CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF MARCIA JOAN PAGE

by Joan M. Benedetti

Marcia Joan Page at Home
in Mt. Washington
May 22, 2009

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Marcia Joan Page was born August 11, 1938, in Greenwood, Mississippi, the eldest of nine children. Her father, John Meketi, played minor league baseball. When Marcia had finished second grade, the family moved to Aurora, Illinois. The Catholic high school she attended was run by Franciscan-order nuns, heavily influenced by the teachings of Dorothy Day and the social causes of *The Catholic Worker*.

After high school, she went to the University of Illinois, Chicago, and then night classes at the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology. In Chicago, she met and married Patrick Page. Their children, Hugh, Andrea, and Michael were born there. Marcia worked as a copy editor and book designer for Henry Regnery Publishers and marched in Martin Luther King's demonstrations against workplace discrimination.

Patrick's employment caused the family to move several times between San Clemente and Malibu in California and Newburyport, Massachusetts, where Marcia cooked at the Stage Coach Tavern. She settled in Santa Monica as she and Patrick separated. With her children in high school, she resumed her art history education at Immaculate Heart College.

Marcia began her museum career as an intern at the Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) in 1975. She received her B.A. in 1977, and was hired as CAFAM Registrar and Traveling Exhibition Coordinator in 1978. As Registrar, she was responsible for collections management and art handling. She digitized collections records, and worked on a collections management policy. As Traveling Exhibitions Coordinator, she often escorted them, including an 800-object "Puzzles Old and New" exhibition, that went to seven sites in the U.S., Canada, and Japan in the late eighties. She organized several folk art shows for L.A. schools and businesses.

In 1989, she was appointed CAFAM's Director of Exhibition Development. She worked on revising the mission statement and developed a team approach to exhibitions. With funding from the Getty Foundation and the California Arts Council, she directed "The Language of Objects," a wide-ranging collections research project, for which a multi-media database was designed that would manage collections and store contextual research. One of the outcomes was an interactive exhibition, Dress Codes: Urban Folk Fashion, mounted in 1993 at the Smithsonian Institution's Experimental Gallery. She oversaw all CAFAM exhibitions from 1989 until she resigned in 1996.

In 1997, Page was hired by the Pacific Asia Museum, first as Collections Manager and then as Deputy Director for Collections and Interpretation. Under her supervision, the museum’s website was developed and the collection records were digitized and put online. She wrote successful grant proposals that funded the development of a detailed conservation plan for the collection and the building. She retired in 2008.

After retiring, Marcie moved from Santa Monica to live with her daughter's family in the Mt. Washington area of Los Angeles, helping to care for her grandson, Ali. Diagnosed with cancer in the fall of 2011, she passed away on June 2, 2012.

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: Marcia Page's home in the Mt. Washington tract of the Highland Park neighborhood in Los Angeles.

Dates. time, length of sessions, and total number of hours recorded: Session 1: May 18, 2009, 10 am, 1:40:56; Session 2: May 22, 2009, 10 am, 1:33:49; Session 3: May 29, 2009, 10 am,1:50:00; Session 4: June 5, 2009, 2:25:02. Total number of hours: 7:28:47.

Persons present during the interviews: Marcia Page and Joan Benedetti

Conduct and Content of Interview: To prepare for the interviews with Page, Benedetti reviewed the CAFAM timeline developed while working on the CAFAM Records at UCLA. Benedetti and Page worked at CAFAM during virtually the same time period (Page, 1975 – 1996 and Benedetti, 1976 – 1997) and their relationship was close during that time, working together on several CAFAM projects, so both parties were very comfortable during the interviews, which proceeded more like guided conversations than formal interviews. First session is more or less chronological, with many conversational side tracks; later sessions were guided mostly by topics presented by Joan.

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

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company; arguments with Edith—Learns from Southern California registrars group and Karen Copeland (trained by Pat Nauert). **15:00**

Many variables--Some shows come fully organized; others from collectors who may not know about museum standards—Mannequin creation. **20:00** Edith: 10+ years' experience at The Egg and The Eye--Turnaround time: one week current show down; one week new show up--Annex space. **25:00** Registrar and whoever is exhibition organizer; preparators and designers—Designers: how it looks often more important than security—Edith: Marcie is “conscience of the museum"--1984 Olympic Arts mask show enormous--Brenda Hurst keeps it organized; masks, films from all over world. **30:**00 Consult educators about labels--Accessibility issue. **35:**00 No elevator huge issue for staff because of stairs to third floor gallery--Objects cannot go through restaurant during lunch, dinner periods. **40:00**

Marcie's other job: Traveling Exhibitions Coordinator—Like curator, but exhibitions produced for schools, corporate venues considered “secondary” --L.A. Unified Schools grant; Edith’s "Museum without Walls" idea. **45:00** Collection development policy with Ruth Bowman--No thought of "Can we care for it? Can we store it?"--Trustee training must be part of it-- Whirligig left at back door. **50:00**

1987: First PCs from Wyle Laboratories? —IBM Displaywriter first, donated by Getty Center--All puzzles information: packing, display lists, insurance information; helped with Customs. **55:00** Puzzles Old and New, Jerry Slocum's collection—800+ mechanical puzzles--All staff helped catalog--Shan "Directing Curator"--“Puzzle House" in Slocum’s backyard--Marcie spends lots of time there. **1:00:00** Michelle Arens packs puzzles for travel; writes putting-together instructions--Marcie, Shan to Tokyo for Puzzles installation--Huge Japanese crew at Matsuya Department Store--Previous show down, space ready overnight, installed 12 hours--About 50 people worked on it. **1:05:00** Travel in Japan before returning.

1:10:00 More about PCs--Marcon database---Marcie used for object collection; Joan used for CAFAM exhibition history--Early preparators: Gustavo Montoya, Patrick McCarthy. **1:15:00** High turnover among preparators: Roman Janczak, Brent Rummage. **1:20:00** Curator Laurie Beth Kalb leaves; Marcie then Director, Team Exhibition Development--Registrar needed; Carol Fulton takes job--At May Company, Carol designs installations while still Registrar.

Gallery 3, Santa Monica Place, lasted one year--"It nearly killed us"--Too much space to manage, not enough people; commuting miles added--Getting in/out shopping mall; security issue—**1:25:00** Ann Robbins, Susan Skinner oversaw shop; curated Introductions: Twelve Artists, An Invitational--Why Gallery 3 not successful. **1:30:00** USC also failed to make it work--Maskerade Ball: David Hockney costume judge--Graphic designer Max King--Marcie did proofreading: the other "hat." **1:33:49**

Session 3 (May 29, 2009)**:** Sam Maloof--Educators Karen Copeland (1975–1981), Janet Marcus (1982–1989)--Karen Educator and Registrar. **5:00** Both "new breed" of educator—Visitor experiences more interactive. **10:00** Phyllis Chang, Educator, 1991.

Patrick’s friends in design community--Edith has hard time letting go—CAFAM Library named for her--**20:00** Patrick wants to "leave his stamp"---Joan forms board/staff committee to locate adoptive home for library. **25:00** Library moved to LACMA, 1997--Patrick sees continuum between folk art and contemporary crafts.

Economic downturn-- Patrick Ela works very hard--Many social events after hours related to fundraising. **30:**00 Friendship with Al Nodal, Manager, L.A. Cultural Affairs—City helps museum reopen after 1997 closure--Administrative assistants--Brenda Hurst, Lisi Rona--Must be creative to survive--A lot of unpaid labor from staff and volunteers. **35:00** Early nineties: over 100 volunteers, good volunteer coordinators.

Laurie Beth Kalb (1987-1989) curator--Capital Campaign announced--Laurie a folklorist--Dissertation subject: Santos. **40:00** Laurie curates/organizes twelve exhibitions--Art Dolls--Mahabharata show? Curator, Pratapaditya Pal--Painting on Clay; **45:00** New Spirit in British Craft and Design; Modern Jewelry, New Design--None are folk art--American Visions: Arlette Gosieski's Applique Paintings, odd one: "folky," not folk art--Trustee Caroline Ahmanson connection? Santos, Statues, and Sculpture. **50:00**

Palms and Pomegranates: Traditional Dress of Saudi Arabia; money for education activities--Guatemalan Masks: the Pieper Collection--Jim Pieper, collector and trustee, didn't want curator--1993 Malibu fire—Reaction of local Guatemalan community, mostly refugees. **55:00** Involving people whose culture is exhibited.

Laurie buys some things for opening show, Hands On! At May Co. **1:00:00** Marcie visits Elizabeth Mandell home for contemporary craft items--Laurie has trouble getting some items approved: *corona* made of bread dough, a saddle, a piñata doll. **1:05:00** Partly "connoisseur's" point of view--"Rapidly vanishing traditions"--Some people think if object isn't old or if new materials used, it isn't good-- 18th century French embroidery company in Guatemala. **1:10:00** Caroline West, *huipil* expert at Fowler Museum, notices "outside" influences--Marcie wants people in communities today involved in shows--"Cultural context" --Hands On! Shows range of CAFAM interest: folk art, contemporary craft, design.

Mort Winston steps down. **1:15:00** Frank Wyle, chair; Museum Tower, developer Wayne Ratkovich—Space Planning Committee--Start of economic downturn. **1:20:00** CAFAM gets major grants, both private and government. **1:25:00** Marcy Goodwin, building program consultant—Minimal needs covered, then downsized--None of Museum Tower plans materialize--5800 Wilshire building: **1:30:00** Leased, never owned by CAFAM—1976, building available for $360,000—1993, costs CAFAM $17,000 a month—Why CAFAM left original building--May Company gives CAFAM free space; very functional, board hates it. **1:35:00**

Earthquake retrofitting; 5814 Wilshire vacated; restaurant closes forever—Ian Barrington. **1:40:00** Mutual interest in food/ wine--Marcie ran restaurant in Newburyport, Massachusetts--Egg and The Eye great idea, successful for long time. **1:45:**00 Final staff lunch--Ian sick; passes away not long after--Original chef, Rodessa Moore, famous for omelettes--Mayor Tom Bradley gave her City of L.A plaque. **1:50:00**

Session 4 (June 5, 2009)**:** Free space May Co. **5:00** Joe Terrell; Charles Moore firm, Urban Innovations Group--May Co museum visitors. **10:00** Entryway $40,000--February 1990: Director, Team Exhibition Development. **15:00** Away from curator-centered exhibitions--Carol Fulton, Registrar; exhibition designer—What a Sight: Spectacular Spectacles. **20:00**

Folk Treasures of Mexico; altars: Miguel Dominguez, Frank Romero, Olga Ponce Furginson--The Language of Objects. **25:00** Grants for L.O.O. multi-media collection database from Getty Trust, California Arts Council $160,000--No L.O.O. exhibition plan--Deirdre Evans-Pritchard, Carol Fulton write Smithsonian Experimental Gallery proposal. **30:00** Dress Codes: Urban Folk Fashion--Traditional cloth (kente, kimonos, bandannas, Pendleton) in context. **35:00** Virgin of Guadalupe, Barbie doll. **40:00** Emil Safier, database program--Deirdre, Carol, Janet to D.C. for installation--250,000+ visitors. **45:00** Marcie to D.C. to pack up--Kimberly Camp. **50:00**

Native America: Reflecting Contemporary Realities—Joan, Marcie co-produce for Columbus Quincentenary--Guest curator, Sara Bates (Cherokee), American Indian Contemporary Arts. **55:00** $5,000 from Casey Danson. **1:00:00** Dec. 1992 May Co. closes--Museum Tower falls through—5800 Wilshire leased--Recession—Collection into duplex. **1:05:00** Hodgetts + Fung to merge 5800, 5814 Wilshire--5800 to be purchased.

April 29, 1992—CAFAM still at May Co.—Meeting with Sara Bates—L.A.'s response to police acquittal in Rodney King beating—Sara to airport. **1:10:00** Joan watches from her rooftop--First floor May Co. broken into. **1:15:00** No damage to museum spaces—Staff "will consider these issues in everything from now on" --More community involvement--Phyllis Chang, Educator, and teenagers—Diversity and inclusion focus of Center for the Study of Art and Culture--More people of color, women, on Advisory Board. **1:20:00** Miguel Dominguez altars. **1:25:00**

28 months to re-opening—Gala "Homecoming," May 12-14, 1995--Marcie works on three opening shows--Carol designs, builds all three. **1:30:00** 5814 Wilshire: Ted Warmbold's Mexican folk art collection. **1:35:00**: "Points of View: Collectors and Collecting"--5800 Wilshire: Museum for a New Century, CAFAM,

museums, folk art display histories—Shan Emanuelli, Chana Smith. **1:40:00** Carol Fulton now CAFAM exhibition designer.

