: Yes.

PHE: --[part of] the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And they love having that building.

JB: Yes. And it also includes the Craft and Folk Art Museum **[1:35:00]** library collection.

PHE: Right.

JB: At least for now.

PHE: At least for now, and so--then [1989-90] all hell broke loose with the financial markets, and we couldn't get the money to do the Richard Weinstein concept--

JB: Exactly.

PHE: --the mixed-use [high-rise] building. So, for a couple of years [we operated in the May Company]--then, what we decided to do was to . . . leave the May Company, and

rehabilitate [our 5814 Wilshire property]--and [also] I think because the May Company was closing that facility.

JB: Well, we were forced to leave [at the end of 1992], yeah.

PHE: Yeah, yeah. And so then we . . . [made] the decision to rehabilitate the museum on Wilshire, you know, 5814 and integrate it into the building on the corner [at 5800 Wilshire], which we had to rent at a fairly high price.

JB: Yeah, I think I remember it was $17,000--

PHE: Yeah, a month. It was really big.

JB: Even . . . [now it seems] abnormal.

PHE: Yes, and so that time we went through a very open and objective search for an architect. You know, I remember several very well-established architects applying for the job.

JB: Yes. Marcy Goodwin--let me just interject--we had hired Marcy Goodwin, who had been a consultant to the L.A. Museum of Contemporary Art, when it was building [its flagship building on Grand Avenue] in downtown L.A.

PHE: Right.

JB: And she worked with our staff [while we were still operating at 5814 Wilshire—before we moved to the May Company] on a big, extensive building program for the Ratkovitch development. Then, of course, that plan, the Ratkovitch plan, had to be abandoned. But then [later] Marcy Goodwin again worked with . . . [a combined board and staff] committee to revise that program in light of a more modest plan.

PHE: Correct.

JB: So, that was I guess going on while we were still in the May Company and we hoped to stay there for at least a few more months, possibly another year, but then the May Company Corporation [suddenly] decided [in November 1992] to close down the Miracle Mile building, which we were [still] in. So we ended up having to move [back to Wilshire] within a month. [But the 5814 Wilshire building had not yet been renovated, so we moved into the 5800 Wilshire building that CAFAM had leased.] Now, before you go on to talk about the 5800 building--it's that building [next door to the CAFAM building] on the [southwest] corner [of Wilshire and Curson].

PHE: All right, OK. As opposed to 5814, [which was our original building].

JB: It was my understanding that the rental agreement that was entered into with Ventress and Lena Longo was what they called at the time a "lease purchase option."

PHE: Correct.

JB: And I know that a lot of us [assumed]--and certainly the Ratkovitch [project] had been dependent on that building being part of the [plan]--

PHE: Totally. Absolutely.

JB: So then, when we moved into that [5800 Wilshire] building, even though it was on a rental basis--we still assumed that we would somehow be able to purchase that building.

PHE: Right.

JB: Talk about some of the advantages of that building.

PHE: Well, some of the disadvantages were that it was floating on a tar pit. There was an arm of the tar pits--

JB: Oh, that's right. That smell in the elevator--

PHE: --that extended over [Wilshire Blvd]. Basically, it was just a--you know, it was nature dominating mankind--humankind.

JB: Yes. How many times did you replace the carpet in the 5814 building [because of the tar that was tracked in]?

PHE: Oh, many times. But the advantages were that it was prime real estate, it was literally adjacent to the original building, [and] we were able to integrate the two buildings architecturally.

JB: Yes.

PHE: That's a plan that was developed by [the architectural firm] Hodgetts + Fung. And, you know, it gave us ample space for the library.

JB: And don't forget the parking.

PHE: For the parking, yup. Exactly, we had parking under that [5800 Wilshire lease], and, you know, I think we bought the Duplex [at 725/727 S. Curson], too, didn't we?

JB: Yes.

PHE: We bought the Duplex, so that we owned the cottage [at 731 S. Curson], we owned the Duplex, we had the parking lot [behind] the corner building. It was, you know, a good chunk of land on a prominent Los Angeles street corner, maybe more than an acre, maybe two acres, **[1:40]** I don't know. But it was a lot of land. You know, we were growing, we were going in the right direction, we were developing.

JB: And at the same time, I didn't mention this [before], but of course we had started this capital campaign in conjunction with the Ratkovitch plan, and--well, why don't you just comment on how this change of plans affected the capital campaign, if at all?

PHE: Well, I personally, as I think I mentioned, asked for and was awarded a million dollars from at least one donor, with a promise to give another million if the plans went forward. We got a couple of half-million dollar grants, we . . . [raised] a lot of money.

JB: Yes.

PHE: And then, when that [Ratkovich] project went south, people in the funding community were upset. And, you know, this is probably not something that's good to put on a tape, but certain foundations, to this day, are irritated with the museum, because of circumstances that were legitimately beyond the control of the museum.

JB: It just took a lot longer, to--

PHE: Well, no, what I'm saying is that the fact that the project—the foundations' projects--the monies that they gave were utilized in good faith in the development and awarding of the entitlements to approve building documents for the high-rise, and then once that was done, the building was never built. And so they felt, "Well, why didn't the developer use his money to do it--[to pay for the entitlements]? Why did our money, our foundation money, get . . . [used instead]?" You know, "and so we're not going to give any more money." That's what I'm talking about.

JB: But there was still, I thought, a capital campaign that continued.

PHE: There was, yes, there was. And we got enough money to remodel, and all that stuff, but it was never as good as it could have been, given the [recession] economy, and the Ratkovitch Company's inability to secure the funding [for the Museum Tower]. That was a real major setback for the museum.

JB: Yes. Now--and that all happened before we had to leave the May Company.

PHE: Right.

JB: Let me just comment, from the staff perspective, [on] what the changes were. Of course we were horrified that we had to move again.

PHE: Yet again.

JB: But, I have to tell you--and I was pretty involved with the original plans, the Ratkovitch plans—and the library was going to be--maybe not as much as I would've liked--but it was going to be a substantial increase, as was all of our space, in [what we had at the time]. I keep referring to it as "the Ratkovitch development," just as a shorthand.

PHE: You could say "the ill-fated Ratkovitch development," (laughter) as a shorthand, to be more precise!

JB: But here's the thing that the staff was worried about: we were worried about the operation of this enormous facility that was going to be so much bigger that what we'd had. How were we going to afford the security, and the maintenance, and so on? So, in a way, we were kind of relieved, when the Hodgetts + Fung project was revealed--although it took a while to--you know, there were various ideas about how to actually combine those two buildings. The final plan, I think, was quite beautiful. But just from the staff point of view, I think we all felt that [the Hodgetts + Fung plan to combine the two buildings—instead of building the 22-story tower--was a much more practical plan; it] was a space that was [a lot] larger than we had had [in the 5814 Wilshire building], and it was going to provide usable and attractive space for everything that was on the table at that time. And it seemed like it was affordable. **[1:45:00]** So that was why, I think, for a lot of us, the [Hodgetts + Fung plan was a lot more reasonable than the Ratkovich high-rise plan] Now, were there people on the board who were very, very disappointed?

PHE: Yes, there were. Yes, there were.

JB: Why don't you talk about, just, the process--

PHE: Well, I think it'd probably be indiscreet of me to do that.

JB: Oh, you don't have to mention [names]--

PHE: No, but, I mean, some of the people on the board were married to the directors of some of the prominent foundations who gave us the money.

JB: Ah.

PHE: So they were in a very awkward situation. . . . Does that make sense?

JB: Well, I guess I never quite understood why they were not willing to have that money transferred to the new project, or--

PHE: Because the money was used.

JB: Because of the time involved?

PHE: It was used up in the entitlement process. [Entitlement essentially means all of the preliminary things needed to gain permission from the Department of Building and Safety to build—architectural planning, engineering, etc.—a lot of this money went to Ratkovich.]

JB: Oh, OK.

PHE: And . . . [two of the donors] thought it was something that--the developer [should have covered]. They thought that they got exploited, in effect.

JB: I see.

PHE: And that we, as the leadership of the institution, should have watched out for their interests, which in turn were our interests, and as a result there's a residual lack of comfort.

JB: I see.

PHE: And that's the awkward part of it. And a similar thing happened [with regard to the selling of the collection] --it's so weird, for me, because I didn't have anything to do with this place [at the time the collection was sold]; I was gone. Gone, gone.

JB: Yeah, for at least a year or so.

PHE: Well, more than that. Two or three years. . . [Ela resigned from CAFAM in June 1996; the CAFAM collection was sold at Butterfield's in March 1998.] And when I came back [later] just to kick the tires in the context of, you know, working out a deal with the city, I had to make a few phone calls. . . for things that [had] happened under . . . [the subsequent administration], and decisions that were made that were further alienations . . . [they] were pinned on me, and I wasn't even there. I mean--that was weird. So, you know what I'm saying? It's like--I don't want to go into any detail about it [now] . . . well, I can do it at some later date--the institution--the Craft and Folk Art Museum--has at least two black eyes with two major players in the Los Angeles cultural scene . . . [and] both of them to do with grant administration.

JB: OK.

PHE: And one of them, I still to this day don't understand; but the other one I do understand, it's because, as I described, the funds weren't optimized--though [they] were not inappropriately used. There was never any malfeasance or anything like that.

And then the second one, whatever monies were in question, oddly enough, given the relative sizes of the institutions in question—[a David and Goliath sort of deal: David had to return the money to Goliath; it was neither fair nor just, but it happened]--were returned to that institution. And so it was all taken care of, but there's a residual issue.

JB: Hmm. Well, that is too bad. There probably was an attempt by you and/or Frank to help--

PHE: Ameliorate?

JB: Well, I was going to say, to get more financial satisfaction out of Ratkovitch, or was that not possible?

PHE: Well, you know, that's a different story. But he just sort of skated [away], scot-free. And we were left holding the bag. I mean, Wayne Ratkovitch is a nice guy, and I'm not trying to do anything, say anything, untoward, but I think the whole thing could have been handled much better and more effectively than it was.