June 1995, Frank Wyle, chair, resigns. **1:50:00** Bud Knapp chair--April 1996, Patrick Ela resigns--Major recession. **1:55:00** May 1996, Development Officer Kim Litsey's assistant, Nancy Fister, named Acting Director; Nancy fires Kim—More layoffs--August 1996, Bud Knapp resigns; Frank Wyle again chair.

Art Week, Nov. 1996, Marcie interview. **2:00:00** Jan. 1997, Paul Kusserow Director. **2:05:00** Marcie: Board shouldn't have approved budgets; didn't know where money would come from--Curator Martha Drexler Lynn hired--Marcie: Couldn't hire Martha until Marcie gone--Marcie let go February 21, 1997--Martha hired one week later--Kusserow finds huge debts—Frank Wyle pays them--Joan laid off April 1997; deals with library, archives. **2:10:00** Nov: Kusserow, Lynn resign--32 years of staff files, L.O.O. materials, go to UCLA Special Collections. **2:15:00**

Pacific Asia Museum (PAM) Collections Manager--Dep. Director, 2005--Collection development policy--Getty Trust $500,000 to digitize collection records, create website. **2:20:00** Milan with 10 Hokusai works--At PAM 11 years--Retires September 2008. **2:25:02**

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INTERVIEW OF MARCIA JOAN PAGE

Session 1 (1:40:56), Monday, May 18, 2009. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: . . . OK, we're going to get started. Today is Monday, May 18, 2009, and I'm here in the Highland Park area [in the Mt. Washington tract] of Los Angeles at the home of Marcie Page, who worked at the Craft and Folk Art Museum for 21 years, from 1975 to 1996. And we're going to talk today about her early involvement with the museum and also some of her personal background. So, just starting at the beginning, Marcie, where and when were you born?

MP: I was born in Greenwood, Mississippi in 1938.

JB: And what's your birthday?

MP: August 11, 1938.

JB: So tell us a little bit about your family. Were your parents from Mississippi?

MP: My mother was, and my grandparents--my mother's family, basically. My father was from Illinois.

JB: From Illinois?

MP: Yeah.

JB: And I understand that you're the oldest of several siblings.

MP: Yes. I have eight brothers and sisters, so I'm the oldest of nine.

JB: Wow, what was that like?

MP: Well, it happened over about 20 years, so, in fact I --

JB: So you were 20 years old when your youngest sibling was born?

MP: Actually--let's see--I was 21. And I was having a baby at the same time. My mother and I actually had babies within a month of each other. Yeah. Yeah, that was interesting. So. . . we lived back and forth between Illinois and various places in the south.

JB: So you didn't stay in Mississippi that whole time that you were growing up?

MP: No, no, we would often go back in the summertime, because my mother wanted to be with her family, but I started going to school in Illinois [in 1947] when I was nine, and from then on, I spent all my school time in Illinois.

JB: Oh, OK. Where--in what town in Illinois?

MP: Oh, Aurora, Illinois. It's a--sort of an--outlying suburb of Chicago.

JB: Oh, that's pretty far from Greenwood, Mississippi.

MP: Yeah, but my father's family was there, and work was there--so.

JB: Did you live with your father's family when you were staying there?

MP: Sometimes--when I was really little--we lived with my grandparents.

JB: So you've--I was going to ask you about your early schooling--and that was in Illinois --

MP: Well, I went to first and second grade in Mississippi, and then after that, we went north, and I didn't go to school in Mississippi anymore, only in Illinois.

JB: Was that because your dad was working in Illinois?

MP: Yeah, yes, he was. He couldn't get work in Mississippi.

JB: So what about . . . your grade school . . . what was that like?

MP: Well, it was predominantly parochial school. In Mississippi, I went to public school because there was no parochial school. And then when [we] moved back to Illinois, my mother sent me to parochial school, so . . . from third grade through twelfth grade, I was in a Catholic school, and the high school was an all-girls school.

JB: I remember, from when we worked together, that you were involved with some Catholic causes, and it occurs to me that being Catholic was an important part of your life.

MP: Yes, it certainly was. I mean, I had a very conventional, traditional, Catholic upbringing. The high school that I went to was actually under Franciscan-order nuns, who've always been very involved in social causes, and they believed very firmly in what they called social action, and they expected all of us to participate in various activities that the school was involved in. So, **[00:05:00]** we were--our homerooms adopted, you know, poor families for the year, and things like that. But also, I remember each one of our homerooms had a subscription to a newspaper called *The Catholic Worker*. And at that time there was only one *Catholic Worker* house, and that was in New York, and it was the one that was the original one that was established by Dorothy Day. So, the paper would come, and it would be passed around, and some people read it and some people didn't, but I was one of the people who did, and so I wanted to go to New York and work with Dorothy Day.

JB: Do you remember how old you were when you [were thinking about that]?

MP: We were 15, 16. I really wanted to do that, but I didn't, although eventually I wound up in Los Angeles, and I [had] found out by that time that Catholic workers had traveled around and established different independent houses, but they were all based on Dorothy Day's philosophy. And there is one in Los Angeles, and I've been involved with them for, oh--since 19-- about 1982 or 3. I can't remember exactly.

JB: Well, I do remember your telling [me] . . . about getting up early in the morning [in Los Angeles] and going down to feed the --

MP: Breakfast to homeless people, yeah.

JB: And so . . . [you went to parochial school] through high school. What, if anything, in your early background, either at home or at school, prepared you, do you think, for your later, serious interest in crafts? Especially textiles, which you studied in college.

MP: Well, I think I'd always been . . . you have to remember that, back in the ’50s and ’60s, people--women especially--you just learned how to sew and embroider and crochet and knit, and you made things for your family, and I did. I used to make most of the clothes that my daughter and I wore. I knit sweaters for everyone in the family. I made curtains--you know, it was domestic, domestic textile work . . . and very traditionally based. But then, in the ’70s, there was the Women's Movement, and the Women's Movement said, "We're going to take women's work out of that little ghetto that it's been in, and--"

JB: Put it in a different context.

MP: Put it in a different context. And a lot of--that was sort of the beginning of the rise of the feminist textile artists, who were taking what had been a domestic chore and turning it into art. And so, you know, I just went along with that. I went to UCLA extension in the ’70s, and I worked with Neda Al-Hilali, and I would say that that was definitely a turning point . . . being in Neda's class. And also, I worked on a big piece of Neda's. She had all her students over there with crochet hooks working--it was an enormous thing! I remember when the show was at Barnsdall Park, and it was reviewed in the *LA Times*, and the reviewer described it as "a piece that looked like the hide of a flayed brontosaurus." (Laughs.)

JB: (Laughs.) Not a very enlightened critic! Was that when Josine Ianco-Starrels was the director?

MP: You know, I think so. I think she was there, yeah.

JB: She had some very creative shows there.

MP: Yeah. No, that was a wonderful show, and I think I still have the catalog from it somewhere.

JB: And of course, in the ’60s, at least in the late ’60s and early ’70s, there was also the--you know--what the journalists called the "hippie" movement. Which had lots and lots of textile work associated with it!

MP: Yes, it did, and I am not ashamed to say that I became an expert at--

JB: You macraméd?

MP: --I macraméd! I macraméd, and I macraméd some pretty astounding things, actually. Because of Neda, I started doing it big. I had [also] made jewelry with very fine waxed linen and different

colors, and tiny little beads, and tiny little feathers. I actually had a nice little jewelry business going at one point, so--

JB: Let's see. I guess what I'd like to know, and I don't know what order in which to ask you, but I'm wondering when you moved [away] from your family--**[00:10:00]** I know you finished your bachelor's degree in Los Angeles, but did you take college courses before you moved to California?

MP: Yes, I went to the University of Illinois for only one year in Chicago, the Chicago branch, and then I kept going to—attending--night school classes at various places in Chicago, including the Institute of Design at IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology], so I went there for several years, because I was trying to finish, to get a bachelor's degree, but I couldn't do it in the daytime. I was working part-time, and then I started having children, and so--but I did continue to go to school at night.

JB: IIT was at the Navy Pier?

MP: No. The University of Illinois was at Navy Pier. So I went there [to the U. of Illinois] for one year, then I was at the Institute of Design at IIT for two--a couple of years of evening classes--and I had accumulated probably about two years worth of college credits at that point. So when we moved to Los Angeles, I continued to take classes at UCLA extension for credit, and I just kept accumulating [credits], and finally, in--I can't remember--'70--around '75--I applied to Immaculate Heart [College] to a special program they had for people like me, older women returning--

JB: Let's go back just a little bit. You started your family early, I guess --

MP: Twenty. I was 20 years old.

JB: So was I . . .

MP: That's what you did . . . back then! (Laughs.)

JB: But it was early. (Laughs.) So just tell us a little bit about how that was. I know eventually you had two sons and a daughter, and--did you marry in Mississippi or Illinois--were you-- ?

MP: No, in Illinois. I didn't go back to Mississippi, and I think the last time I was there, I was 14 years old.

JB: Oh, OK. So presumably you moved out of your family house at that point.

MP: No, I moved out of the family house shortly after I started going to school in Chicago. It was a long commute, so...

JB: So you were living on your own when you met your future husband?

MP: Yes, I was. Actually, he lived around the corner from me . . . . From my apartment in Chicago.

JB: OK, so that was in Chicago that you were living and going to school and got married and started to have your kids. OK...is there anything else you'd like—oh--I know what I want to ask [about] before we leave Chicago: You--I read this on one of your earlier resumés--you had several jobs with publishers in Chicago, both as an editor and a book designer. And it occurred to me that this really became another thread of interest in your life--

MP: Oh, it always has been. The book thing has been continuous. I had the ambition to finish at the Institute of Design [at IIT] in Graphic Arts, and that's what I wanted to do, but then it didn't work out, because we moved to California, and the book arts were not particularly happening here at that time--although they are now.

JB: I was wondering, since you were still going to school, how you got these jobs with--I think one was the University of Chicago Press, and the other was Henry Regnery?

MP: Well, Henry Regnery was the first job I got, and that just happened to be a part-time job that I acquired through a friend of a friend. They needed somebody to just file reviews, book reviews, and so that was an after-school job I had. So I would go there several days a week and just read and go through magazines and clip clippings and file them. And then I learned to proofread, and I started working full time as a proofreader. I couldn't afford to stay in school, basically, and so I worked as a proofreader there. And they sent me to a class--Regnery was a really interesting company. I don't know if it still exists as an **[00:15:00]** independent company [it was sold in 1977 and then Henry Regnery founded Henry Regnery Publishing, Inc., as a separate company], but it was one of those small places where you could do --

JB: Oh, it had a good reputation [as a publisher] . . .

MP: Yeah--no. It's--Mr. Regnery was very conservative. I mean, I actually met William F. Buckley, Jr., because...I think they published *God and Man at Yale* [in 1951].

JB: . . . [I didn't know that.]

MP: At least, he was doing something for Mr. Regnery, and I remember him coming in the office, and we all had to bow down to him. And he was pretty obnoxious, as I recall, so it was always interesting to see him on television later. But they allowed me to design some books there, and I actually did design several, and one of them--I won a Society of Typographic Arts [STA] Award for. Chicago is a big center for book arts, and if you were a member of the STA, the Newberry Library in Chicago used to have a wonderful little small-press operation in the basement, and it belonged to STA people, and that was ours. We could go there and set type and print small books and so on, and so I did do printing--some. Yeah, and I really liked working in the book arts.

JB: Now, had your kids started to come along at that time?

MP: Oh, yeah. I think I had two then.

JB: It wasn't easy working full-time with--

MP: Well, I stopped working full-time at the second one. I went, "OK, I can't do this anymore." But then, that was how I got the job working for *Modern Age* magazine. That was a quarterly and the publisher of that was a friend of Mr. Regnery's, and so they recommended me, and I did copyediting for them, and that was easy because I could do it mostly from home. I only had to go in to that office a few times every quarter to talk to the editor and bring my work in and so on.

JB: So, let's see, you had . . . a really good introduction to the book world at those jobs. You had finished, what, about two years' worth of college courses at that point?

MP: About. But when we moved to California . . .

JB: And what took you to California?

MP: My husband got an excellent job opportunity [at a company called Edutronics]. It was very exciting. He went from being a systems analyst to being a person who worked on animated films to train people to use computers. Because they were very creative people.

JB: Do you remember when that was? That was pretty early in the [development of] computers . . .

MP: Well, we moved to California in 1968—so, yeah.

JB: So he was working with big computers at that point.

MP: Oh, huge, those awful things that filled up rooms, yeah.

JB: But that must have been exciting.

MP: Yeah, he got into it very early, and he was very successful with the animated training films. It was a real good opportunity for him to do something much more creative.

JB: And where did you live when you first [came to California]?

MP: Well we moved to San Clemente, because his company was in Costa Mesa. That was a big shock [coming] from the south side of Chicago. It was John Birch country. But we didn't stay there very long because the company then moved up to Los Angeles, and it was a huge commute for him, so we moved up to the Los Angeles area--Malibu, actually.