JB: Mm-hmm. Well, I think maybe we should leave the rest of that story until next time. I do want to revisit . . . [at our next session] some things we've talked about [only] a little bit today. Specifically, the restaurant, which of course had to close forever at the end of our time at 5814, and also a little bit more about the shop. There's still plenty to talk about, but this has been great so far. And thank you for letting us come into your inner sanctum.

PHE: You're very welcome, sorry it's not more--

JB: It's fine.

PHE: --presentable, but it's, you know--

JB: It's wonderful, no, it's a wonderful--

PHE: It's what it is. **[1:50]**

JB: --office in [the artist], Frank Romero's, studio. It's a great place to be. Thank you.

PHE: You're welcome.

[End of Session 2: 1:50:08]

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF PATRICK H. ELA

Session 3 (1:54:35), Tuesday, November 18, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: Today is Tuesday, November 18, 2008. And I'm here in Santa Monica with Patrick Ela, [former CAFAM director], and this is our third session, and my name is Joan Benedetti. In our first session, Patrick, you said that when you first arrived at CAFAM in 1975, the shop and the restaurant were completely dominant. And one of the things that you did was to minimize the physical impact of the shop. You said that when you first arrived, both sides of the first floor were . . . [occupied] by the shop.

PHE: Correct.

JB: And the [museum] gallery, then, I guess, was only on the third floor?

PHE: That's correct.

JB: When you made that change, that must have been the start of the first-floor gallery then.

PHE: Yes. I would say it would be better to characterize it as an attempt to make the new museum, in its physicality, more proportional to its stated goals and mission. Because it was for many years, as you know, considered a gallery [and] a restaurant.

JB: Well, it was supposed to be a commercial gallery.

PHE: Right, and so that was the legacy . . . [against which], if you will, the academic side--the tutorial side of the organization--had to . . . swim . . . . That was the current against which . . . [we were all] swimming. When you went in the front door, not only was the shop on the left, and on the right, and in between, behind the steps, it also ascended the steps up to the mezzanine. There were little display vitrines. And those were all part of the shop--all geared toward The Egg and The Eye being a feast for the eye and the palate. And so what we did was make . . . the right-hand side [a] museum gallery.

JB: The west side.

PHE: The west side. As you're looking in, [the right-hand side]. And the transitional space underneath the stairs of the old facility--there was a little platform where a lot of electrical conduit and everything was. And so depending on the show that the museum had, that space under the stairs was allocated to the shop for more display of sales merchandise, or to the museum for more exhibition. And it went back and forth, back and forth. And that was actually until the whole thing was remodeled, you know. But that was the configuration we utilized. And then, even those vitrines in the stairwell were eventually given over to museum exhibition, depending on how much space was needed. So that,

[as a result], you had a [museum] presence on the first floor; [and then, with the niches in the stairwell], between the first floor and the mezzanine; and then on the third floor.

JB: Well that was a big deal, then, to add that much gallery space to the museum.

PHE: Yes, it was. It probably added--I wouldn't say it doubled the gallery space, but it probably added another 70%.

JB: Do you remember--I guess there were several--not major renovations--but renovations nevertheless, over the first ten years or so. There must have been some renovation that took place when this change that you're talking about happened at the beginning. Do you remember?

PHE: Yes. Over the years, there were several facilities. There was the museum cottage, there was the building between the museum and the cottage, there was the building on the corner, eventually, there was the May Company, there was a space called the Annex, which was above Emser International Tile on the south[east] corner, I guess, of Curson and Wilshire. And depending on what configuration we had, we changed the office configuration on the **[5:00]** third floor of the original . . . 5814 building . . . which was the museum proper. Yeah, there were some changes. I remember the first time I ever went there, the board meeting, and the nascent library and archive were in--

JB: In that little room.

PHE: --the little [southeast] corner--well that subsequently became part of the gallery.

JB: It's amazing to think that the board actually met in there.

PHE: Yeah, that subsequently became part of the gallery. So there were several renovations, and a lot of those were, like, interior improvements, as opposed to moving walls, you know, burying walls and things like that.

JB: Right. Well that's what I was thinking of. Because until we actually moved out of that building [in 1989 and then in 1990] went to the May Company, I don't think there were any major structural changes to that building.

PHE: No.

JB: When you first started, were the offices [upstairs] at the front--overlooking the Tar Pits?

PHE: Yes, they were at the front. They were at the front. And then, at one point, my office was moved over to that little two-story building.

JB: To the Duplex?

PHE: The Duplex, yeah.

JB: That was, I guess, around the time that we were about to move to the May Company?

PHE: Yes, somewhere [in that time period]. [In July 1989, CAFAM staff offices were moved temporarily around the corner to the "Duplex" at 725/727 Curson Avenue; they remained there for one year until the end of June 1990 when they were able to move to the May Company.]

JB: . . . There were a lot of properties [at that time]. It was sort of like a Monopoly game almost. Except that we were not really occupying all of them at the same time. It was--

PHE: No, we weren't.

JB: --shuffling around. Well, I thought I would ask you about some of the individuals who were there for a while. And maybe some of the story of their departments will come out in the process. But I just was thinking we'd focus on the people for a while. Thinking about the shop, when you first arrived, John Browse was the Shop Manager, and he had been there for about [four] years. He had come to The Egg and The Eye gallery [in 1971] with Alan Donovan. John was from Kenya.

PHE: Nairobi.

JB: But he had moved to the U.S. [though they had met in Nairobi]. Alan was an American citizen who was living in Nairobi, in Kenya. And together, they had an import-export business. And he [and Alan] had brought this show of East African crafts to The Egg and The Eye gallery. And then Edith asked John to stay. I guess she [had] asked Alan to stay, and he didn't want to. So she asked John. And he said yes. So he had been there for about . . . [four] years when this transition from the Gallery to the [museum] happened. And you came on the scene. Do you remember--I mean, of course, you remember John Browse [from the later time when] . . . he came back [after Ann Robbins left in 1982].

PHE: Oh, he's a very dear man.

JB: But do you remember, at the beginning, how it was with him as the [Shop Manager]?

PHE: Oh, yeah, I think it was probably a little volatile, at times. I mean, because, A, the nature of the space and [B], the goals of the space were changing. And [C], the rules under which he had operated were changing. . . . He had [had] direct contact with, not only Edith, but with Frank Wyle, and other members of the board. I mean, he was probably--now that I think about it--he was probably, like, the co-director of the gallery.

JB: Let me just interrupt you a second. When I interviewed John, I asked him what his title had been. And he said, "Well," he said, "I don't know that I had a title. Edith used to refer to me as an associate." Well after that, I was looking through some of the old Egg and The Eye newsletters, and I came across a little article with his picture that introduced him,

you know, in the newsletter. And this was in 1972. And it says that he is the Assistant Director. Now, whether he ever knew that, or he had forgotten it, I don't know. But that is the position [that was described in the article]. And here you are **[10:00]** coming in as Administrative Director, which I could see might have overlapped [with what had been his duties].

PHE: But he was always very cordial, if formal, you know, at that time. Since then, we've become . . . friends. But apart from any personality issues, the rules changed, and the goals of his work changed. . . . Before, it was to have the best, and make the sales, and be profitable and all of that. And now, in addition to those things, everything had to be under the umbrella of, and in support of the mission of, the museum. And the first tangible thing, of course, was the changing of the [west side gallery] space, which took place not too long after I got there. And it was based in--you know, it wasn't, like, territorial or something--but it possibly felt that way [to the shop staff]. It was just in terms of trying to actualize and realize what the museum said it was about, as opposed to how it felt when you walked in. And, you know, I always . . . [sought to be inclusive] from the first day I got there--I had staff meetings. And I always asked for John's input. And he had a volatile relationship with Edith--a loving relationship, but, I mean, he--

JB: Yes. That's almost exactly how he described it.

PHE: I remember one time that he had worked really hard on installing the African show, and she came in and was critical of it. And he took everything down and said, "Well you do it, then, madam." And he told me, "Well, madam was not pleased." . . . . And so, it was sort of like an "Upstairs/Downstairs," English or colonial . . . like . . . a colonial relationship, although he was, in many ways, her equal. Actually, the first time I was there--one of the first shows I remember was that African show. ["Africa's Influence in Traditional Clothing Styles," October 14 - November 23 or 28?, 1975; the exhibition was primarily of Katherine White's collection.] And they had dancers and models and the great international model Iman was supposed to be there. And at the last minute, it fell through, and that was a big disappointment. But they had other people [from Africa].

JB: Well, I think . . . [Iman] had been at that first Egg and The Eye gallery show back in 1972 [that John and Alan organized].

PHE: Yes. And eventually John--you know, he never ceased his Tribal Eye [import] business. He always had that on the side. And I think, eventually, he felt that he had done what he had set out to do and accomplished what he could, and that it was time to move on. And he passed the reins over to Ann Robbins, who had been his assistant. And then Ann Robbins came on, and she retained Susan Skinner, who was there for quite a long time--

until she had gathered sufficient information [contacts, names of artists and suppliers, etc.] to create her own gallery, which was called New Stone Age.

JB: Well, John was actually at the museum for [only], I guess, about six months after you arrived. And then he had an opportunity to work with the Museum of Natural History shop on a big show that they were bringing in. So that was when he left the first time. He did come back, because Ann Robbins--after about six years, I think--Ann and Susan were running the shop--and Ann left rather precipitously. I think it was personal, or family-related. [Ann Robbins resigned August 31, 1982.]

PHE: Right. She and others in her family had health problems, and they were unfortunate.

JB: Yes. But Ann was an interesting person. She was a craftsperson herself, and became very involved with the American Craft Council marketing arm, American Craft Enterprises.

PHE: Before you leave [the subject of] John--John was very close with Dorothy Garwood, who was a curator there **[15:00]**, and also very oriented toward the crafts, whereas John was more oriented toward the folk arts. And I think John and Dorothy felt the changes were not to their liking, or--John less so than Dorothy, but Dorothy just basically left about the same time, or not too . . . long before John left.

JB: It was about the same time. That's right. [Dorothy Garwood resigned sometime before the end of 1975; John Browse resigned in March 1976.]

PHE: And so when Ann came in--she was more aligned, in terms of her own tastes, with Dorothy. And so she brought in, as you say, with [her association with] American Craft Enterprises, a whole sensitivity toward the crafts, and toward establishing relationships with good, recognized craftspeople to sell their pieces in the museum shop.

JB: Yes. So she had, you know, a fairly lengthy tenure. I think it was, like I said, five or six years. [Ann had been hired by John as Ass't Shop Manager and then when John resigned, she became Shop Manager in March 1976. She resigned for personal reasons at the end of August 1982.]

PHE: Yes. And how would you feel, by the way, if you came in as the new, sort of younger director, and then all of these established people left? I mean, that was a little unsettling.

JB: Well how *did* you feel? [laughter]

PHE: Well, I felt like I had always treated them with respect, and I had treated them fairly. But that I was emblematic of--or I represented--a new institutionalization process, with which . . . they may not have been comfortable, or with which they may not have been particularly at ease--nor did they have an interest in [that process].

JB: So you took it philosophically.

PHE: Yes, I didn't take it personally. I . . . [treated them all] with respect. And I think, over time--John, at least, with whom I [still] maintain contact--I think he felt that and respected that.

JB: Oh, I'm sure that he wouldn't have come back to work again [in 1982] if he--

PHE: Right. But it was a sensitive time, you know. And, you know, the shop was, proportionally--not only in terms of the physicality of the space, but as the museum grew, if the shop were profitable--wildly profitable even--the portion of support that it rendered the larger museum grew to be less and less, so that it may have originally been 30-50%, and it was then, toward the end, maybe 8-15% [of the museum budget] . . . . Because there were curatorial positions, library, education, publications, exhibition expenses, and so on, that were well beyond what the shop could pay for. And early on . . . [during the Gallery days], it had all been mixed up together. The shows were . . . sale shows.

JB: Well, I think I heard either Ann or John talking at one point about wanting to be able to separate out the shop revenues from the--they recognized that the shop revenues had to help support the museum. But they had a concern about the artists getting paid, and so on, and their expenses--

PHE: Yes, but the shop and the museum always had separate accounts.

JB: Oh, did they?

PHE: Sometimes there were inter-account borrowings. But the other side of that coin, about the craftspeople being paid on time and so on, which, you know, everyone always tried to do--when you're running a shop, and you get inventory, there are two ways to get inventory. You can take it on consignment, or you can purchase it. And one of the dangers that befell the shop under certain managers--and maybe under all managers from one time to another--was that they would put their profits and their cash flow into inventory, making it illiquid. Meaning, if they wanted to **[20:00]**--

JB: Rather than taking things on consignment, you mean.

PHE: Yes. Or [rather than] having cash on hand to make sure that their people were paid. Because if you buy something from a craftsperson, and you buy all kinds of things from all kinds of craftspeople, and your sales are slow, then you don't have the money to pay them, whereas if you take things on consignment, and the sales are slow, you don't owe anybody anything until the sales are made. So one of the constant battles was making sure that the inventory levels [were at the proper levels.] Sometimes—often—[they] were over $100,000 of inventory--so, like, if you think $100,000 of cash instead of $100,000 of

inventory, there would be few times when cash flow for the shop would have been a problem. There were inter-borrowings. But oftentimes, the museum shop couldn't pay the museum [even though their assets in terms of inventory were high] because . . . [the assets were] illiquid, if that makes sense.

JB: Yes. Well, I just think from an administrative point of view, aside from the problems that the Shop Manager may have had, it must have been difficult for you [at the beginning]. One of your primary jobs was overseeing the budget, right? So that must have been difficult.

PHE: Well--and you had to do it with sensitivity and not, you know, aggravate . . . [people]. It was always a balancing act, trying to keep things centered along the direction of consensus--the . . . [road on] which the board and the director or the staff, collectively, thought the institution should be traveling.

JB: And you were usually in the middle of all that.

PHE: Yes, and I had to . . . steer the boat, you know--basically. Including . . . avoiding the rocks and the underwater--

JB: Shoals.

PHE: --hazards.

JB: Not an enviable position to be in.

PHE: Well it was OK. I mean, it was OK.

JB: There were some fun times, too. The shop over the years was certainly very successful in terms of its reputation. I think it's safe to say it continued to be highly respected. . . .

PHE: I agree, and I would just point out that the Natural History Museum shop, the Southwest Museum shop, The Egg and The Eye [gallery], and then the Craft and Folk Art Museum shop were among those institutions that had a world view early on as the world was opening up. And they, accordingly, had many highly collectible and unique things--treasures. But over time, with globalization, a lot of the unique things were copied. . . . [For example], it was not uncommon to find . . . Navajo weavings made in Oaxaca. Or you can find Oaxacan carvings made in the Philippines.

JB: And all of it made in China!

PHE: Yes, all of it made in China. You can find Navajo jewelry made in Turkey now, you know, and foist it off as authentic. Go to Costco, or go to IKEA, and you'll find kilims from Anatolia. It's like the whole thing is not like it was 40 years ago. The whole arena, the "whole world" point of view. And there's duplication and dumbing down. And a lot of

people don't know the difference between an authentic piece of folk art and a well-made replica.

JB: Yes, and I think that was always a problem. But if anything, it may have become even more difficult.

PHE: Right, so right now it's a lot worse than it was. Because they [copies are] . . . omnipresent. There are so many things that are just copies of other things that are copies of other things, and they're made all over the world.

JB: Yeah. One of the things that we used to brag about was that, **[25:00]** unlike many museums--like LACMA and most of the larger museum shops, [they] had reproductions. They were reproductions from their permanent collections. And, of course--well, our permanent collection is a whole other discussion. But nevertheless, we could say that we didn't have reproductions in our shop. They were all originals. And it was quite wonderful. I think one of the biggest attractions of the shop was that you could go in, you could spend a lot of money, but you could also spend a little money and still get something that was original and interesting.

PHE: That's correct. That's exactly correct.

JB: Well, little by little, after we had to move out of the original building and moved into the May Company--and I do want you to talk about the May Company--but I just wanted to mention that the shop sort of diminished little by little at that point after it had to move out of the original building.

PHE: Yes . . . it grew back to a respectable size when it came back to the 5814 facility, . . . [but] it did diminish in that space [in the May Company].

JB: During that time [March 1990 – December 1992]. In fact there were over two [and one half] years that the shop was completely closed [from the time we moved from the May Company into the 5800 facility at the beginning of 1993 until the Hodgetts + Fung remodel opened in May 1995]. And that must have been very hard financially for the museum.

PHE: Well, it was hard financially. On the other hand, the costs associated with running it [the shop in the May Company] were . . . [minimal and the critical financial importance of the shop was diminished during the May Company years. It had always been a strong part of the program mix of the museum, but because the May Company was so generous in funding us, the lack of the normal cash flow and financial contribution of the Shop was not as painful as it might otherwise have been.] And so, on a net basis, it wasn't that bad, because as I said earlier, when the income derived from the shop was a higher percentage, it would have been much more impactful, but when we moved to the May

Company, it was already, you know, below 20% of the museum's needed income. Probably was more like 10%. So--to have [the shop costs] eliminated--and then, also at the same time, to have all of the utilities' [costs] eliminated, because we were guests of the May Company--there were offsetting benefits to [not having the Shop open].

JB: Now, let's talk a bit more about the restaurant. I know we did talk about it a bit in the last session. But that was another part--a very basic, important part (like the shop was) of the whole Craft and Folk Art Museum persona. And I know, because I've been looking in the archives, that you tried very hard to keep the restaurant going in some fashion. Or to include it, I should say, in the plans for—well--both of the new building plans. When we moved out of the May Company, and the Hodgetts + Fung renovation was begun, there was still a space in the plans for that building for some kind of a restaurant. But . . . when we finally did reopen and had our big homecoming gala reopening, which was fabulous, there wasn't a restaurant.

PHE: But the restaurant in the Hodgetts + Fung plan, if I remember, was in the corner building, and not in the original building. Maybe I'm wrong.

JB: I believe that it was in what is currently . . . the office spaces on the [mezzanine] --

PHE: Oh, so where it was originally, in other words.

JB: I believe so.

PHE: Maybe so, maybe so.

JB: Whether it was actually big enough to really do what I think, you know, people envisioned, I'm not sure. But that was a very big change. I wanted to ask you--I jumped ahead a little bit actually from what I was hoping you could talk about, and that is how the restaurant was when you first arrived, and some of the management people that were there **[30:00]**. And then I would like you to talk about Ian [Barrington] also. So why don't you just kind of tell the story of the restaurant as it was [when you arrived in 1975] and how it proceeded during the time that we were . . . at 5814 [before we moved to the May Company at the end of June 1989].

PHE: Well the restaurant had a great reputation. As I said earlier, the building, as one entered it, was dominated by a staircase that went up to the mezzanine, and [the restaurant was] on either side, . . . on the mezzanine level. And [on the left side] they had an omelette preparation area, where this wonderful cook named Salvador [made omelettes]. . . sort of in front of the people eating.

JB: Yeah, so it was . . . a little stage, almost.

PHE: A little stage. And they had banquettes along either wall, and, you know, sort of French bistro tables. Wooden tables on metal stands with round feet and bentwood chairs. On the right side, they had a full bar with a full-on liquor license, which was subsequently lost in the bankruptcy that the restaurant had. There were various owners. Originally, the restaurant was part of The Egg and The Eye.

JB: So it was owned by The Egg and The Eye. By the gallery.

PHE: . . . . The gallery, and subsequently, the museum, owned not only the equipment but also the liquor license. When you're a 501(c)(3) organization, a nonprofit organization, you can have businesses like the museum shop that are related to your stated nonprofit purpose. But if you have businesses that are unrelated, you have to pay unrelated business income tax. And so, on my recommendation, and on the recommendation of some of the other board members--and I think it didn't exist until I got there--I said we needed to divest ourselves of the management of the restaurant. Because rent is exempt from unrelated business income tax. So then we needed to set about to find operators of the restaurant. And we went through two or three. I remember there was a guy named . . . Casey. There was another guy from Mexico. And all of them did OK, you know--or not. But one of them had real problems. He had put a lot of his capital into a Mexican bank the day before the peso was devalued.