JB: Oh! That must have been kind of fun! Although the commute from Malibu can be [pretty awful] (laughs)!

MP: It [Malibu] was very nice. Well, at that time, [the commute] wasn't bad; the [Pacific] Coast Highway was not what it is today.

JB: Yeah, [now it's] bumper to bumper. So did you try to get a job right away, or were you being a full-time mom for a while?

MP: You know, I was being a full-time mom, and I also had time to work on my various projects, to take extension classes at UCLA, and so that's what I did.

JB: But at some point you did decide to enroll full-time at Immaculate Heart, is that right?

MP: Yeah, that was quite a bit later.

JB: Oh, it was?

MP: Well, [in 1972] we moved from [Malibu,] California, to [Newburyport in] the Boston area, but only for a little less than two years [1972 – 1973], and then came back to California again, and when we came back, that was when I decided **[00:20:00]** I better go to school when I could, because my kids were getting to be [close to] college age. They were in high school. [We bought a small house in Santa Monica.] And I thought, there isn't going to be any money for me [to go to school] if I wait too much longer. So Immaculate Heart had this special program, and I applied there and was accepted, and I had my [first classes there in 1975].

JB: And what special program was that?

MP: It was for people, predominantly like me, who had dropped out of formal schooling, and then wanted to go back. But who also had done some things. They gave me college credit for my design work, for instance. I had to write up what I had done, who I had--I mean, I did study with a very famous book designer at--

JB: Was that Corita Kent?

MP: No, she was not there anymore. I mean, I knew who she [Sister Corita] was, and I was interested in Immaculate Heart because of her. She established--her philosophy was still governing the art department there when I went there, but she had gone. But I mean, I predominantly went there because they had this program [for people who had dropped out]. I knew they would give me--if I could establish credibility for what they called "life experience"--they would give me college credit for it, and they did. So I picked up quite a few units, I think about 30.

JB: That was very progressive of them at that time.

MP: It was. I mean, you had to justify it, and a committee looked at your work, but I was able to go to the public library--I didn't even have copies of the books I designed [for Henry Regnery]. It seems so stupid, but I didn't have them. But the library did, and my name was in them, because in those days, they used to publish what's called a colophon in the back of books, and said who designed it. So I was able to prove it.

JB: Do you have copies of them now?

MP: No. I mean, I probably could get them.

JB: You could get them on Bookfinder [a used-book website] easily, I'm sure.

MP: I'm sure, I'm sure I could. But I bet--a lot of them, I only designed the jackets, and the jackets are usually gone.

JB: Often they are, that's true. So, let's see, you got your B.A. in '77. So did you start in '75 or so, do you think, or was it...?

MP: Around--yeah, I think it was '75.

JB: . . . . I know from your resumé that that was when you started working as a volunteer at the Craft and Folk Art Museum. Now what I would like you to tell us is, how did you first hear about the Craft and Folk Art Museum?

MP: I'm trying to remember. I believe it was because--my husband was--his office was not far from there--and he thought The Egg and The Eye Restaurant was great, and I think he took me there for lunch, and then I saw, you know, what it was. And I went, "Oh, this is great." I loved everything there, and so then I would go back either by myself or with the family.

JB: You know, there was one thing I wanted to mention on the subject of Immaculate Heart: they had quite a large folk art collection. You were aware of that when you were there?

MP: They did. I knew about it. [And then] I know they had . . . the big sale [auction], but [that was] prior to me being connected with Immaculate Heart.

JB: Oh, I had forgotten. Actually, the CAFAM Library has a copy of that auction catalog [*The Gloria Folk Art Collection of the Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Sotheby Park Bernet, 1975)], but I had forgotten when that happened. So that happened before you got there.

MP: It did. Yeah, that was a done deal. They didn't have that collection anymore. That belonged to one nun, and I can't remember--

JB: It wasn't Corita Kent?

MP: No, it was somebody else. [The collection belonged to Sister Magdalen Mary, who was the chair of Fine Arts at the college; the college closed in 1981.] And the person who knew all about it was Seymour--Seymour Rosen. He knew that nun--and he was connected with that sale. He used to talk about it, but I can't remember the details.

JB: Well, that's not surprising. [Seymour Rosen had huge files of documentation on what he called “folk art environments”; he passed away in 2006.] So all right, tell me what you remember of CAFAM--your first memories, I suppose, [of] just having lunch at The Egg and The Eye to begin with. What do you remember about what the museum looked like, and what you saw there?

MP: Well, it wasn't the museum [yet].

JB: Well, it was changing. How early in '75 did you go, do you remember?

MP: Well, no, I think that we had gone prior to that.

JB: Oh, prior to that!

MP: Yeah, because we moved back to California in 1972, and--

JB: So it was still The Egg and The Eye Gallery **[00:25:00]**.

MP: I think it was, yeah, I don't--it wasn't the museum--

JB: All right, well good! Well, tell me what The Egg and The Eye Gallery was like then.

MP: Well, I mean, it just--it was the two downstairs rooms, but they were connected in a different way--by kind of a central area that was closed off later on when they formed the gallery [i.e., the museum]. John Browse was, I think, the manager, and actually somebody I knew in Chicago was working there, and so I found out--she told me about what a great place it was, and how much she really liked working there, and so on. I mean, we just ran into her because we went there to have lunch, and I was looking in the shop and there she was, and so--

JB: Did she stay on for a while?

MP: You know, I don't think she did. She was somebody I had met at IIT, and she was married to a student who came out here to go to school, and I think they were still traveling around. Anyway, she didn't last very long because I did come back frequently to The Egg and The Eye, and I didn't see her after a while. I just thought that they had wonderful things, and I had never seen anything quite like them, and I remember the--there was a Sam Maloof cradle sitting on a pedestal in the middle of the gift shop. I don't know what it was doing there. I remember thinking that it was just the most wonderful thing I'd ever seen, and it seemed very expensive, but I don't think it was more--

JB: In comparison to today, yeah.

MP: I don't think it was over $1,000. Anyway, I was just inspired by all the gorgeous things.

JB: Well, tell [us] a little bit about what kinds of things you saw.

MP: I'm trying to remember. I know I was fascinated by contemporary enamel jewelry, because they had several people who did gorgeous things that were like little miniature paintings in enamel, and they were very expensive, mostly gold. And I'm sure they're famous, but I don't remember anybody's names. And ceramics, all--they didn't have very much in the way of textiles that I recall. But oh--handmade clothing! I used to own this really wonderful dress that was made by a woman named Pat Gollin, I think that's her name . . . . So I was fascinated by that. That was the first time-- I mean, it was sort of the hippie thing, but it was much more elegant, you know, so I was fascinated by those.

JB: I wonder-- John Browse and his business partner Alan Donovan arrived [from Kenya] at The Egg and The Eye Gallery in November of 1972 with a traveling show that they carried in a trailer . . .

[in back of their car]. I know this only because he told me--I wasn't there, but I wondered—“East African Jewelry and Crafts.” I'm just wondering if you saw that by any chance.

MP: You know I have this recollection that I did, because I remember models.

JB: OK, oh, yes. It was--

MP: OK--well then--either they repeated it later in some form, or I did see it. Because I do remember it--I remember it was live models.

JB: You were apparently in L.A. at that time, and had already started to come to the Gallery. Yeah, he--that was [John’s] introduction to the Gallery, and then Edith Wyle asked him to stay on as . . . her associate. [Later] I found an article [in the CAFAM newsletter] that referred to him as the “Assistant Director.” At any rate, he was essentially managing the sales operation, and doing a lot of other things.

MP: Right, because when I started volunteering there, he was in charge of the shop, and [Ann] Robbins was his assistant.

JB: Yes, I've been trying to pin down just when Ann started. I wish she was still with us, so I could ask her. [John Browse hired her and he started in 1971, but Robbins is first mentioned in the Egg and The Eye newspaper in early 1976; she probably was hired at least a year before that.]

MP: You know who knows. Probably Susan--isn't Susan in Albuquerque?

JB: Susan Skinner, yes, I do plan to interview her next time I go there--so yes.

MP: Because Susan came pretty early, too, and I think she would have known when Ann came. **[00:30:00]**

JB: Sure--sure she would. Well, this is interesting. You saw the Gallery evolve into a museum, and there's a lot of--I don't know if it's controversy--but Edith always insisted that the museum started in 1973, which was actually when they got their IRS tax--

MP: It was provisional.

JB: Yes, yes. But '73 is when she insisted was the start of the museum, but actually, the first exhibitions that were advertised as Craft and Folk Art Museum--"incorporating," it would say, The Egg and The Eye--started in June of '75. So --

MP: What was that? What show was that?

JB: Well, there were four different shows. And I can quickly look them up. There was an Indian show--

MP: Right, I remember that.

JB: I mean, American Indian. [Reading from the CAFAM chronological exhibition list.] Prehistoric Pottery. Appalachian Folk Art. Contemporary Indian Art from San Ildefonso and Hopi, Second Mesa. And then a strange kind of--Totem Poles from the Northwest carved by Polish Folk Artist Ray Kowalski.

MP: Those were amazing! So I saw all those shows. The Indian one--because I remember there was a Navajo weaver who was weaving in the Gallery--so because of her, I decided to build myself a Navajo loom and try it myself. And she gave me some good advice. Yeah, I did.

JB: So, do you remember--

MP: Oh, maybe this [reading from the exhibition list] is the African thing I'm remembering: Africa's Influence in Traditional Clothing Styles. Because they might have had a fashion show in connection [with] that. I bet that's it, because I don't think I would have been around for the original '72 thing. But I do remember a fashion show with tall, beautiful black models. But that was probably it. Yeah, I think I just got connected with the museum right around then Well, I knew it was doing the museum thing then [i.e., converting from a commercial gallery to a nonprofit museum], and I thought that maybe if I volunteered, you know, maybe when I graduated I could get a job there.

JB: We learned, didn't we?

MP: Yes, we did. Never volunteer!

JB: That's the way to do it, for better or for worse. So, let's see. So when you came in the door [of The Egg and The Eye], tell us, just basically, what was in each of the areas, and was the central staircase there?

MP: Oh yeah. Oh, right, and the connection between the two downstairs rooms was under that--you would--it [the staircase] was open [underneath] at a certain point.

JB: Yes, John mentioned that.

MP: You know, I think--I'm just remembering that one side was jewelry and ceramics and sort of hard stuff, and the other side was clothing and--I don't know, I mean I'm not--and furniture. They did have a fair amount. I think at that time they were selling Sam Maloof's things. And some other furniture makers, too. John Nyquist and people like that.

JB: Oh, I think so. John [Browse] mentioned something. He's not the only one, actually. I'm trying to piece this together--I think that during the gallery days, before it became a museum, one side, I think the east side . . . (which eventually became the museum shop) was more of the sales venue.

MP: And the other side had these little shows.

JB: --that would feature the--yes, an artist or a group of artists under a theme, or something,

MP: Right, I think that was true.

JB: And then there was a central staircase. So tell us...

MP: And then the restaurant.

JB: What was the restaurant like when you first [went there]?

MP: Well, it didn't change that much in its layout, and I believe that they continued to use the same tables and chairs that they had always had. **[00:35:00]** There were two sides to that, too, and one of them had a balcony that overlooked the west side of the shop. And there was a bar there. It used to--a lot of things used to happen there at night, because they would have special--they had a full bar, and--

JB: And they were open late to begin with!

MP: They were open late, and they would feature musicians and things like that. It was a really interesting place. And then I never went to the third floor, although I remember there was something that if you were a member of The Egg and The Eye Society or something--

JB: Associates.

MP: Associates, yeah, [I remember] that there was a lounge or something up there, and then they would have events up there sometimes. Films and things like that. Performances. I don't think I ever went to anything up there.

JB: Do you remember getting to know any of the restaurant staff in those early days? I know you did later. [You] got to know Ian [Barrington]--but just in the first few years?

MP: No. Well, I think that there were two waiters who I think were there forever. Nat and another one, and I don't remember his name, I feel bad about it. Nat I remember very well. And he certainly was there before Ian came. I don't remember—[there were] various managers, there was a French guy --

JB: Yeah there were several [managers].

MP: He was quite nice, but somehow he couldn't handle it. No, and the food stayed the same for a long time, until Ian came, actually. Well, actually, I think when the French manager came in, he made some changes. But the omelets were sacred; there were certain ones that were always there.

JB: What was your favorite?

MP: You know, it's hard to say. They had one that was called the African Omelet that I remember was quite tasty--and they used to invent new omelets for special shows and things like that. I don't

know, I mean, I just--I ate many, many omelets there, and probably they were mostly the same one. But I remember we used to change our minds, or my husband and I would order two different ones, and then share like a dessert one and a regular one, because they were huge.

JB: And they were made right in that little--

MP: Yes, you could see--that person was right there making those omelets.

JB: That was another thing that was really before its time.

MP: Oh yeah--to have this cook out in the open like that?

JB: So--at what point did you start volunteering, and who did you work for? Tell us about [your] first experiences there. Was it Karen that you worked with?

MP: No, because I worked--I got to know Karen because of working--I think I worked the front desk, because they had a little desk in the front of the shop, and they wanted people to be greeted when they came in, and encouraged--if they were going to the restaurant--to come back to the museum and so on. And Edith wanted somebody live--answering the telephone on weekends, and that--I believe that was my first job there--was sitting at that desk on Saturday and Sunday answering the telephone and being nice to people.

And then I sort of would help out in the shop when they got busy, and so I learned how to deal with their system, and I would wait on people and run the cash register and so on. I don't exactly remember--I would volunteer to come back and help with exhibits, because I was interested in that, and that's how I met Karen, because she was the registrar, or she came in as the registrar, and I'm not sure when that happened. But she was there before me. And then I worked with her, and when she got pregnant, I think that was just when I was graduating from school, and I could work full-time, and that's when--I think it was '77, '78 that I started working full-time there as the assistant registrar, but I, it's just, you know, really hazy now. [Marcie started working as the Assistant Registrar in the summer of 1978.]

JB: Well, of course. But even so--you mentioned John [Browse], of course, was there, and at that point, he was **[00:40:00]** officially the Shop Manager. And you said Ann was working there. Were either of them there on the weekend? You said you were working on the weekend.

MP: Oh, I'm sure they were. Yeah. I'm sure one or the other of them would have been there.

JB: What was your impression of either or both of them?

MP: Oh, I thought they were lively, interesting people. I--you know--I just--I mean, they certainly were people who were important to that place because they were very energetic, very creative, resourceful--because there was never enough money.

JB: Right. Ann was more or less in charge of the contemporary craft area, and John did folk art more.

MP: Yes, I think that's what she was hired for. Right. And then there were various people that worked in the store; I don't remember anybody in particular.

JB: But you thought Susan [Skinner] had started pretty soon after you started, or—[I wonder] whether she was there at the time?

MP: Yeah, I can't remember when Susan--

JB: So you were more or less on your own--well, who did you report to, when you were a receptionist? Who hired you? (Laughs.) Was there a volunteer coordinator that--?

MP: I don't remember one, but I didn't stay a volunteer in that job very long, and they actually paid me for it fairly soon. Well, because I wasn't willing to volunteer every single weekend both days--

JB: You were smart! (Laughs.)

MP: But who was--? I don't remember when Patrick came--

JB: That was what I was going to ask you about next.

MP: Because, I think--oh, the Festival! I remember--I think Edith hired him fairly early, because she really needed an administrative person, and she didn't have one. I think it might have been Patrick.

JB: Well, Patrick--that would make sense. He started in October 1975. He was hired at a board meeting at the end of August, but he didn't actually start until October 6, 1975.

MP: Yeah, I remember him giving a speech at the Festival, and I think that it might have been the first real festival.

JB: Actually, it wasn't . . . . No, there was nothing like that in that first [year], in '75. '76 was when, in the fall, they had the Devils, Demons, and Dragons [exhibition], with the big dragon out in front. And that was when they had the first parade, and the cops coming to arrest the Gamalan orchestra [a traditional Indonesian musical ensemble] or whatever it was that was on the street there. You must have been around for that.

MP: I was, yeah, I do remember it, and I remember Patrick giving a speech. That was probably it, he was standing under that dragon, I think, or next to it or something. I've seen a picture of him doing that, but I was there. Yeah, I worked for that parade.

JB: And by that point, you may have been working with Karen, or, maybe you were doing more than one job, maybe you were working--

MP: I probably was. You know, I think I--I would sort of just waffle back and forth. I was still in school and I was still trying to figure out--

JB: That's right, you were still finishing up.

MP: Right, yeah, but I was just doing anything that I could do to get me a job after I got out of school. Well, now I'm thinking--I think I applied for that shop job that Susan got, but I didn't have as much background as she did in contemporary, and that's what Ann wanted, so. I mean, even though I was busy getting my degree in it, I didn't know the artists.

JB: And that was sort of fateful, it occurs to me, because if you had, you wouldn't have had the time probably to work on [registration with Karen].

MP: No. **[00:45:00] I** wouldn't have gone in that direction, I would have stayed in retail probably.

JB: So at some point--you started working with Karen Copeland, who was, I guess, also doing more than one job.

MP: Yes, she was doing education as well.

JB: And she really wanted to be the educator, I guess. But she really introduced you to registration. I guess she had had that position somewhere else --

MP: Yes, she did. She did, at the New Jersey State Museum; that's where she trained. The registrar she trained under was legendary, I can't remember the name of that person, but that was a very important person in registrar history. [Her name was Pat Nauert.] So she passed it on to me, and I have subsequently passed it on to a number of other people who are all in registration. It's amazing.

JB: So you were really there at the start of the museum. I mean, you were obviously there as a visitor even before. But did you have--I don't know how to phrase this exactly--but I'm just wondering if you had a sense of the transition, and some of the difficulties, the turmoil, that must have been going on, making that transition [to a museum] in terms of staff, and in terms of deciding--you know, who should do [what]--what kind of jobs should even be available, for example.

MP: Well, I mean, Edith, even though she had hired Patrick and had, I'm sure, promised him that she would not interfere--of course she did--and whenever it wasn't what she wanted, or how she thought it had been going to go, well then, she kept stepping back in, I do remember. You know, certainly [there was] some confusion and some tension as a result of that, but you know, everybody stuck it out. It's funny, she went through preparators, because she designed all the shows for the most part, and she was kind of hard on preparators. But, if [they'd] make it through one show with her, they would stay, I mean, people had a lot of loyalty, actually. And even though she could make you just crazy, she was usually right about the artistic decisions that she

wanted to make. I remember, once, that she went out of town over the weekend, and we totally installed--it was a Nigerian textile show--and it was painted, hung, done deal, and she comes back on Monday morning, and the color was wrong, and she made us take everything down and repaint the galleries 24 hours before the opening! And we did it! [Decorative Arts of Contemporary Nigeria, 10-14-81] You know. And people--I mean--I was there several times when people walked out. Once I did. With Patrick McCarthy.

JB: You were not the only one. (Laughs.)

MP: I know. But we came back, you know, we came back, and we kept doing it.

JB: So you must have had some sense of the significance of this institution, this...

MP: It was just very unique. I thought it was. I still think it was very unique. I don't think any other place is like it.

JB: Well, talk about that just a little bit. What, in comparison--

MP: I mean--now I know other places, and I didn't, then, but now I do. And it's not the Museum of International Folk Art; it never wanted to be! Well, Edith wouldn't have minded having that collection--

JB: Or some of the money that's supporting it--

MP: Or some of the money that's gone there, yeah. But the whole point was traditional and non-traditional and looking at how they're different and how they're related--and nobody does that. I don't think anybody does that now. [Except maybe the Mingei in San Diego.] I think that was what was really unique about that place. I feel that it was going in a really interesting direction at one point. [It was] starting to look at--when we started to look at urban phenomena. I mean the muralists, the Chicano mural people, all the connections between folk art and that--the "Language of Objects" project was starting to look at how it's [folk art] in pop culture. And a lot of people couldn't stand that, but if you don't go there, you don't see the connections. **[00:50:00]**

JB: But even at the beginning, before they did anything like that, the juxtaposition of the traditional, what we called "folk art," and contemporary fine crafts, yes that was unusual.

MP: It was, it was. And when Patrick came in, and he wanted to put his stamp on it, and he [added] . . . design, a lot of people didn't like that. But he was right.

JB: He did that later, not right away. But later.

MP: Right. But he saw that connection, and to me, that was a very important addition to the mix, that if only they had been able to continue to evolve, and to have enough money to do some exploration and get some kind of curator with some vision, and not somebody who was stuck in

the traditional, academic definitions--I always thought that was the "too bad" part of it, but without serious money and vision--organized thinking about it--it couldn't happen.

JB: Now, the restaurant, how do you see that as fitting in to the whole picture, the whole ambience of the institution?

MP: Well...they did try to relate the food in a way to what was going on, and they could have--that too, could have evolved in connection with everything else. And I don't think it was a bad idea at all, I mean people like to eat, and once they're done eating, maybe go look at stuff. And buy stuff.

JB: And, of course, part of the whole reason that CAFAM is located where it is, is because just a short time before it [the Gallery] opened in '65, the L.A. County Museum had moved its art collection just west of there, across the street. And they did have a restaurant, but I have yet to hear anybody speak favorably about that restaurant at any time, certainly not at the beginning, and so The Egg and The Eye restaurant that was part of the Gallery was a very important place to eat.

MP: It was a big draw. I mean, you'd go to the County Museum to look at their big show, and then make a reservation for dinner or lunch over at The Egg and The Eye.

JB: And that became a source of worry, I think, for some people. I'm not sure, still, how Edith felt about it. But I know she did voice that concern occasionally, that maybe they were just coming to the gallery or to the museum to have lunch and then, you know, not noticing --

MP: Well, I think, I can remember several attempts--like little cards on the tables and so on--to try to get people to go into the galleries. Certainly, they [the patrons] used to lean over the balcony and occasionally throw trash down into--I mean, when we had the yurt exhibition [Traditional Textiles of Afghanistan; opened July 10, 1979], we had a terrible time with people using the smoke hole in the top of the yurt, they used to toss --

JB: Oh, I've not heard that story before!

MP: Oh, I used to clean out the yurt quite frequently, because people would throw trash down from the restaurant through the smoke hole in the yurt.

JB: Well, I'd like you to talk a little bit more about Edith Wyle . . . do you remember when you first met her?

MP: She was interested in everybody who worked there, and especially [those] who were the first people [seen when visitors came] in the door. I think she made a point of meeting me. I mean, I was in awe of her, but I also liked her. And she liked me. And then when we actually began to work together, I mean, I would stand up to her, and we had screaming matches, but we always were friends. And I count her as certainly one of the major influences on my life, because she just introduced me to a whole other way of looking at things.

So, for all **[00:55:00]** her difficulties, she just--she was really passionate and really dear, and I think she was a visionary woman. She saw something that nobody else did. Nobody. And I, in some ways, I've often thought it's too bad that she didn't stay with her painting, because she was a very interesting painter, but she put her creative energy into that museum, and you really can't do both. She couldn't have continued to be a serious painter and stayed on top of that place for as long as she did. So I think that was her sacrifice. I think that she sacrificed a part of her talent for that museum. But also, partly, it is what it is, because she had that kind of off-the-wall artistic sensibility, and she knew some amazing people, who were influences on her.

JB: Well, she had been--she considered herself to be--a full-time artist, as well as a dancer, for a while when--I guess that was before she married Frank. But after she married Frank, she continued to paint for a long time.

MP: For a long time. But she didn't, I mean, I was lucky to be able to see some of her paintings. She wouldn't, she did not [show her work regularly].

JB: She had one or two [paintings] in her office one time, I know, and I was very impressed with her skill.

MP: But mostly, I don't think she had confidence in that side of herself. And then, you know, The Egg and The Eye certainly would take all the energy that you would give it, when she was starting it.

JB: She had--I found that--although she was interested in the kinds of concepts that really underlay the Gallery and the Museum showing all of this diverse work--she had a little trouble articulating that. She tried several times, and we have some really interesting charts and things that she--some writings where she tried to talk about her underlying philosophy of the Museum with some success. But she was not ever really that comfortable with the intellectual side.

MP: No, she was intuitive, she was a very intuitive person. And usually her intuition was right on the mark.

JB: Yes, and I guess what I liked about her was that, although she wasn't very completely comfortable with the intellectual side, she didn't deny it, and she allowed, for example, the Library to develop. And she encouraged all of the educators and curators to develop, you know, seminars and lecture series and so on. So she wasn't *un*interested in that [side of things].

MP: No, and she knew it was important; it just wasn't her thing. But no, she was a very intelligent woman . . . .

JB: Yes. Now what about Frank [Wyle]? Do you remember when you [first] met Frank?

MP: You know, I don't. I mean, I'm sure I met him at openings or Christmas parties or whatever--because they were always very nice and would have parties at their house, to which they would

invite the staff, so I'm sure I met him early on. I mean, he was very busy at Wyle Laboratories then--

JB: But he came to exhibition openings--

MP: He was supportive, yeah, definitely, I mean he put in his appearances at everything.

JB: So, what did you think of Frank?

MP: You know, he was just--sorry! He was Edith's husband! (Laughs.) I just--because I didn't spend any significant amount of time in [his company]. **[01:00:00]** I mean, I think the only time I ever really saw much of him--they did invite me to the ranch once, and so I was up there for the weekend, and he drove me around, and he showed me all the places, and he was very proud of it and very interested, and showed me his prize cows, and all kinds of things. You know, I just don't have any handle on Frank. He was very, very supportive of Edith when she was sick, and I . . . went to visit her a number of times [then], and he was always so--he was personally taking care of her--so.