JB: I remember that.

PHE: And he lost 95% of his money overnight. And he was just devastated. What we had had to do periodically was to put the liquor license in the name of the then manager or concessionaire with the understanding that it would be returned to our possession on the termination of the lease. And I remember that guy declared bankruptcy, and our liquor license got embroiled in the whole thing. And I had to go testify in court. . . . The opposing attorney's last name--a bankruptcy lawyer--was . . . Moneymaker, which I always thought was very ironic. And we lost our liquor license, which was very hard to get, in that bankruptcy proceedings. And one of the senior sub-managers of the penultimate concessionaire was Ian [Barrington]. And so we approached Ian --

JB: What was his relationship to the restaurant?

PHE: I think he was a chief waiter or a chief--an undermanager [for a prior manager].

JB: So he did act as a waiter, but he also had a management role?

PHE: He was a super-waiter, yeah. Had a junior, on-site manager position. And so when that relationship **[35:00]** soured, we approached Ian about becoming the person with whom we would do business. And, you know, he was a doctoral student at USC and very wise

and well-travelled. Scottish. He loved bagpipes and was very [gregarious]; he chatted up all of the wine purveyors.

JB: He was the first one that I remember knowing personally.

PHE: Yeah, and he used to really put his heart into that, and he had a number of employees--Booker and Nate and Salvador were there--various younger people he brought through. So he ran it for quite a while until we closed it up to move to the May Company, and I think it's important for people to know that we closed the building because subsequent to the 1971 earthquake . . . . There were very strict retrofitting requirements placed on any unreinforced masonry building. And ours was designed by an architect named Underwood, I believe. And he was the one who designed the Ahwahnee Hotel in [Yosemite].

JB: Yes, his firm, at least, was the same.

PHE: Yeah, his firm did, and the assembly. And even though [that building] had ridden out many earthquakes, and we had done our bolting of the floors and ceilings to the exterior masonry walls, we [still] had to do major, major, major work. It was [going to cost] maybe $700,000, or $750,000 or [maybe just] a half a million. Some huge amount of money. And we would have been dark for a good year. In retrospect, maybe we should have done that [retrofitting then]. But at that time, we had a very good offer to move to the May Company, which subsequently has now been taken over by LACMA, you know--but we were the first museum there [while the department store was still in operation]. And we got a pretty good deal to move over there. . . . We lost some of our momentum. But we--you know, it was a strategic move at the time. We were trying to build a major complex. And we almost did it. But with the downturn of the economy in 1989, we--just like it is today in 2008--we couldn't get the financing. [If it hadn't been for the Ratkovich plan for the high-rise mixed-use complex, we would probably have done the earthquake retrofitting sooner and the restaurant] would have still been there.

JB: Well, and . . . the mixed-use idea was--

PHE: Very progressive, yeah.

JB: Very much ahead of its time.

PHE: It was a [plan for a] residential condominium/restaurant/ museum [complex], and then some retail. And it almost happened. But it didn't, you know. But going back to Ian Barrington. He ran the restaurant. And he subsequently passed away. He ran the restaurant until we closed to go to the May Company. And, at that time, we didn't have [any way to continue the restaurant]. The May Company had its own restaurant, the Tea Room.

JB: The Tea Room--the infamous Tea Room. Which I think we all really loved a lot, even though it was funky.

PHE: It was incredibly tacky and funky, but it was retro.

JB: Well I guess we really should talk about the May Company. I know that we looked at several places. You gathered up the staff on at least a couple of occasions to make field trips to go and look at various possible venues. Maybe you should talk a little bit--you already started to--telling about the earthquake retrofitting. It is confusing for a lot of people. Some of the people that I've already talked to--some of the former board members and so on--are confused in their minds about why we moved to the May Company.

PHE: Right. Retrofitting was in two phases. And basically most brick buildings and other, un-reinforced masonry buildings had little ledges on either side into which the floor joists and ceiling joists **[40:00]** nestled, but they weren't connected. So if the building were to sway or to undulate, it's possible that, on either side or both sides simultaneously, the floors or the ceilings could have just disengaged and dropped straight down. So the first phase of earthquake retrofitting was to bind the exterior walls to the floor and the ceiling joists. And you would often see these little --

JB: The stars.

PHE: -- stars or triangles on the outside of the building. And what that was, was a bolt from the outside and a triangle or star was, in effect, a washer to prevent the bolt from breaking the brick underneath. And that would be bolted through the wall and into the floor joist--the vertical element that spanned the space and held the floor above it or the ceiling below it.

The second phase was to do subterranean steel reinforcing. In essence, the building now--which is still, in large part, the original brick building--on the inside of it, has a steel I-beam box so that there's an I-beam that's maybe 24 inches tall, and, on either side, maybe 20 inches wide. And it goes in a concrete bed about six feet under the ground under the floor and then it's attached to two vertical I-beams which are in turn attached at the top of the building to another horizontal I-beam. So you've got, like, ribs of a ship in the building --

JB: Or a cage.

PHE: --or a cage holding up the brick walls. And then they're all totally locked into all the floors and ceilings. And there are other reinforcing elements, so that the brick becomes less responsible for bearing the weight of the building than does the steel. It almost becomes like a curtain wall. And so that is pretty heavy-duty stuff that you have to do. Every [city]

has its building codes. And a building is valid until such time as the codes change. And then it has to be upgraded [to current standard]. And so we moved [to the May Company] because it was a balancing act where we thought, "Should we build a new building?"

JB: Which you were planning to do at the time.

PHE: Or "Should we retreat for a couple of years to the May Company, continue our programming, raise the money to build the new building, or should we stay there [on Wilshire] and retrofit?" I think we moved to the May Company in '86 or '87 --

JB: '89 actually. July of '89.

PHE: '89. OK, well, still prior to the move, the economy was really humming along. And in '89, late in the year, I guess it went into the tank. And if we would have known there was going to be an economic downturn, we probably would have stayed there. You know, and retrofitted. But we didn't.

JB: But you couldn't retrofit while we were in the building. We would have had to move.

PHE: No, we might have just closed down for a while or something, I don't know. I didn't even think about that [possibility] because we were optimistic, you know. And we raised several million dollars to . . . [construct the new museum with Ratkovich].

JB: Oh yes, well I was about to say that the reason that it's confusing, I believe, is because, at the same time that the city was pressuring us to do the retrofitting, you were in the middle of a huge capital campaign to build this building. And, in fact, it was--I don't have it right here in front of me, but, I believe--

PHE: Who the developer was? Ratkovich?

JB: The developer was [Wayne] Ratkovich. What I was trying to remember was exactly when we had the big press conference with the cake the shape of the model--

PHE: Oh, the cake [with] Tom Bradley [and other dignitaries].

JB: And I think it was just a few months before we moved to the May Company. [The press conference to announce the plans for the Ratkovich 22-story "Museum Tower," attended by Mayor Bradley, Councilman John Ferarro, General Manager of Cultural Affairs, Al Nodal, Richard Weinstein from UCLA (who was at that point the chief designer), and other dignitaries, happened on May 9, 1989.] So the public--

PHE: And that's because the buildings were going to be demolished. They were going to be demolished to make way for the new building.

JB: For the new building, see--so that's why it becomes confusing **[45:00]** in people's minds, because it seems as if we moved because we were going to start building the new building. At least, as soon as we had the money. [But we also had to move out of 5814 Wilshire because of pressure from the City to retrofit.] There was a woman named Judith Teitelman, who would, after Mark Gallon had done the initial development, [be our Development Director; she was hired in 1988].

PHE: Aaron Paley's wife.

JB: Yes, Judith and Aaron. Judith worked . . . as our first real paid Development [Director], and really got this project underway--the capital campaign. [At first she worked 30 hours a week and then full-time.] And then Sue Sirkus was [hired to be the Development Officer].

PHE: Well actually we had an outside firm who ran the campaign. [Judith Teitelman acted as a liaison to them.] And they —[Marts & Lundy]--were a big Midwestern company who ran that campaign. . . . And we had our own guy assigned to us. . . . We did our own fundraising brochure, that little oatmeal-colored deal, and we outlined our vision. [Sue Sirkus, who was the Development Officer after Judith, oversaw the creation of the capital campaign brochure and portfolio, both of which were designed by [Tish O'Connor and Dana Levy of Perpetua Press]. I remember I raised, you know, $1,000,000 from one contributor, and we got another million dollars from another.

JB: Well Ahmanson, I think, gave $1,000,000 and maybe the Getty did also.

PHE: They gave a half million.

JB: Half a million. But there were a number of others--Lloyd Cotsen, I think, also gave.

PHE: He gave a million.

JB: And it was a very complex project, the whole capital campaign. And that brochure--

PHE: And the problem--and there's still a problem with it--because the museum's money [given by donors for the new museum]--rather than the developer's money--was used to pay for the entitlements and the architectural development. And as long as the project was going forward, that was fine, but when the project terminated because the developer couldn't get the money, the museum was left holding the bag, and it irritated some of the donors.

JB: [And the reason the donors thought the developer should have paid for the entitlements was that] . . . those entitlements were for the development as a whole, not just for the museum.

PHE: You know, in retrospect, I would have managed it differently. I wasn't too involved in that management, but it was something that could have been done maybe a little differently.

JB: Well your job at that point was--it had [always] been complicated, but it seems to me that it was incredibly complex at that [point in] time. Even granting that we had a company overseeing the capital campaign, you were still very personally involved with all of the funders.

PHE: Right, and then we were also--at the same time--we retained a consultant named Marcy Goodwin to work on the development of our program.

JB: Yes, the building program.

PHE: [Which], for those uninitiated people, is the wish list and organizational conceptualization that one gives the architect, and from which the architect develops a plan. And so that was another major undertaking.

JB: Oh, yes. I was actually quite involved with that.

PHE: I remember you were.

JB: Because I had talked to, among others, Eleanor Hartman, the librarian at LACMA. And we even had a meeting. I think, maybe, you were at that meeting. Pratap [Pratapaditya Pal, LACMA's curator of Indian Art] came to it and Eleanor and a couple of other people from LACMA [who had just gone through a major renovation and addition with the architectural firm of Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer Associates and [at the meeting they] basically told their horror stories about not being able to work with the architect that they had: really very bad practical consequences of the architect either not having the information or being unwilling to communicate with the staff. So that [developing our building program] was another whole project in and of itself that was very complicated, [and] . . . we interviewed--there was a committee, a board staff committee--and we interviewed several prospective planners or consultants to work with us to develop the building program [before finally hiring Marcy Goodwin]. But it was a very exciting time.

PHE: This is a point of reference. In my approach to management, I always tried to be inclusive, **[50:00]** to make sure that the staff and the board and appropriate other people were involved in decisions.

JB: And that's hard work to do.

PHE: It is hard work, but in the end, you know, it pays off, I think. But we were also dealing with a few acts of God or acts of government that were beyond our control.

JB: Oh, God, yes. Well, let's move onto the May Company. We [the staff] actually [did not get . . . into the May Company until the summer of 1990, but in the] . . . fall [of 1989 we] opened the first show which—

PHE: It was of our permanent collection, I believe. [The CAFAM gallery at the May Company opened that fall with a show drawn from CAFAM's permanent collection, "Hands On! Objects Crafted in Our Time" [opened November 21, 1989], but when the 5814 Wilshire building was closed at the end of June 1989, the staff offices were moved into the Duplex and the staff did not move to the May Company until June of the following year, 1990.]

JB: Yes, and Laurie Beth Kalb had been hired by that time, as, I guess, the first permanent curator. And she had a folklore background—. . . [with] a special interest in folk art.

PHE: Right, from the University of Pennsylvania, I think, [where she had studied with the famous folklorist, Henry Glassie].

JB: She was [also] fairly knowledgeable about contemporary craft. I mean, considering that she was a folklorist. I was impressed by her--at least she was a fairly fast learner, let's put it that way. So she organized that [first] exhibition [at the May Company]. Let's talk a little bit about how we all fit into the May Company. You want to just describe the different--where we all fit, physically, in the May Company?

PHE: Well, we occupied at least two floors and had access to the basement where there was a shop.

JB: A building [or carpentry] shop.

PHE: Yeah, a building shop. We had a gallery, I think, on the third floor or the fourth floor. I forget which.

JB: The fourth floor.

PHE: The fourth floor. And my orientation--you know, we talked about John Browse and Edith being [specialists in] folk art, and Laurie Beth Kalb [also in] folk art and [Ann] Robbins and [Shan Emanuelli] being [oriented more] toward the contemporary crafts. I was more toward the design [area], and tried to, on many occasions and in many presentations, make the argument that there was a continuum of the relationship between the various art forms depending on where one happened to find oneself in the world. And [as we discussed earlier, design is] a--you know, industrial level of . . . development. But I tried to always make sure that we had good designers for things. And the entryway to the gallery in the May Company on the fourth floor was designed by [the firm of] Charles Moore, who was one of the great 20th-century architects . . . of the postmodern movement. Taught at Yale, taught at UCLA, designed some of the buildings at UC-Santa Cruz early on.

JB: He had been involved with that [citywide] vernacular architecture project ["Home Sweet Home"].

PHE: Yes, he had been a curator with Gere Kavanaugh on that [project]. And [it was his involvement with that project] that brought in a lot of blue chip architects and designers, too, [as presenters at the symposium at UCLA, produced in conjunction with "Home Sweet Home."] And so, even though, as some said, we grew out of the [May Company's] lingerie section, we were--

JB: It was actually their [former] furniture department [that was where the CAFAM gallery was placed], which was a good space, because it had that lovely wooden floor already.

PHE: Right. And we refinished it and we did that whole thing.

JB: And [the designer], Joseph Terrell, I think--

PHE: He did the lighting and the first installation, and that's where . . . Carol Fulton, now Carol--

JB: I don't remember [her married name], but yes.

PHE: She got her start [as CAFAM's designer]. So many people, by the way, have peeled off of the museum to create their own businesses: Susan Skinner, Aaron Paley, Katie Bergin, Carol Fulton. Many people did that.

JB: I think that's a sign of a healthy organization . . . They were inspired.

PHE: Yeah, [and] they moved on. Anyway, so we had our display space on the fourth floor, and our offices up [on the fifth floor] on the same level as the roof, I believe--as the Tea Room, but separated from it. We couldn't walk around the corner on the roof to get to it. We had to go through the door.

JB: But we had access to the roof itself, which was kind of nice for [parties].

PHE: And Jim Watterson, who was the president of the May Company Foundation here in Southern California, was like our godfather, and he made sure that we got everything we needed. We got, basically, room and board and a generous **[55:00]** stipend to boot. I mean, in addition to the space, they gave us a couple hundred thousand dollars each year for our programming. So it was a very nice deal.

JB: It was really a great deal. And I wanted to ask--I'm glad you mentioned him--how did that connection [come about]? I don't remember hearing or seeing anything about Jim Watterson until we got [into the May Company].

PHE: It was cultivated [and became a very long-standing friendship].

JB: OK.

PHE: . . . I worked with him on a couple of projects and he liked what we were doing. He knew other people in the organization. . . . We sought that resolution. I sought that resolution. And had many, many meetings at the main May Company offices out . . . in Laurel

Canyon in the Valley. And so I had to go out there all the time. You know, they underwrote exhibitions. They gave us grants. And it worked over a two- or three-year period.

JB: Apparently, they had underwritten at least a couple of the Festivals of Masks previously.

PHE: Right, and they were . . . [already on our side]. And that landmark building was sort of a dinosaur to them. And so [our presence there] was a way to, you know [enhance their space] --it was not pure altruism. They thought that it would increase traffic to the store and increase sales. And, now, of course, LACMA's there, and LACMA's got quite a large presence there on the corner.

JB: Oh, they really have taken over the whole thing. You know that the [CAFAM] library collection is [now] there on the third floor. And that's probably a better space for it. Well, actually, it's probably going to be dismantled now--just temporarily, because they're going to build out that building. Unless the current recession interferes with that.

PHE: All in all, it [our residence at the May Company] was a pretty sweet deal given the knowledge we had at the time. As I said earlier, had we known there was going to be a recession, maybe we would have gone there for [just] one year, and retrofitted the building--which we ultimately did--but maybe we would have tried to buy the building on the corner, because, you know, we lost that building on the corner by [a mere] $25,000 because they were just nickel- and dime-ing. The [trustees in charge of the building program—and, indeed, the Ratkovich people] . . . I think, should have been more aggressive in buying the building. Because, ultimately, the rent that we had to pay, subsequently, was just strangling, you know.

JB: $17,500 a month.

PHE: It was outrageous. If they would have paid $300,000-400,000 more at the beginning and financed it, the rent would have been [$4,000-5,000] a month to pay off the mortgage.

JB: Well, I really do want to get into that, because that's a whole other very complicated, kind of baroque--I think--story.

PHE: Yes, there were decisions that were made and opportunities that were lost on several occasions. And people did what they thought was best at the time. And then that was it. I'm not faulting anybody. I'm just telling you.

JB: No, I really want to talk about that. I'd just like to finish up about the May Company [first]. Because we were there for three and a half years, and the library was on the mezzanine.

PHE: . . . . Yeah, . . . it was on the mezzanine. How did you like it?

JB: Well, I liked it a lot. And Michelle Arens, who worked with me, and who I was able to interview a few months ago, confirmed that it was really a very good space from a practical point of view.

PHE: Yep, I remember. Forgive me for not mentioning it earlier.

JB: Oh, that's OK. I just wanted to mention that because that was kind of an interesting space to be in. Because being on the mezzanine--it was the same level as the May Company administrative offices, and the personnel office. Almost everyone that had business to do with the May Company managers had to pass by my office, which was right there. And it was really interesting and actually very sad when the May Company corporation decided to close down the building, and we had to leave. And I **[1:00:00]** had to overhear some of the very sad conversations, because there were May Company employees--

PHE: Lifers.

JB: --who had worked there for thirty years or more. I would like to talk a little bit about this—really--schism between the experience that I think most of the staff had when we were there, and the knowledge that we had that--you know--this was a great deal--considering our circumstances, it was a great deal. And the spaces worked very well. And there were problems, because the May Company employees never really did understand what we were all about. And people would come in to visit the museum and be misdirected and so on, but, nevertheless, I have found, still, in interviewing people [now] and talking with them at the time—[there are] board members and other members of the museum who did not have a positive impression of the May Company situation. And it's always bothered me, you know, just seeing the difference in point of view.

PHE: I think people misunderstood it. I think [many] people were lackluster in their enthusiasm about it. [But] I remember Bob Ahmanson, . . . who gave us $1,000,000 subsequently--he loved it. [The donation came from the Ahmanson Foundation.] He said, "This is fabulous. Why do you even need a new building? This is fabulous, you know."

JB: The Japanese have had museums in [department stores for many years].

PHE: Oh, the top of the Petersen Museum [building], when it was a Seibu [department store], used to have a museum and a gallery in it. You know, on the [southeast] corner of Wilshire and Fairfax. But it was a little bit ahead of its time, or behind its time . . . . My own opinion is that The Egg and The Eye [Gallery] and the Craft and Folk Art Museum were . . . [perceived as being] top drawer . . . [with some] snob appeal, [albeit with the more populist] Festival of Masks and other public programs. And I think that the perception of the May Company--and that was before it was Robinson-May, I believe--

was that it was sort of déclassé. I remember Mike Kaiser saying that . . . [the name of the "May Company Budget Store"—which was in a separate building next door to the department store--was redundant].