JB: Well, that counts for a lot.

MP: Oh, yeah. Well, and obviously, he indulged her quite a bit because she tended to get what she wanted, and I think Frank facilitated that.

JB: Yes. Let's see...I know you've talked about Patrick a little bit. Is there anything else you'd like to say about Patrick in those early years, when he was just getting started--about the same time that you started--and you may even have--did you deal more with Edith or with Patrick?

MP: No, I remember dealing mostly with Edith . . . because of the collection, and handling the artwork. [Patrick] was concerned about those things, and he did pay attention--I remember he designed one show, that French Folk Art exhibition [opened September 5, 1978].

JB: Yeah, that came from the Smithsonian.

MP: I think that's probably the closest I ever worked with him on an exhibition . . . , because [as registrar] I had to access all the material [the objects] for him.

JB: Well, he was supposed to be--he was the administrative director to Edith's program director--so it would make sense that you were working with her more. But he did have to approve budget-related things.

MP: I mean, of course later on, after she was not there anymore --

JB: After she was retired.

MP: -- then I dealt quite a bit more with Pat.

JB: Well, maybe we'll get into that period of CAFAM history next time. There are a few more things I'd like to talk about today. I guess I'd just like to find out if there's anything else that you remember from those first years, and if you want to look at the--this is a chronological list, maybe there are a few exhibitions that you particularly remember. [Joan hands Marcie the chronological exhibition list.] Do you remember which one was the first you worked on, maybe? With Karen or...?

MP: [Pause—looking at list.] I know I did Wind and Weathervanes [opened March 23, 1976].

JB: Oh, yes, Sabra [Petersmann] was involved with that, wasn't she?

MP: [Nods her head, yes.] I'm not sure about Benjamin Serrano [Benjamin Serrano was an exhibition under consideration, but it was not mounted.] I think I was not [involved with An Exhibition of Stringed Musical Instruments; opened December 16, 1975]--I didn't have anything to do with musical instruments. I think Wind and Weathervanes might have been my first one. For sure, the coverlets [Nineteenth Century American Coverlets; opened June 8, 1976] I worked on—condition-reporting those. Yeah, yeah, it's right in here that I started working with her [Karen Copeland], because I handled all of these things, so. Yeah, I remember Mr. Abe [Handmade Papers of Eishero Abe; opened October 9, 1976]. I have paper [made] by him.

JB: And one area that we haven't talked about is the board. The CAFAM board. There were a few people that--like Ruth Bowman for example--that I know worked with you and me--and of course, Frank Wyle was [president of the board a lot of the time].

MP: Bernard [Kester]. Bernard was on the board for quite a while.

JB: Yeah, he was, it turns out--

MP: No, he wasn't? (Laughs.)

JB: Well, actually, this is one of the surprises that I discovered in working on the [CAFAM] archives. He was, at least technically, the first CAFAM board president in '75; however, he resigned a few months later. He didn't really want to do that, and that [making him president] was more of a legal technicality. **[01:05:00]** He did remain very involved. He was on that PIC committee, that Program Input Committee --

MP: Yeah, I remember. Gere [Kavanaugh] was, too.

JB: Yes, and Josine [Ianco-Starrels], and a bunch of people. And, what's his name? Milt Zolotow. But Bernard didn't actually come back on the board until quite a bit later; I think it was in the early ’80s, but he certainly was involved with the museum.

MP: No, he was, and I can remember that he did design a certain number of the installations, because I worked with him on those. I think the California Women in Crafts [opened January 18, 1977]?

JB: Yes, that was . . . California Women in Crafts was early '77, January '77.

MP: I think that might have been the first one that I worked on with Bernard.

JB: . . . . So Frank [Wyle] was the actual president of the board in its first year, but then he didn't want that job, either, because he was, as you said, he was very involved with his business, Wyle Laboratories, but he knew someone who was CEO of a small oil company called Tosco [an acronym for "The Oil Shale Company"], who agreed--apparently, he [Frank] had asked Mort Winston to join the board, and Mort said he would do it only if he could be president, and that was fine with Frank. So Mort, he was president of the board for--I think it was over ten years--it was close to ten years. He was elected board chair in [September 1976], and he was--well, I'll fill that in later--but I know it was at least . . . ten years that he was chairman of the board. [Winston stepped down as board chair December 4, 1987.] So did you have any dealings with him?

MP: I only remember him because, in the end, their collection came to CAFAM, their quilt collection.

JB: The Tosco Corporate Collection.

MP: Right--and I was kind of horrified at the way they [had] treated it, because it was very faded because of the way it had been displayed. I do remember--I know I met him--I just--I don't have any--I think they bailed us out money-wise a few times, but mostly I didn't know about that kind of thing.

JB: And what about Ruth Bowman, because she was certainly an advocate for--

MP: Oh, she was a real go-getter and very--a big advocate for education.

JB: Well, she had been the Museum Educator for a short time at LACMA; that's how she met Patrick and recommended him to Edith.

MP: Oh, yeah, I didn't actually know that.

JB: But she was also an advocate for good collection development policy, and --

MP: Right, and when we did the collection [policy]--yes, that's right--that's when I worked with her. When we were doing that--in fact, somewhere in my files, I probably have--because she was something at Bryn Mawr College, and she got me a copy of their collections management plan, and we--

JB: Well, she was an alumna of Bryn Mawr.

MP: Well, somehow she got me a copy of [their plan], and that was the beginning of CAFAM's—[we decided] that we'd use that one to jump off from in writing it. And she was one of the Board members that was on that committee. I remember it was kind of hard getting it going, because of course, you know, you try to build in certain restrictions and safeguards, and those don't go down very well with some people, because they see it as limiting. Or, as one board member of another

museum I worked for said, "Marcie, we don't want to tie our hands." Well, there was some of that attitude at CAFAM, too, although it was not put quite like that. But in the end, we did get a collections management policy through the board, and that was the period at which I worked with Ruth. **[01:10:00]**

JB: And that was when you had the [full-time] job of registrar, and Karen went to being [the full-time] educator. So were you still, I know at [the beginning]--maybe this just was something you did all the time, off and on--you also did proofreading of CAFAM publications--

MP: Oh, I started doing that early on when I was sitting at that front desk, because I said, "Hey, you guys, I have extensive professional proofreading experience (laughs), from which you would benefit," because many of their catalogs were not well-edited at the beginning. So I did do it, and it just sort of became--because I could do it, I just fit that in--right.

JB: Was Karen the first museum educator? Was there anyone doing that before?

MP: No, I don't think so. I think she was it.

JB: I think she was the first. I think so too.

MP: She certainly did all the tours while she was still registrar. And workshops. Yeah.

JB: So she was very relieved to get [the actual position of Educator]--

MP: I'm sure she was.

JB: And as I think you said earlier, it was when you finally got your B.A. from Immaculate Heart that you were able to then work--take this full-time job as registrar.

MP: And I was very happy to do it.

JB: I'm sure. So let's talk a little bit about what you did as registrar. Were there, when you first started helping Karen, before you had the job full-time, were you aware of any permanent collection items? Were there permanent collection items in 1975, or, at what point did you become aware of them?

MP: I think the first [accession] numbers were '75, because Edith was adamant about having--"you're an art museum, you have to have a collection." And probably they mostly came from her, I don't remember, but I'm pretty sure that there's a '75 1.1. I'm not sure--where are those records?

JB: Well, I haven't gotten to them yet, but I think they are in the archives. I have some of those big notebooks, the binders that--

MP: Well, that'll tell you, because Karen would have accessioned them. I'm sure there was nobody before that. But I do remember that there was a smallish collection of items on the shelves in that storage room.

JB: Do you remember what any of them were?

MP: There were some clothes, there were some--kind of raggedy actually. Odd bits of textiles and little folk toys. I can't remember when the Japanese ones [came in]. Edith had bought--gone to Japan at some point--and she bought a bunch of 'em and brought them back. That may be what I'm thinking of--was the core of it--I think that might have been it. She bought a bunch of things in Japan and brought them back and gave them, and that was the beginning of the collection. But that's--you'd have to look at the records to see if my memory is serving me.

JB: It seems to me that there was always some controversy about whether or not the Museum should have a permanent collection, and well--you worked on the policy. There were quite a few years before we actually had a board-approved policy, right?

MP: Right, it was just kind of haphazard, and for the most part, it was Edith--

JB: Who was forming--sort of under the table--

MP: --she would just get stuff, and--yeah. But I do think that she felt it was important, and then, you know, she tried really hard to build a mask collection. She really, really wanted that to happen, but I don't think they ever had more than a few "good" masks. I think most of the rest of them were pretty modern. But I know that she wanted a collection.

JB: But there was always a problem with where to put it.

MP: Oh, yes. The only good space we ever really had for it was the off-site storage that we had at Cooke's Crating Warehouse. That was a good space, that was an excellent space. And the fact that it was there **[01:15:00]** was not a major handicap at the time.

JB: That was a climate-controlled space?

MP: It was climate-controlled; it had security; it was not fun to have to drive down there to work on it--

JB: Where was that?

MP: It's in East L.A. But it's off the 10 [freeway] . . . at [the] Santa Fe [Avenue exit]. So I never found it onerous to have it there. Once we had it at this horrible space that was over on Pico. You know, once we got all of that Mexican folk art that came from the Artesanos [Mexicanos: Three Folk Artists from Mexico; opened June 26, 1978]--

JB: Yes, the Piñata [Foods] collection.

MP: That's when it got to be a problem, because we had those huge Judas figures, and the [papier maché] mariachi band, and all of that, and we needed space. And that's when it got troublesome.

JB: That was when we rented that Pico [Blvd.] space?

MP: Yeah, that's where it went, after that show was over, I think that's when they [put it there]. But it leaked and it was dirty.

JB: And it was a terrible neighborhood.

MP: And it was a terrible neighborhood, I mean, [the] Santa Fe Avenue [storage space] was better than that. The street warehouse area--because it did have good security, whereas the Pico [Blvd.] place did not. And it was very, very dirty, and it was not a good space.

JB: Where did it go after that? Because we didn't have that space for very long, did we, the Pico [Blvd.] space?

MP: No, I think that's when it went to Cooke's Crating.

JB: Oh! It went there after.

MP: Yeah, and--there it stayed. Until the museum went to the May Company, and then it moved there, and then it got moved from the May Company over to the apartment building [the Duplex at 725/727 Curson Avenue]. And the conditions deteriorated--

JB: The moving was not good for it.

MP: The moving wasn't good for it—[the] conditions--it got infested by moths at the May Company. A lot of stuff was lost from that, and then the apartment house leaked badly, so there was some serious water damage. I mean, I wasn't dealing with it by that time--Carol Fulton was--but it just--No, they never had--the only good storage they ever had for that collection: clean, lighted, safe, and air-, climate-controlled, was at Cooke's.

JB: And was it super expensive?

MP: Well, no, I don't think it was. I think it cost about $1,000 a month, which was not super-expensive to me, but it was [in consideration of] the limited funds that the museum had—so--

JB: I guess I wanted to tie-in the relationship of the board to the museum on that theme of the permanent collection. I know there were a very few people on the board who felt strongly one way or the other, [i.e.], pro or con, permanent collection. But I had the impression that most of them didn't really think about it much.

MP: That was my impression. I mean, except for the expense of renting space for it. I mean, I had money for a certain budget for acid-free storage boxes and paper, and it wasn't stored badly for a while. Of course it never was that large, either. It's easy to deal with less than 4,000 things. It certainly wasn't a priority; money didn't go there, because it was needed for so many other things.

JB: So do you have anything else to say about the board?

MP: You know, I just remember, I mean, I was on committees with various Board members. I remember Lloyd [Cotsen]. I was on a committee with him and I thought he was, you know,

irascible, but very intelligent and knowledgeable and concerned. I just don't remember individual people very well--well, Gere Kavanaugh--she was always very supportive. I think they tried to diversify the board at some point. Frank Romero got on it, they were trying to have some artists on it. And Sam [Maloof], wasn't Sam on that board for eons?

JB: Yes, yes he--well, actually, like Bernard, he didn't get on the board--even though he was involved with the museum--he didn't actually get on the board **[01:20:00]** until sometime in the ’80s. But then he stayed, basically, at least until the museum closed at the end of '97.

MP: No, and I remember him coming to meetings. He would come, he did his duty. And he was concerned.

JB: But in general, there--and I guess this is true of every museum board--there's just a disconnect, isn't there, with--certainly with what the staff is doing (laughs).