. . . . He said that the whole thing [the whole May Company store] was a budget store. And that was his take on it. And I remember people saying, “Oh, we’re going to die. The museum will die a slow death behind the lingerie.” You know, "lost in the lingerie." And even people like Aaron Paley were down on it. I guess most people who were down on it came off somewhere around the idea that the institution was "making do" instead of leading, and being reactive instead of proactive.

JB: Well, I wish some of those people had--

PHE: I . . . thought it was a very enlightened move, myself.

JB: I agree with you. And I enjoyed it a great deal, in spite of, you know, these problems. And I just wish that some of those people [who objected] had been willing to give us a deal like that!

PHE: It was very nice. And after we opened in the new space on Wilshire, subsequent to the May Company, and I don’t know, was that in the ‘90s then?

JB: We were in the May **[1:05:00]** Company [from July 1989] until the end of '92. They announced the closure in November, and we had to be out by the end of the year.

PHE: Yes. But those first years after we moved in . . .

JB: To the May Company?

PHE: No, to 5814 again.

JB: [We moved] to 5800--the corner building--[in January1993 while the renovation work on 5814 was going on and then, when the 5814 renovation was done--in May1995--the two buildings had been merged architecturally].

PHE: . . . .Post-Hodgetts + Fung--before I left the museum [that last year (1995-96) was] all in balance in terms of the budget. We had a modest surplus. . . . We were not running at a deficit. We had started to gain our support base back . . . subsequent to [being at] the May Company. And after I left, things started to deteriorate--and, for a variety of reasons, not only financial, but health reasons of some of the principals. That’s when they decided to close the building and close the museum. [The Hodgetts + Fung-renovated museum reopened in May 1995; PHE resigned in June 1996; the museum closed one a half years later at the end of 1997.]

JB: Right, well we certainly want to get to that. Let's talk about the interim period, from the time that we moved out of the May Company [at the end of 1992]. The decision was made [to lease the 5800 Wilshire building], and I'd really like you to talk about this, because I was not privy to everything that was going on. As a staff member, I learned only a little bit.

PHE: Are you saying of the period where we occupied the corner building while the other building was being rehabbed?

JB: Yes, exactly.

PHE: And then we rehabbed the corner building.

JB: Yes, it was two and a half . . . years [January 1993 – May 1995] before we were able to occupy the new merged space designed by Hodgetts + Fung. And I guess what I'd like you to talk about is--you started to talk about the . . . attempts to purchase the corner building [at 5800 Wilshire]. That building, of course, was part of the original deal for the Ratkovich development. It [and the 5814 Wilshire building] would have been torn down if that development had [moved forward].

PHE: Right, and during the [negotiations for that] development, right around Christmastime [1992], we tried and tried and tried to buy it from Thrifty Oil, which owned it. . . . . But I remember Ratkovich and Frank Wyle were negotiating on the opposite team from . . . Roy Ventress [and his team]. And [Ventress's team] won . . . [with a bid] in the range of like $1.3 million. It was not that much. And they won by $25,000, and for some reason, we didn't [stay in the bidding]. We should have just sort of done a pre-emptive bid, in my opinion. Because I remember one of the arguments was, we should rent the other building and remodel--I remember, Thomas Rupert, who was on the board at the time, and a real estate guy--commercial real estate--he thought that we should rent the building and remodel the other one and then--

JB: Rent the 5814 building?

PHE: No, the corner building. Because we owned the 5814 building.

JB: I thought you meant rent it out to someone else.

PHE: No, no. I'm sorry. Rent [the corner building—5800 Wilshire]. And so, ultimately, that's what we did, but I was always afraid of that big rent number, you know. It was really, really disproportionate. I remember the catchphrase at the time was "We'll be back on the street," as opposed to on the third floor of the May Company--or the fourth floor.

JB: Yes, and the other catchphrase that I kept hearing, that the staff kept hearing, was [the 5800 building] was "leased with an option to buy." And I know we all assumed that the

5800 building was going to be purchased in order for us to occupy this merged plan that Hodgetts + Fung were designing. For one thing, the plan included this lovely courtyard, which was created out of what had been our small but still serviceable parking lot between the two buildings. And the 5800 building **[1:10:00]** had this enormous parking lot out in back, which was included in the deal. So it made a big difference, not only in terms of the use of the Hodgetts + Fung plan, when we lost that building, but it also made a difference in our parking.

PHE: I honestly don't remember there was an option to buy, but I didn't negotiate the lease, so I don't know.

JB: Well that's what we were told, and it does appear in some of the documents that I've seen, but I didn't know what that meant.

PHE: At one time, that building could have been bought for $325,000, you know.

JB: Oh, yes. Back in the late '70s.

PHE: It was just unfortunately something that was--there was a lack of vision on that particular issue.

JB: Yes, I have to say that I did not have the impression that Frank Wyle was terribly enthusiastic about going after that building, and I always wondered--

PHE: Yes, and I think if he had been, he would have gotten it. But that's the hand we were dealt. And we leased it with an option to buy, I guess, and we did some minor renovations to [the 5800 Wilshire building], so that it would be suitable to our purposes. . . . But I don't remember [exactly how it was laid out]. I remember [some] offices [including] the Festival of Masks were on the bottom floor. And some offices were along the front in the top [second] floor. And I know that the library was on the second floor in the final configuration. But I don't know if it was always there.

JB: Yes, it was. In fact, it was the first department to move into that building. And I ended up really working quite directly with Van Holland's company, the construction [crew for the remodel]. I guess they were related to the Van Holland who was on the board, is that right? There was a Van Holland who was on the board.

PHE: No, no, no.

JB: No they were not related?

PHE: The contractor's name was Marvin Van Holland. The other guy . . . was a controller for Wyle laboratories, whose name was Van, and his last name was Holland.

JB: Oh, that's interesting. I made a false assumption there. So anyway, Marvin Van Holland was on the job. I guess he had done some work for Frank Wyle, and he and his crew ended up more or less camping out, at least during the week. They were from Riverside. So rather than go back and forth, they [brought in an RV and slept on the construction site during the week].

PHE: Right. And one thing that we haven't addressed is that we had a very interesting selection process for the architects before we settled on Hodgetts + Fung. . . . Antoine Predock was considered, Barton Myers, Barton Phelps, Frederick Fisher, and Hodgetts + Fung, all of whom were top, top-drawer architects. We settled on Hodgetts + Fung, and I think they did a very credible plan, you know. It was a little clunky, I think, in retrospect. The building was a little funky.

JB: Well, it worked beautifully with the 5800 building.

PHE: Yes, and they integrated them very nicely. But I don't know if it ultimately functioned as they had hoped. They had this sort of reflecting--not a reflecting pool, but a . . . [concrete box] with an I-beam --

JB: The water feature, yes.

PHE: The water feature. Water features are always problematic.

JB: I had the impression, actually, that it was kind of added at the last minute. And the engineering was not as good as it should have been. It was beautiful when it worked.

PHE: That building--that whole area's geologically active, and it's actually situated above a subterranean tar flow, and there are active--

JB: Yes, remember the elevator [in the corner building] that always smelled of tar?

PHE: Yes, tar and methane, and they never took into consideration **[1:15:00]** the fact that all that stuff would come bubbling up.

JB: Oh, it did.

PHE: And it did [come up] through that nice patio, you know. But all of those things, . . . as successful as they were, they were plagued by a series of missteps. And I think we made a silk purse out of a sow's ear [the "sow's ear" being the 5800 building and the parking lot]. I think [. . . Hodgetts + Fung] did a good job. I do think it was a little funky, but I think it was a great job. I respect them tremendously as architects. You know, I think they're wonderful people and wonderful architects. . . .

JB: Yeah, well the whole idea that this building on the corner, which was [an integral] part of the plan, was not actually owned yet!

PHE: Yes, I mean, I wouldn't have done it quite that way.

JB: Now, I just want to mention, since the earthquake retrofitting did happen before the remodeling started that, on January 17th, Martin Luther King's birthday of 1994, we had a 6.7 earthquake. And luckily, the [retrofitting] work had been done before that earthquake happened. What was your experience of the earthquake? I mean, it was the first time that I ever really thought I was going to die. [Beny and I] were in Santa Monica. You were in--

PHE: Studio City. It was a pretty good shake. It cracked the floor of our home. Bricks fell out of our fireplace.

JB: It was early in the morning. [The quake occurred at 4:30:55 am.]

PHE: Yes, I remember my youngest son, Spencer, came running through, and I'm sure, you know, he could have been hit by a brick, you know, [but] he wasn't, [thank goodness]. But they were scared. That was a good jolt.

JB: It was a very big jolt. In Santa Monica, and also up where my son lived [in Santa Clarita].

PHE: That [was] the Northridge Quake. [It was centered in the north-central San Fernando Valley; it had a duration of 10 – 20 seconds and "ground acceleration that was the highest ever instrumentally recorded in an urban area in North America." --*Wikipedia*]

JB: All of the staff came back to the building the next day wondering what might have happened [to the building or the furnishings]. [The Northridge quake happened before the Museum reopened to the public; the work was not completed on the 5814 building, so CAFAM facilities were only in the 5800 building at the time.] And I was amazed to find that, except for one bookcase that had not been tied into the wall, nothing was damaged in the library. . . . So that was a happy thing. [Now I would like to] mention that, at about that time in 1994, during the Primavera Ball, which we had continued to have every year--it was a--

PHE: --a fundraising ball.

JB: Right. I found a speech that you read during that ball. And you said, "Our goal is to raise $8.5 million for the purposes of building and furnishing the museum, acquiring adjacent real estate through exercising our option --"

PHE: OK. Well then there was an option.

JB: "And establishing an endowment." And you went on to say that, of the $8.5 million, we have raised approximately half. So that was pretty impressive. Now, about that time, Sue Sirkus, who had been the development officer, resigned. And Kim Litsey was hired [to take her place]. And I don't remember exactly when the actual building began to take

shape--the Hodgetts + Fung building--but it wasn't too long after that. But [in 1995] we planned this gala. We called it a "Homecoming." Because that's what it felt like.

PHE: Yes, and it was a good event. It was a very nice event. I remember it. That was held in the parking lot of the corner building.

JB: Yes. A big tent. So that was in May of 1995. And that served as the annual fundraiser. We didn't call it the Primavera. But that whole **[1:20:00]** weekend was quite amazing. The dinner dance was on Friday night. Well, it wasn't a dance, but the gala opening and dinner. And it seemed like everybody was there, everybody who had ever had anything to do with the museum.

PHE: I remember a lot of people came, even antagonistic support groups.

JB: Wouldn't like to mention any names?

PHE: No, no, I wouldn't. But people who both believed in the museum and put their money behind those beliefs, but [also people who] were at polar opposites of the political spectrum.

JB: Oh. Well, from a staff point of view, it really did feel wonderful. It had been such a long time. We had been looking forward to [the completion of our home].

PHE: [We had been] wandering in the wilderness.

JB: Yes. And I think I mentioned to you last time that, in terms of the abandonment of the Ratkovich plan, the staff kind of was relieved, in a way, to not have to be concerned about the much larger staff and security that that would have entailed. And the Hodgetts + Fung plan just seemed so much more practical. You know, as you say, maybe it was a little funky, but it worked with the 5800 building. We had another gallery.

PHE: I think the key to [the failure of] that plan was the [non]-ownership of the building, and I think that was a mistake not to acquire the building. I really do. I think that was one of the major problems.

JB: Yeah, that was sad. But that hadn't really--

PHE: Played out yet.

JB: --played out. Well, I guess you should tell that story, because I'm not sure of the timing.

PHE: Well, it's not all that long after this timeline of yours that I hung up my spurs and rode off into the sunset.

JB: Right, yes, [you resigned] about a year later [in June 1996], after the reopening.

PHE: Right, and I don't know if that had finally played out prior to my departure or not, but I know that I had felt it was important to get that building. And I had been, by that time, with the museum for 21 years, and I wanted to try out some other things.

JB: Yes, well there were several minutes of board meetings that are in the archives where you made very definite statements that "You must buy the 5800 building. We have to have that." But you were around when the final negotiations attempting to buy the building happened.

PHE: I was? . . . . I don't know. I mean, that is not ascendant in my mind at this time. I can't remember in my mind's eye looking at this meeting. I can't visualize it. [Actually, the "final effort" to buy 5800 Wilshire took place around May 1997; Patrick had resigned a year earlier.]

JB: Well, I'm not clear about exactly when it became final. I remember one time . . . when Frank and Edith came into the building. We were still there in the 5800 building. They had been to a meeting, and I remember Frank saying to me, "He wouldn't accept it, he wouldn't accept it." Frank had made Ventress what I guess was a final offer. And Ventress was just incredibly hard-nosed about it. And I always wondered why Ventress wasn't more accommodating. I mean, of course it was a business deal, but he just seemed as if there [was perhaps some personal issue].

PHE: Yeah, he was very wily. Not to use a pun. He was from New Orleans, I believe, Cajun background. And he was in partnership with Lena Longo, who was the widow of [the guy who had owned] LongoToyota.

JB: Were they related? Ventress and Longo?

PHE: No. Roy Ventress's wife is Italian. And Longo is Italian, and they were very much involved in things Italian. They were just business partners. And, you know, I think he could have been more accommodating than he was, I agree. **[1:25:00]**

JB: And they were involved with some of the museum activities for a couple of years.

PHE: Yes. But [in the negotiations] he didn't give an inch. And I guess in the bigger picture, the way [the Wyles] looked at it, it wasn't worth going more. But that would have then been the third occasion where they hadn't gone for it.

JB: There were several other offers before.

PHE: The building was offered to the museum in the '70s for $350,000. It was offered for a little more than $1.3 million in the Ratkovich plan, and subsequently, I don't know, maybe it had gone up to $3,000,000, I don't know.

JB: No, I think $2.3 million was the highest.

PHE: That Frank would not go above?

JB: Well I don't think Frank wanted to go to $2.3. $2.3, I believe, was Ventress's asking price. And for some reason, Frank didn't want to go that high. He had gotten a lot of advice, apparently, that the building was not worth $2.3 million, so he was hesitant.

PHE: Well, when you're doing appraising, there are three approaches to value. There is a market comparison approach, the cost approach, and the income approach, which is typically used in commercial real estate. And the value of a property is predicated on how much income you get from it on an annual basis. So it's a multiple of your income. And if you're making . . . $200,000 a year in rent, which is what they were getting from the museum, you multiply that times 12, that's $2.4 million. And that's the asking price of the building. If you get it for $2.2--I mean, the multiple can be anywhere from 10 to 20, depending on where the property is. And, you know, using a traditional commercial real estate evaluation based on the income approach, maybe Ventress wasn't that far off in what he was asking. I don't know.

But anyway, all those things . . . were at play, I guess, in my decision to move on. I always thought it was like being a priest or a minister or a rabbi or a college president or something, where you were the skinny part of an hourglass, where you had all these people above you wanting things, and telling you their opinions, and all these people below you, and all these people sort of at the same level, or close to the same level, and everything had to go through you. Up and down, up and down.

JB: It was too much.

PHE: Well, it wasn't too much; it's just that there was a cyclical nature to it, a repetitive nature to it. And that was good and motivating against a backdrop of planning and realizing a vision of some type of a permanent home with a collection and with publications and, you know, a legitimate, *bona fide* museum. But once that got truncated, then it became more . . . [a matter of] just completing the annual cycle. You know, if you don't have the space, how do you grow the library? If you don't have the space, how do you grow the collection? How do you grow the publications and the footprint of the museum, the historical footprint of what it can accomplish? So, in a truncated state, despite all the best efforts to try and keep it going, you know--

JB: It must have been very tiring. Very wearying.

PHE: Well, it was. But it was also exhilarating. And as I also said earlier, the last two fiscal years--one of the things I did was change the fiscal year from a calendar year to one that began, like many governments do, on July 1st and ended on June 30th, because the bulk of our money **[1:30:00]** always came in the final quarter.

JB: Sure, Christmas. Holidays. [For tax purposes, people want to wait until just before the end of the year to make their donations.]

PHE: Yes, and if your money comes in the middle of the year, you can better plan for the rest of the year, whereas before it was always at the end of our year. And so we were always scrambling. But my memory is, and I'm pretty sure it would be borne out by the financial documents, that we completed those last couple of years I was there in balance, even with that big nut of renting the space.

JB: Well that must have felt good.

PHE: That was a good accomplishment. I felt good about that. And I thought our program quality was good and high.

JB: Well, is there anything else you'd like to say about that last year or last few months before you resigned?

PHE: You know, that I hoped that I had left it in better shape than I found it. And I think I did. I think I did a lot of things that people never necessarily knew I did, or needed to know. . . , but I was involved in very, very many things, and facilitated their happening. So I felt good about the quality of the work that I did.

And I think I was very involved in directing the board. And I had more of a partnership with the board than being sort of a subordinate to the board, even though, technically, I served at their pleasure. And I was pretty proactive, I think. And many board members acknowledged that.

JB: Yes, and just your longevity there, of course, as well as the longevity of some of the board members. They must have been aware of what you had accomplished. And I have to say, after looking through the archives, the files, of everything that went on, it's quite amazing to me, that you were able to balance all of those things. I don't think that most board members, let alone staff members, realized how many different aspects there were to the museum. We did realize that we were stretched a lot of the time. We were [all] really scrambling. But you know, you look at other museums, talk to other museum staff, and everyone has the same complaint, related primarily to needing to get financial support for everything that one does. Very few museums have endowments that actually support basic operations.

PHE: I remember having to hustle on more than one occasion to make sure everybody got paid on time. And that was one of my great preoccupations on a semi-monthly basis.

JB: Yes, and you also worked to get a retirement plan going.

PHE: Even though it wasn't always implemented as it should have been. But I tried a lot of things, and I just think that the board, for a major city, I think somehow, we never got as much money as we should have gotten, or we had every right to expect that we would have gotten--given the fact that we're in L.A. I mean, if we were in Riverside or Porterville or somewhere, I can see it, but you know, this is like the Big Orange, or whatever they call it. I think that we were hampered by a lack of commitment and success in major fundraising.

JB: Now some people have said, on more than one occasion, that as generous as Frank Wyle was--and Edith Wyle were--that, in some respects, the fact that they were willing to give every year so much **[1:35:00]** was actually discouraging to some other board members.

PHE: I can see that argument, and I've heard that argument, but when we were affiliated with, or supported by Tosco, the oil shale corporation, and Mort Winston was our primary benefactor at the time, the Wyles gave just as much as they ever did, but relatively, that amount was less then, proportionally, you know. And the Wyle money, after Wyle Laboratories was sold, changed quite a bit and diminished.

JB: OK. I know we're running a little short on time, and you need to get on the freeway, but your life at CAFAM did not end forever in May or June of 1996. I don't know that we really need to get into the history of the museum in between, but what I'd like to do is skip . . . [ahead almost two years], I think it was, to when the board decided to--the museum had closed at the end of 1997. And then, in just a few months after that, March 26th, 1998, they had decided to sell the permanent collection in order to raise money.

PHE: To pay off their debts.

JB: To pay off their debts. And so there was an auction. And I think you said that you did come to that auction.

PHE: I did. I thought it was very sad. I think the whole thing was very sad. I think it's important to note that there were four long-time financial supporters of the museum, like [Lloyd] Cotsen, and Frank and Edith Wyle, [and] Dan Greenberg, and [then] Frank had a heart attack, Edith got cancer, Lloyd got something, Dan had other--I mean, he was the president of Reed College, and I don't know what else. And all those glass collectors, Sonny Kamm and Dan Greenberg, a lot of others, in that earthquake you mentioned, they just were devastated--a lot of their holdings were broken. Anyway, the core support group for the museum became infirm. And Edith subsequently passed away of her illness. [Edith Wyle passed away on October 12, 1999.]