MP: The disconnect--I'm thinking in terms of that board and then the other one that I just spent ten years with [The Pacific Asia Museum]--it's the businessmen. They just have a whole different point of view. And I think CAFAM was fortunate in having some artists . . . designers, people with another point of view other than business. I think they were fortunate to have that, and I don't see that, in comparing the two boards--you know, my recent museum experience is one that was totally businesspeople, and/or civic leaders, which means somebody who was married to a businessperson! (Laughs.)

JB: All the clichés are true.

MP: All the money, well because the money's there, and the connections to money are there, and that's understandable, but when you only--I don't know, in the end, both museums had serious money problems because they never had endowments and weren't able--for whatever reasons--to build one. But I do think that it was somewhat of a saving grace from the point of view of philosophy for the Craft and Folk Art Museum to have a more diverse board, even though they didn't raise much money. Because the businesspeople--

JB: Rather than being entirely businesspeople.

MP: --yeah, because I think the businesspeople just, they just don't see certain things, or the importance of certain things.

JB: Like what—conservation--?

MP: Well, conservation, but also...

JB: Endowment, I suppose.

MP: Well, you know, you'd think they would see the importance of endowment because that's where the cash comes from. But the building of an endowment is another story, I mean--it means that people have to hustle. . . .

JB: And they have to think long-range, which-- (laughs)

MP: And I think CAFAM did rely on generous support from long-term people [on the board] like Mort Winston and Frank Wyle and Lloyd Cotsen. I believe Lloyd Cotsen gave the Museum quite a lot of money over the time period. [Lloyd Cotsen was the founder of Neutrogena Cosmetics; he eventually gave a large part of his collection to the Museum of International Folk Art.] But they tended to put their eggs in those few baskets, and that was a mistake. I don't know--building a board is a hard thing. I don't think I could give good advice on that, but I do think that having some non-business minds to provide another point of view is a good thing. So I don't think it was bad that CAFAM had those people.

JB: Well, I think if it had been up to Edith, it would have been mostly artists. So--just one other area I thought we would fit in, and then we'll quit for the morning. I was thinking of the other activities that we haven't talked about. There was so much going on at CAFAM all the time besides exhibitions, and of course, one of them you touched on--the Festival of Masks, which started with the parade in '76 and then became an annual festival. Can you just tell us what you remember about the Festival . . . did you, well, I guess all of us worked on it. (Laughs)

MP: Oh yes, everybody! Nobody opted out of working on the Festival. I thought the earlier--I thought the Festival was really a wonderful thing . . . .

JB: Talk to me about it as if I didn't know anything about it . . . [as] if you were describing it to somebody that [had never seen it].

MP: The Festival of Masks. Well, nowadays, nobody would even consider trying to pull something like that off without community involvement, but at that time, that was an entirely new idea. To actually ask people who were from different ethnic groups and from all over the world to participate as partners in organizing something like that, so that their culture would, in fact, be represented **[01:25:00]** by them--I think that was a very novel idea at the time. And I don't remember any other thing like that. I mean, some of the local churches or community organizations would have their own thing for their own group, but for everybody to spend six months having meetings and talking about how they could all get together and represent themselves, in terms of cultural activities and food and artifacts to sell--in combining all of those things--because it's one thing to have performances, but then, you know, you're selling the food that goes with it, and you're selling--and then you give people [from traditional communities] the opportunity to make money--

JB: Well, at the time, I think it was, if not the first, certainly one of the very first of that kind of multicultural [festival in Los Angeles].

MP: I mean, the Lotus Festival, I don't remember when the Lotus Festival started [according to Wikipedia, it started in Echo Park in 1972], but I don't think that was happening then.

JB: And that focused on Asian-Americans, didn't it?

MP: It did. I'm not sure that it did, initially, because I don't remember that either, because of the neighborhood that it's in, is--well, at that time, it was Echo Park, and at that time, it was more Hispanic. But I think it was . . . a community organization activity, and I don't remember when [the] Watts Towers started having a festival, but I don't think they were doing anything then. Although they--I think John Outterbridge was maybe--because he was involved in the early [CAFAM] festivals.

JB: Yeah, he came to the meetings.

MP: Yeah, and it may be that—again--they might have had something there, but it was just for Watts. And that [Mask] Festival actually got a lot of people from different parts of the city who never would have had contact with each other if it hadn't been for that festival. They would have stayed in their own little groups.

JB: You're talking about the Festival of Masks?

MP: The Festival of Masks, right. I just--I think it was--again, another one of Edith's brilliant--

JB: Well, do you remember how--I've yet to really find anyone who remembers the origin of that idea, the idea of a festival that celebrated the mask. [See interview with Nancy Romero on the origin of the Festival of Masks concept.]

MP: I just assumed it came from her, because she loved masks, and they were her--

JB: I'm just wondering how, how she--you think maybe it was because of the collecting of masks that she had done?

MP: For her? I mean, I think she fixed on the mask as an important artifact that was cross-cultural. Every culture has some kind of --

JB: Or most of them do.

MP: Well, or some feature--some face-altering, or...something. It doesn't have to actually be something you put on--

JB: It could just be paint, or--

MP: Face-painting counts, yeah. I think that she saw that that would be the thing that could have everybody represent themselves uniquely--but within the genre of the face-altering and character

altering. Because that was part of it for her, too, how you put the mask on and then it changes everything.

JB: Well it became a huge family event.

MP: Our family certainly loved them, and I took my grandchildren to them--well, one anyway.

JB: Yes, and it grew. It started, well, [it] started as a parade on one day, and ended--I think at one point, it was three days!

MP: When it was part of the Olympic Arts Festival--

JB: [In] 1984. [That was] the apex.

MP: That was overkill. It was too much--it was way too much.

JB: The museum actually lost some money on that one I think.

MP: Oh, I bet we did.

JB: Well, they had changed the venue for one thing.

MP: Yeah, yeah, it was in the other park.

JB: It was always across the street [in Hancock Park], and then for that [Olympic] year [of 1984] it was in Pan Pacific Park.

Now there were some other events...there came to be, I think, first through the work of that fellow, Mark Gallon, who was on [the CAFAM staff on] a volunteer basis--pro-bono basis--I guess, really. [He was] the museum's **[01:30:00]** first development officer. He worked for Tosco for Mort Winston, and he had the idea of the museum having an annual fundraiser. . . .

MP: Oh, is that where that came from--the Primavera?

JB: Yes. I think museums had been having those kinds of things for a long time, but we didn't have our first one until, I think it was '77, and it became quite a lavish event--and, I was just wondering--I think you were involved with some of those?

MP: Oh, I've been at every single Primavera until that place closed, until that year, what--'96 I guess. [The last annual fundraiser was held in 1994.] In fact, I--I think I remember the excitement about the first one, and the invitation--they had a little Adam and Eve on it or something...it was like a folk art thing.

JB: Max King was involved with the design, I think of all of those.

MP: And there was a woman who was head of the--

JB: Well, Donna Wheeler was the first head of Los Primaveras.

MP: I remember her.

JB: Yes, I remember the parties that they would have in the afternoon in the library space. They--

MP: Oh, that little room upstairs? (Laughs.)

JB: -- it was a big deal to handwrite all of the invitations, so she would get all of her wealthy friends to come in and address those invitations.

MP: Yeah, those parties were great, though, they really were, some of the early ones. And who was that other woman--the food person, gosh--

JB: Tell us a little bit about—yes--it's right on the tip of my tongue.

MP: She used to do [the food for] all of the openings.

JB: Yes, she did some very creative decorating as well--

MP: She was marvelous about that. I'm sorry, I can't remember her name.

JB: It'll come to me. [Darcy Gelber]

MP: I don't know--they all had themes and they were in different hotels, and I remember --

JB: There was a guest of honor always, that was important to invite the [honorée's employees, friends, and clients].

MP: Right--that was important to get people to buy tables. But the entertainment was always thought-through. I mean, PAM--Pacific-Asia Museum--has one every year, too, but I always thought they were quite boring because they--well, they're centered around an auction so you could buy things. So that was the entertainment, but otherwise--buy stuff, eat, dance a little bit, or not, and go home, that's what it was. Whereas the CAFAM ones--they would have a theme, they would have this entertainment [related to the theme], and various chairs would try to outdo each other in originality, and so on, so I just remember them as actually--even though they were hard work for the staff, because you all had to go--they were also fun.

JB: Well, we did get to go, although there were a few years where I remember it was a question as to whether the staff would be able to go, whether it would be free for them, or whether they would be charged. (Laughs.)

MP: Right, that depended on [whoever was the chair]. But then when they got hard up and they weren't filling tables, then they would beg you to go so that they didn't have empty chairs.

JB: Yes, but before the Festival [Primavera]--or just in preparation, the staff was involved, and I think you were involved, especially, weren't you?

MP: Oh, quite often. I remember they borrowed some very expensive things, possibly--was it glass? I remember when they had one at the Jonathan Club, and all the table centerpieces involved contemporary glass sculptures by people like Dale Chihuly --

JB: I may not have gone to that one, because I don't think I've ever been to the Jonathan Club--

MP: Well, I sure did, although I didn't get to sit with the “white people.” [This is a joke; the Jonathan Club was known as a very conservative club at that time.]

JB: (Laughs.)

MP: They picked me because I had to pack all that stuff at 1 A.M.

JB: That's why you were involved!

MP: Yes, because they would use original artwork as part of the decorations, so they got me to go along to safeguard [those things].

JB: Well, they certainly were fun. And I think it was important for the staff. I know it was for me as a kind of a perk, in a sense, of being on the staff, and a reward for our work.

MP: But I remember having to work at them, I mean you did stuff--

JB: Well, yeah, you sat at the check-in table and--

MP: And then for a while, they would spot **[01:35:00]** us strategically so we could talk about various museum activities to the right people and hopefully get [them interested in joining]--

JB: But I always enjoyed sitting with the rest of the staff. I always resisted [sitting with the ‘important people’]--they would want to seat me somewhere else, but it was more fun [to sit with the CAFAM staff].

MP: Well, there were years when there was a “staff table,” and then there were years when they wanted to spot us around to talk up various things. It depended on the philosophy--

JB: I guess you would possibly think of the staff table as being a segregated area, but I really enjoyed being [with] the staff. You know, it was a dress-up event.

MP: And sometimes it was costumes, I --

JB: Well, didn't we call it "ethnic”--

MP: "Ethnic attire." Right, exactly.

JB: "Ethnic attire," and then at some point, it was thought that was not a very politically correct term to use. (Laughs.)

MP: Right, but I know--we [also] had the ones--they started having one in conjunction with the Festival of Masks that was a costume party.

JB: Those were amazing!

MP: Those were quite wonderful. But I remember, [one of the] regular fundraisers [was] at--I think it was at the Beverly Wilshire, and the theme was "Made in L.A.," and it had to be, I think that was

[the name of] the show we had at the museum [Made in L.A.: Contemporary Crafts ’81; opened January 27, 1981], so you had to come wearing something that was made in L.A. Or that interpreted the term "Made in L.A.," so--

JB: Oh. That's interesting--

MP: Oh, you don’t remember that one?

JB: For some reason, I don't, but you know...

MP: I happen to have a picture of me and my date for that, and --

JB: Oh, I'd love to see that!

MP: You know, I have it somewhere. Remember Richard? "Punk" Richard?

JB: Yes, I sort of do.

MP: With the crazy red hair and the dog collars.

JB: Oh, yes, yes.

MP: He was the--sort of--custodial person for a while. Well, he was feeling very sorry for himself, because he wasn’t going to the ball, and he was moping around on the day, and I said, "What's the matter Richard?" You know, he could get very out of sorts. And he said, "Everybody's going and I'm not going!" And I said, "Well, you're staff! You can go!" "I don't have anything to wear; I don't have a costume." I said, "Richard, if anybody ever represented 'Made in L.A.,' you do. You come as you are, and you can be my date!" (Laughs.) And he did! He did, and he was very excited, and somebody took a picture of me and Richard coming in the door. We almost got thrown out of the Beverly Wilshire, because when we walked in--because he was so punk. But fortunately, I was Miss Goody Two-Shoes, and I was wearing a sweet little outfit, and--

JB: Oh, I'd love to have a copy of that picture. Well, there was also a series of “Great Chefs,” and those were actually very ahead of their time in terms of the *nouvelle cuisine*, and--

MP: Joaquin Splichal.

JB: Yeah, that was when he actually cooked [and, I think, before he started the famous restaurant Patina].

MP: Yeah, and that was at a restaurant in Beverly Hills [Max au Triangle?]; we took it over for the evening.

JB: The hotel? Oh, I know what you mean, yes, yes.

MP: I think that's what that thing at the Jonathan Club was. It was three or four of 'em, great chefs, and they each did a course. That was an amazing thing, I mean...I didn't get to eat it, but...

JB: I think I missed that one. But we do have those menus in the archives.

MP: That's the one where they used the [Chihuly] glass and had it at the Jonathan Club.