JB: I just want to say, it occurred to me that, during that time when the board and Frank were trying to buy the museum there at the end, Edith was already ill at that time, and I would imagine--

PHE: Buy what museum? You mean the corner building?

JB: Yes. I'm sorry, I misspoke--when they were trying to buy the 5800 building. You know, we were talking about maybe Frank's not having a huge amount of enthusiasm, and I could imagine that some of that was because of Edith's illness at that time.

PHE: Yeah, could be.

JB: So, at any rate, the auction happened, it was sad, I was there. It seemed more like a wake to me--

PHE: Yes, to me too. I was there. And of course, it also, in some quarters, turned the museum into a pariah. What kind of institution would sell its permanent collection? The archive was given to UCLA. The library was given to LACMA. And there were discussions about merging with LACMA prior to my departure.

JB: Yes, that's right.

PHE: I met with Andrea Rich. I remember having lunch with her in her office. Anyway.

JB: Yes, when I went over there to work [in September 1997], the day after my first day at the LACMA Research Library, at that time, the merging was going ahead, and a day later, it was announced that **[1:40:00]** Frank Wyle had pulled out of the deal.

PHE: Well, and LACMA was--they were driving a pretty hard bargain. They were going to basically reduce the museum to a plaque on Wilshire Boulevard that said, "Here lies the Craft and Folk Art Museum."

JB: I know that's what Edith feared.

PHE: So, at any rate, going forward--I read in the paper that the museum was closing. I didn't know it was closing.

JB: Oh, you didn't.

PHE: I was long since disassociated.

JB: Yeah, but you were occasionally in touch with the Wyles, weren't you?

PHE: Oh, I was in touch with the Wyles, but I was disassociated from the museum. And I guess the point being that I was a private citizen. I was in no official capacity--neither a staff member nor board member nor consultant. And I thought--that [the museum closing] didn't seem right, even hampered as it was from having sold its collection. And

so I had been part of some of the [preliminary] discussions with LACMA. And I knew that the City of Los Angeles [Cultural Affairs Department] lacked a Westside presence . . . even though [CAFAM is] mid-Wilshire--to most of L.A., it's more on the Westside than anything [the Cultural Affairs Department] had. I think the farthest west they were was on Adams or maybe the Municipal Art Gallery. So, I called up Al Nodal, who was my friend.

JB: Yes, you had known him for a long time.

PHE: Long time. And head of the--

JB: [City of L.A.] Cultural Affairs.

PHE: --Cultural Affairs department, the [General] Manager. And I invited him to have lunch. And we just talked, and I said, "What do you think about taking over the museum?" And he would say, "It's a shame, you know, that it would close," and he just asked me how it would work, and I told him how it would work, at least one way. He said it sounded interesting. So I basically got the City to agree, in principal, to take over in a joint, private-public partnership. Not take over, but go into a partnership with the board to run the museum. And I had that in my pocket, basically, and there was a [planned] board meeting, and I guess it was one of the final board meetings. And I called up Frank, and I asked him if I could address the board with an idea. And I hadn't told the Wyles about it beforehand. And so I told them, and they were sort of interested. I mean, they were sort of shocked, and I think, pleased. And [at] that board meeting [they] agreed to consider my plan. And then one thing led to another, and I negotiated the agreement. It was a ten-year agreement.

JB: Do you remember the deal points?

PHE: Terms? Well basically, it was that a lot of the operational costs--the security, the utilities, part of the staffing--would be paid for by the city, and there would be some grant monies in it. The board would be responsible for running the programmatic aspect of it.

JB: The exhibitions.

PHE: Exhibitions. There could be a shop. There would be this and that. I mean, there were lots of provisions. But the bulk of it was that the operational costs would be borne by the city. And it would be an arts center of the Cultural Affairs Department. The Municipal Art Gallery is a [city] arts center. The Banning Museum is an [L.A.] art center . . . And so, part of the City's acceptance of the deal was that I would be made the chairman of the Board of Directors. And I couldn't afford to do that as a private citizen. Because I was a consultant. I mean, I made my money doing work for people. And so they offered me the chairmanship, the board did, and **[1:45:00]** I said, "That's nice, I can't do it unless you

pay me." And so they paid me, not a lot, but they paid me. And, in that capacity, I oversaw the re-emergence of the museum. And the first . . . director--was Joan de Bruin.

JB: And she had worked in the Cultural Affairs Department.

PHE: Yes, she did. And so, [after] a while, I don't know, she became ill and decided to retire or something.

JB: Yeah, she was there for several years. [Joan de Bruin was appointed CAFAM Director in February 1999 and she resigned in April 2001.] I was going to ask you when--and you continued as chairman of the board during that whole time.

PHE: Yes, as chairman. I think I was chairman for two or three years. [Ela was board chair from January 1999 – April 2002.] And then she was leaving, and she counseled me to get a director from the outside. And during the time between when Joan left and the new director came in, I was retained by the City to be the acting or interim director of the [CAFAM] art facility, the art center. So [for one year] I was simultaneously the paid consultant to the board acting as chairman and the director. So I was like a Chief Executive Officer, basically.

JB: That was a really unusual situation.

PHE: It was an unusual situation.

JB: So you oversaw the process--the search process?

PHE: I oversaw the programs for one year in my capacity as director. And I oversaw the fundraising and the board committees. I ran the board a lot differently than Frank did, by the way.

JB: Well tell us about that.

PHE: Well, I respect the way he did. He came from a more corporate perspective, and I came from a more collegial perspective.

JB: And more of a programmatic perspective.

PHE: Programmatic. And I would invite a lot of discussion at board meetings. Both ways are valid. But at any rate--

JB: Your way sounds a lot more interesting.

PHE: Well, it was interesting. I mean, Frank's was interesting, too. And then, I got involved, toward the end, with the selection of the new director. And I wasn't particularly enamored of the choice of the selection committee.

JB: You were, or you weren't?

PHE: I was not.

JB: This was Peter Tokovsky.

PHE: This is Peter Tokovsky, yes. And upon his appointment, I told Frank that I had already been here 21 years, and now I'd added another four or five years, and, given that I might not be seeing eye-to-eye with the new director, I certainly shouldn't be the chairman of the board, and I probably should get off the board. And so then I rode off into the sunset a second time.

JB: And Frank, then, resumed the chairmanship.

PHE: He resumed the chairmanship. So that's the end of my story, although, I was on the board for a little longer, and then they got another director . . . The next director, I helped select was Jim Goodwin, and I was very happy and very involved. And [then when] his successor [was hired], that's when I finally demurred. She who shall not be named. [laughter] [Patrick resigned as Interim Board Chair--while remaining on the board--when the board began its search for a new director in April 2002; he oversaw the exhibition programs as Interim Director until Tokovsky was hired at the end of 2002; Patrick remained on the board until July 1, 2005.]

JB: Well, you certainly did yeoman service in several areas. And I think, one of the best things that you did was to rescue the museum before Edith died. I get emotional just thinking about it.

PHE: I felt really good about that for her. I did, too . . . and they named a square after her. And Al Nodal did that, by the way.

JB: I wanted you to tell about [that].

PHE: Well, he was aware that she was in failing health, and he respected her tremendously. And we talked about it. And he said, I'm going to get the city council to dedicate that corner to Edith Wyle, officially. And I mean, [Alexander] Sokurov and some of these other great Russians and great people all over the world get squares named after them. And so Edith got it--right **[1:50:00]** on Wilshire Boulevard [on the corner of Stanley Avenue and Wilshire]. And I think she was really happy that the museum was saved.

JB: Oh yes. She had died by the time the Edith Wyle Square was named, but all of the Wyle family came for that occasion. Beny and I were there.

PHE: Yeah--it was a big deal. It was a big deal.

JB: It was a very big deal. And I think that must have been very satisfying to you.

PHE: I was very gratified for her, and for the museum. Because it shouldn't have died, you know. And now, to the present day, I'm in no way involved with it. I don't know what its current mission is, and I can only assume from the programmatic activity I see [published] that it's quite different from what she initially envisioned--

JB: It seems to be.

PHE: --and what I envisioned. It doesn't seem to be based in folk art, craft, or design. I mean, certainly, it's tangentially tethered to those things. But they have, basically, whatever exhibition they want, I guess. And I'm not putting it down. I just am not involved anymore.

JB: As far as I can tell--and I, also, am not involved, [but] I'm still a member, so I get their literature--but I'm not involved at all. I believe that--I don't know what the written mission statement is, but it does seem as if the exhibitions are, to use the term loosely, culturally-related.

PHE: Really. Sounds like a very loose use of that word. [Programmatically, CAFAM became somewhat more aligned with the original mission after Suzanne Isken became the Director in February 2011.]

JB: I agree, it is. Well, Patrick, I really, really am glad that we got these three sessions done and that you contributed [so much to this oral history].

PHE: Well, thank you for your yeoman efforts. I mean, this is a great thing you're undertaking to preserve the oral history of the museum, or, at least, certain aspects of it.

JB: Well, I think the museum is definitely worth it. And you were such an important part of it for such a long time.

PHE: As were you for such a long time. I mean, we've both been in the trenches.

JB: Yes, we have.

PHE: In the valleys and on the peaks.

JB: But it was fun. We had a lot of good times, too.

PHE: I agree. And I think the museum resonated with the city during its prime. And I think it was a really good union. And I think that Al Nodal--him being open to joining the museum with Cultural Affairs--basically ratified that view. And made it tangible. And, I guess, actually, 2008--this [currently] is the year where there's the first tenure option to renew. I think we made the agreement [for ten years] in [1998 or 1999]. So it'll be interesting to see what they do.

JB: Yes, I guess Wally Marks is the chairman now, so it'll be up to him.

PHE: He's well-connected with City Hall. So that's not a problem now . . . .

JB: Well, I know that we can't have another session, although there is [still] so much that we could . . . talk about. But this has been fabulous, and I really appreciate it.

PHE: Well thank you for all your time and your patience. I know it's hard.

JB: Thank you very much.

PHE: A pleasure.

[End of Session 3: 1:54:35]