JB: I have a colleague at UCLA who's very much a foodie, and somewhat of a food historian, too, you know, she's read all of the books--and I showed her the first one that we did, that was "Great Chefs." That was in, I don't know, '82 or '83 or something like that, and it is amazing to see the roster of chefs who've now become so famous and what was served [that night] and so on. Well, is there anything else you'd like to say--?

MP: About the early days--

JB: About the early days.

MP: It was a really exciting place to work then, it really was. I mean, it could be frustrating, and you were really tired, and you put in tons of extra time, but people did it because they were so excited about it--so.

JB: And the pieces themselves were exciting--

MP: Well, the artwork. Because that was an interesting era, that whole--between the middle '70s and the middle '80s. I think when contemporary craft really left that whole hippie-craft thing behind, and made the move into the fine craft category **[01:40:00],** so to speak. It just--it was a very interesting time. And some of the great names now in contemporary craft art, they were just up and coming then, and they showed at The Egg and The Eye—[and in the early years of the museum].

JB: For example, Dale Chihuly. (Laughs.)

MP: I think one of the reasons why he always came back, when he was [famous]--he remembered that Edith had given him a place when nobody ever heard of him.

JB: Well, it was kind of a revolutionary place in a lot of ways. Certainly [that was] a time of great ferment, and that made it exciting. Well, we're going to meet again next Friday, I believe --

MP: It's this week, Friday.

JB: Yes, this coming Friday.

MP: Yes OK, that's fine.

JB: And so thank you very much for today.

End of Session 1 [1:40:56].

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF MARCIA JOAN PAGE

Session 2 (1:33:49), Friday, May 22, 2009. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: OK. Today is Friday, May 22, 2009, and I'm here once again with Marcie Page in her beautiful 1905 Craftsman home in [the Mt. Washington area of] Highland Park, in Los Angeles. On Monday, we talked about her initial involvement with the Craft and Folk Art Museum, and her first few years as CAFAM's registrar. And we're going to continue that today. And my name is Joan Benedetti. So I thought I'd ask you, Marcie, to just walk us through a sort of typical day or--I don't know--maybe it'll have to be a week, but just your typical things that you would do, from when you come in, in the morning, to however late at night it was. I know there were a lot of late nights.

MP: Yes, there certainly were.

JB: As registrar. So officially, you were the registrar and the traveling exhibition coordinator, but let's focus on the [job of] registrar first. And just--where was your desk in those years? I think it was in the back somewhere.

MP: Right, it was. It was behind the museum shop, and it was a separate room with a door that locked, so that I could--

JB: Oh, the "keep-out room."

MP: The keep-out room, that's right, that's what it was called, because it had--it just had a big sign on it that said "keep out," you know, so it became known as the keep-out room. But, actually, Karen Copeland and I both had desks in there, because when she came back after . . . having her baby, the education--I mean, basically, education and registration shared--oh, maybe it was 20' x 20'--that room--and the shelves had permanent collection items on [them]. The museum in the early days didn't have a very big permanent collection.

JB: So it was all in there?

MP: It was all in there. There were shelves, and some cabinets along one wall. But we also were expected to pack and unpack artwork that came in on loan, and keep it locked up in there, and it was a nightmare, because there was absolutely no room. But we did--we managed. Because there was a small permanent collection in the beginning, I didn't spend very much time--normally a registrar does do quite a bit with a permanent collection, in terms of housekeeping, record-keeping, insurance, and so on. . . . I think, really, the biggest addition to the permanent collection was the Mexican folk art that was donated [by the Piñata Foods Company] in conjunction with Artesanos Mexicanos, and [looking at exhibition list] that was in 1978, I see. And at that point--

JB: That was a wonderful show.

MP: And at that point--that's when we had to have some off-site storage. I can't remember where, exactly, it went. [It first went to the space on Pico Blvd., and then, eventually to Cooke's Crating in East L.A.]

JB: That was the first time that you--did you—put [just] those [Artesanos Mexicanos] things in the off-site storage, or did you put the [whole] permanent collection in the off-site [place]?

MP: No, I think at that time, the large Judas figures and the mariachi band, I think they were all at Cooke's Crating in their main warehouse--because all of those things arrived with crates--but we started paying early on for off-site storage for those things. Usually, the exhibitions changed very rapidly. I'm looking at this list and I--I mean--at most it looks like . . . [the exhibit duration]--was two months, I see. [The Dyer's Art, the previous show, opened] in April of '78, and by the end of June of '78, we were opening Artesanos Mexicanos, and both of those were really big shows. So most of my time was spent checking borrowed artwork in and out, and accessing it for people who needed it to work on for the installations. I had to do insurance lists when the museum traveled exhibitions. I think the first one we traveled was Artesanos Mexicanos. That went several places. I can't remember exactly.

JB: That was known as the Piñata Foods Collection, because—right?--the Artesanos Mexicanos [objects were donated to CAFAM after the exhibition came down].

MP: Oh, it was--yes, because the Piñata Foods Company paid **[00:05:00]**—funded--the creation of the materials . . . . We were given all that because the company had originally planned to decorate their headquarters with it, but they [Pinata Foods] were bought by some larger company that was not interested in Mexican folk art. They actually, I think, sort of wanted to disassociate themselves from that sort of thing. So, the museum got it, and it was a wonderful, wonderful collection, really wonderful.

JB: Just as an aside--you mentioned Karen's baby.

MP: Oh yes, she was the museum baby.

JB: Amanda Lynn? I remember [her name] because--silly—[of] the musical instrument "mandolin" and--

MP: Well, we always made fun of the poor child's name--Amanda Lynn--right.

JB: But yeah, she [Karen Copeland] was very forward-looking. She brought Amanda to the museum [when she was a baby].

MP: Well, the museum was very forward-looking in allowing that, and later on--I think the same year--we had a receptionist--someone who answered the telephone, who also brought her baby, and sometimes you would have babies crying in the background when you were talking on the phone,

which was--people were just nonplussed by that, because it was quite unheard of for people to do that at the time.

JB: That was still the late ‘70s.

MP: But Edith and Patrick both were very tolerant of it, and I know Amanda became a big menace in our area, because she had one of those little walker things that you sit in, on wheels, and she would sort of get a running head-start, and then crash into people from the back. So, when she was about eight months old, I think, Karen had to find daycare for her. But it was fun. It was fun having a baby there.

JB: The museum was always very family-tolerant, which made up for a lot.

MP: Well, you know, the other thing--when you say that, I remember--I know all of the Wyle children--because they all worked at the museum--the grandchildren--but actually a couple of the children as well. They worked at the museum in the summers. Edith would ask us to find something for them to do, and I think she gave them some kind of stipend out of her own pocket, because the museum couldn’t afford them, but she wanted them to know about working, and actually do something real, and they did.

JB: They probably got to know what their grandmother did, too, which was a good thing.

MP: No, I think so. I mean, Noah--I remember Noah [Wyle], when he was a really little boy, and now I believe that his foundation is giving some support to the museum.

JB: Yes, that’s true. [Noah Wyle became a well-known film and television actor.]

MP: No, he’s always been very loyal to Edith, and the museum.

JB: Well—so, as registrar, obviously you interacted with the objects, but you also, I think, had to interact with a lot of the staff--certainly anybody that was involved in exhibitions.

MP: Oh yes.

JB: So just continue as you were, just telling what you would do on a typical day--who you would see.

MP: Well, I saw a lot of the shop staff, because our office was there [right behind the shop] and the art storage was there, and when we had--we would frequently have a guest curator. . . . I can’t remember when we got our first staff curator . . . because Edith and [the PIC], the program committee, chose the exhibitions for a long time, and a lot of them were traveling exhibitions from other places, or they were private local collections.

JB: Well, Shan [Emanuelli] and Willow [Young] both did curate a few shows, but I think the first time we had a sort of dedicated curator may have been Laurie Beth Kalb--but that wasn’t until ’87.

MP: . . . . But Shan’s title was Curator.

JB: Well yes, eventually it was. She started out working on the Festival of Masks, but--

MP: As did Willow. Yes, that's right, they both came in, in conjunction with that, and then they stayed.

JB: And Shan sort of specialized in contemporary craft, and Willow specialized in folk art. But they both did other things. So . . . I just wanted to mention that--at least my recollection is that--all program staff had some input into the preliminary **[00:10:00]** discussions about [exhibitions]--but then--once the show was set into the schedule--what did that set off in terms of your job? What were some of--?

MP: A lot of paperwork. A lot of paperwork and telephone calls, because--although whoever was curating the exhibition had the responsibility for choosing loans and contacting people about them--once it was decided, then I would have to do individual loan agreements, supply certificates of insurance to people, make arrangements. I frequently went to people's houses and packed things. The museum didn't have--

JB: When they were coming from a local [curator]--

MP: Locally, yes, although, actually--when we had that big toy exhibit--I actually went to northern California and stayed in the house of those people for three days.

JB: Oh that Dr. [Robert] Scoren? [Scoren died March 22, 2012.]

MP: Yes.

JB: Fantasy [in the Industrial Revolution: Toys from Mid-19th - Mid-20th Centuries; opened November 24, 1981].

MP: It was his toy collection.

JB: That must have been interesting.

MP: It was unbelievable family dynamics, and you know, there I was caught in the middle of it for three days, and in the middle of nowhere, too, because they lived in Woodside in a very rural situation. So--yeah.

JB: Was their house just full of toys?

MP: Oh yeah, and the house was beautiful, and the grounds were beautiful, and they had a tennis court. I mean, it was lovely. It's just that the experience of living with that family was not lovely.

JB: Well I heard that he was--

MP: He was definitely difficult, and actually during the installation of that show [at the museum], pretty much the installation staff walked out, and Patrick [Ela] had to plead with people to come back, because Bob [Scoren] was being--Dr. Bob--was being so horrible. He wanted to personally

control how everything looked and how everything was installed and so forth. So it was hard. I'd say that was probably one of the more difficult ones.

JB: But that was part of your job . . . just dealing with all of the people involved, sort of pacifying them if possible, and if not, setting them straight.

MP: Well yeah, and because I had a responsibility to the museum's insurance company, I just could not allow certain things to happen. I mean, things couldn't be out in the open, or--I mean--I had arguments with Edith, because Edith had total artistic control most of the time over how things looked, and she had wonderful ideas, but often they weren't safe. And she wasn't--most of these people were not museum professionals, and they didn't really know about standards, and so it was hard. That was one of the difficult things about [the registrar's job] . . . a lot of our exhibits were done by people who were very enthusiastic and quite knowledgeable in a non-scholarly way—usually--about the materials that they collected. But they didn't know about professional museum standards.

JB: Just briefly, how did you find out [about standards]? I mean, I remember you belonged to the registrar's group in AAM. Was that part of--

MP: Yes, and at that time, the Southern California registrar's group was very active, so I mean, Karen--I was lucky in that Karen Copeland had trained at--under a professional registrar at an eastern museum, and that woman was legendary. I cannot remember her name, unfortunately. [Her name was Pat Nauert.] But Karen--I had Karen there [at the beginning] and Karen already had a really solid background in professional registration practices, so I was fortunate in that respect.

And I would take classes, and I think at one point the museum paid for me to go to a workshop--it was a summer workshop that went on for several weeks at USC under (inaudible). And so I do have a certificate in preventive conservation. The teacher in charge of that was the head of the Conservation Institute [ICCROM—International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments] in Rome at the time. Yeah, so there was--I did, I did [get professional training], yeah.

JB: But you had to cope with people who--both on the staff and collectors--who didn't necessarily [know museum standards] . . . . **[00:15:00]** So much would depend on the particulars. That is, a show could--I made a little list of some of the possibilities: A show could come to us fully organized, like the one from MOMA, the Alvar Aalto show, I suppose, or the French Folk Art show, which came from the Smithsonian. But that was relatively unusual, wasn't it?

MP: Yes, it was. I'm looking [at the list]--Weaving Traditions of Highland Bolivia [opened December 18, 1978]--that was a very extensive exhibition. The people who curated that were people who had made the collection themselves, [Bruce Takami and Laurie Adelson]. They had lived in

Bolivia and traveled all over, and they were very knowledgeable and very good, but that show was hard, because they had a lot of costumes, and people wanted to have these--sort of--mannequin dioramas, and so we were creating those.

JB: Oh, is that the show where you and Edith [and Shan]--

MP: Made all those mannequins, yes.

JB: And yeah, tell about what some of the considerations were, about how the mannequins should look, and--you didn't want them to be too realistic, I think.

MP: No, nobody wanted them to be super realistic, but the other thing is that the reason why we didn't use ordinary mannequins--it was very difficult at that time to get--let's see, when was that? That was '78. There are companies now that make perfectly beautiful ethnic mannequins, but that was the other consideration. The Indians in the Altiplano [of Western Bolivia] are short, and kind of stocky, and they are not the elongated [fashion] mannequin type at all.

JB: Certainly couldn't use fashion [mannequins].

MP: No, no, we couldn't, and so we started experimenting with different ways of dealing with them. And then, you know, because these were textiles, there was also some [necessary] conservation. You couldn't have them on just any material. Trying to remember. I think--weren't those things--we had sort of chicken wire armatures, and then paper maché on top of that, and then they were spray-painted with acrylic.

JB: Did Shan help with that?

MP: Yeah, she did, yes.

JB: Yeah, I wasn't involved, but I do remember that somebody--maybe it was you--put together a little manual.

MP: I did. I'd forgotten that. Does that still exist?

JB: I think it's in the archives, yes, and I know you and Edith were trying to get it published, but--

MP: Oh maybe it was she, because she was very proud of those . . . . They worked, and we used them for quite awhile. They didn't hold up, of course, because they were paper maché, but they were a good solution at the time.

JB: And then some of the other [exhibition] possibilities were: a show could be organized by CAFAM with an outside curator. Well of course, the Bolivian show was a good example of that, or the Tunisian--that was another textile show. We had a lot of textile [exhibitions]--

MP: We did, we did, and I think that's partly because Edith was very interested in them. But, also because it was a folk art museum. I mean, it's true that [a lot of] textile art from around the world is [folk art]--

JB: Well it's so amazing, I think especially for people [like us] who--most of us [on the staff] at that time, were still naïve about . . . other cultures . . . , and it was just so amazing to see [the material culture of] people that we probably thought of as rather, you know, unsophisticated. And here they had done these incredible, amazing [weavings]--

MP: The Bolivian weavings in that collection are just astounding. I don't know what people are doing today in those areas [of Bolivia]. I would seriously doubt that they're continuing those traditions, just because of the difficulty. It's so time-consuming and labor-intensive, but they had evolved these very tiny, very complicated patterns, and I own a couple of pieces, which I acquired as a result of that exhibition . . . and I don't think you could even buy them today. I haven't seen any recently. I mean, that was true of lots of things that were on view there early on. [Although] I do think **[00:20:00]**--I always hated that "rapidly vanishing traditions" thing that people get so--all nostalgic—[about].

JB: But they work from a pretty isolated [place]--the people whose textiles were in that show were up in the mountains.

MP: Right, in the Altiplano, which is still, I think, pretty isolated. But there have been so many changes politically, in a lot of these places . . . [and] you know what happens when people become refugees. Although sometimes they evolve--that's an interesting thing, and I'm sorry the Craft and Folk Art Museum isn't what it was, because it would be--somebody needs to take a look at what happens when people become refugees and go someplace else, and they try to do something using new materials in a new place, or--

JB: The Long Beach Museum of Art had done a little bit of that [with an exhibition of Hmong story cloths that illustrated the refugee camps in Thailand].

[And talking about how exhibitions were organized] . . . of course sometimes CAFAM did organize shows with a staff curator. The Traditional Toys of Japan [exhibition opened April 30, 1979] was organized by Edith, and even though she was--did not have professional curatorial training, she did [curate] that show actually.

MP: No, she did, and I think she was--I mean, she knew what was important, and I think she had personally collected most of those things, although we did borrow--we borrowed from several local collectors.

JB: And she had--at that point--had over ten years' worth of experience at the The Egg and The Eye Gallery installations, although I understand from John [Browse] that things were put together and taken down very, very quickly.

MP: Oh, the turnaround on exhibits in that place in the early days was astounding.

JB: Even after it became a museum, it was still--I was going to ask you what the typical—like--de-installation . . . and installation time was.

MP: Very often, it was two weeks.

JB: For the whole thing.

MP: For the whole thing--take it down and--I mean, we sort of organized it. Yeah, we would usually have about one week to get the old one out, and get the galleries ready, and one week to install the new one. That was quite typical. And it did necessitate quite a lot of unpaid overtime by everybody.

JB: Of course, there were two galleries, the one downstairs on the west side, and then the one on the third floor, the big one. So there was some juggling that went on, but--

MP: But very often it was the whole thing [i.e., one exhibition often took up all the galleries]. And then, when--let's see. I can't remember when we took the space in the other building, the one across--

JB: The Annex on the . . . [second] floor?

MP: The one that was on the corner that got torn down for that huge building [the Wilshire Courtyard]? . . . That's where [the] Black Folk Art in America [exhibition] was.

JB: . . . . That [was what we called] the Annex--over the carpet store [on the corner of Wilshire and Curson]. That was our first major expansion, and it gave us more gallery space and office space, and some storage space.

MP: Yes, that was a very nice storage space. That was a very nice collection storage space the museum had, in that building. It was quite large.

JB: [The lease was for] the whole . . . [second] floor, and that was a pretty big building.

MP: It was . . . . The office spaces were on the perimeter in the front, and then the rest of it was the storage area, and . . . education, because I think they moved education over there, too.

JB: Yeah, Janet [Marcus] had a really big office there--by that time, I guess Karen had left, and Janet Marcus was the educator. Now did you move your office? I don't remember.

MP: Yeah, it was the nicest office I've ever had. It overlooked the--I could look out and see the mastodon family [the display in front of the Page Museum of the La Brea Tar Pits]--, because it . . . [overlooked] the street and had big windows. Yeah, it was very nice.

JB: Yeah, I was trying to remember. I know Janet had an office there and--very briefly—Ann Robbins [and] then Willow.

MP: And the preparator was over there.

JB: And the preparator--and you.

MP: Right, we were all over there.

JB: And there was even a little staff meeting place.

MP: Oh yeah. **[00:25:00]** No, that was lovely when we had that space, it really was. It made quite a difference. I'd forgotten that--because I was thinking--where did we put all that stuff? That's where we put it—[it] was up there.

JB: We were only there, unfortunately, for [a little over] two . . . years [from November 1982 to February 1985]. But they were very exciting years. Part of that time was during the Olympic Arts Festival.

MP: It's possible that's why we were there. Because they needed a much bigger staff for that.

JB: Yeah, we actually went in that space in '82, I think it was, and we stayed there past the Olympic Arts Festival. Let's see. [Looking at the CAFAM Timeline.] Opening of Annex space, November '82, so it was toward the end of '82. But yeah, that was a great space.

So you were involved with not just the--whoever was organizing the exhibition, whether it was an actual curator or someone who had a collection--but also with the preparators [and] with whomever was designing the exhibition--and the design of the exhibition, I know, was always very important to Edith.

MP: Yes, it was, and often--I mean, I always personally had problems with most of the designers, just because, as I said, how it looked was more important to them than secure mounts and things for the objects. And so I would sometimes have to at least try to put my foot down. I think that's how I earned--Edith used to call me the museum's little black cloud, because I was always raining on somebody's parade. But it's true, I did.

JB: I think she also called you the museum's conscience, which was a little more positive.

MP: Oh well, yeah. But it's true. I think I lasted a long time there, just because I wasn't afraid to stand up to people, not to any of them. And, I would also know where, you know, . . .—[how to] choose your battles wisely. You can't win all of them, so you have to know where--at what point are you going to be willing to make what kind of compromise.

JB: Well I think Edith probably relied on you to be that sort of person. I think she was not necessarily willing to compromise.

MP: Right, well--and I remember there was one lender who said to me, "I'm only loaning that museum these things because I know you're going to be"--you know—[responsible], so I did take that as a compliment, because that person was an important collector.

JB: And then, of course, there were shows that--and again, this didn't happen very often, but once in awhile there was a show—that was mostly or entirely from the permanent collection.

MP: Yes, we would organize those from time to time.

JB: I think there was always the feeling, and I'm not sure it was true, that those kind of shows would be easier or cheaper or something like that.

MP: I think cheaper, because the budget problems were ongoing there, and if something didn't get funded--I'm looking at the list. Gosh, well--when did we started having--we didn't really start having permanent collection shows until--I mean, I don't think we had much of a permanent collection until later on. We weren't able to do it.

JB: Yeah, it was I think--as I recall--it was around the time that we were beginning to think about the new building.

MP: Objects of Our Affection--I think that looks to me [like a permanent collection show]--well, Traditional Toys of Japan included some things in our collection, but by no means--it wasn't totally our collection.

JB: There was a whole series of shows that had that "Objects of Our Affection" title, so if we look on the alphabetical list--

MP: That's '85 . . . . **[00:30:00]** I don't see any others that would have had anything significant in them from our permanent collection. Maybe a few masks, but--well, the '84 Masks in Motion [opened June 5, 1984], of course--that was a huge show, and it did have things in it from our collection, but predominantly those were lent, or they were the ones the various countries sent to the museum.

JB: Masks in Motion, '84, that was the Olympic--yeah, that was an enormous, enormous show. I remember Brenda Hurst, who was the administrator [of that exhibition].

MP: She had to organize that. I mean, it was horrendous, because all the countries were involved that were invited to the Olympics. We were trying to have them all represented.

JB: And they pretty much were, I think.

MP: I think so.

JB: I know Edith intended to write something. First, she was going to write it for the program book, I think.

MP: But she did write something for the program book. It's kind of the introduction.

JB: But she had in mind something much bigger. She had those big notebooks that I think Brenda [Hurst] actually put together, but Edith intended to use them. And they are in the archives now [except for the one on Asian masks, which went missing].

MP: Oh, that's great. Because there was a huge amount of research . . . . We had all those films, and there was a lot of documentation.

JB: Yes, there were films that were transferred to video and put on loops that just ran continuously.

MP: No, that was an amazing undertaking. It did take quite a few people to put that together.

JB: Now was Edith the designer of that show, that installation?

MP: No, she brought--I think Jack [Carter?]--I can't remember his last name. He was working for the Fowler [Museum] then. Yeah, I think it was he. They did bring somebody in who was a professional designer, because I think everyone realized that we just weren't going to be able to do that by ourselves. Because there were all the different sections for the types of masks, and he had different colors--yeah, it was in both buildings [the 5814 Wilshire building and the Annex on Curson]—and [both] upstairs and down [galleries] in the original building [the 5814 Wilshire building]. That was a major installation undertaking, and that one must have taken us longer than two weeks. I don't remember. But it was--because I know there were all these colors involved, because [the walls of] each section [were a different color]--

JB: Yes, they were beautiful colors, and it was beautifully lit, which [was amazing]--considering how relatively small those [masks were]--well, there were some huge masks, but still--.

MP: And some mannequins. We had some mannequins. Yeah--wow. Do we have all of those--are they all documented?

JB: Well we have [35 mm. color] slides. Remember--that was one of the things that I did and you helped me to [do it]--after the show was down, we had about a week, I think, that we spent photographing each of the masks. Well--and the costumes too. Yeah, those are still in the archives. So . . . what other staff would be involved in a typical show? Just about everybody.

MP: Yeah, because the staff wasn't that big, and although, usually, the educator didn't help with the installation, sometimes they would try to give input. At that time, it wasn't typical for an educator to be included—[whereas] now they always are consulted, in most places.

JB: Well, wasn't that one of the things--maybe it was Karen. I was going to say Janet—but there was one of the first educators was quite insistent that they at least be involved in the decisions about the size of the type and the height of the labels.

MP: I think that was Karen, [though Janet cared about that too]. Because we weren't accessible in a lot of ways--for instance, at that time, there was no elevator, and so a person in a wheelchair could not see what was in the third floor gallery, and so I think that was one of the ways **[00:35:00]** that we could comply with federal accessibility regulations.

JB: But she [Karen] had a special interest in that.

MP: I think so, yeah.

JB: Speaking of the lack of elevator, you want to talk about what it was like to carry things up to the third floor?

MP: Unbelievably horrible. It was unbelievably horrible, and I can still remember the tombstones from the Black Folk Art in America [exhibition], and I begged that designer not to put those tombstones on the third floor, but he did, because--

JB: In the Annex building there was an elevator, but in the 5814 building, that's where--

MP: But any big artwork, anything in a crate, had to be carted up the stairs in the Annex as well, because--

JB: Oh, the [Annex] elevator wasn't big enough?

MP: No. Yeah, so it was just the way it was, and we would do it. I don't know how, but we had people--we used to bring slings and things like that, and then of course in the 5814 building, you had to make that jog through the restaurant and then up a narrower flight of stairs.

JB: You couldn't do that during the lunch period, the meal period.

MP: No, no, no we couldn't. So we were always having to work around that dinner hour. I mean, they were open for dinner at that time, so you couldn't even wait until it closed. But everyone worked around it, so.

JB: Yeah, I just--I was appalled that it took them such a long time to install an elevator, and now they have quite a wonderful elevator [that was installed sometime in 2002]. But you know, how is it possible that the board didn't understand?

MP: Well, I recall one board member saying, "Why should we spend $100,000 for a few people in wheelchairs?"

JB: I mean, even if you could accept that argument--

MP: But that was said out loud in front of me.

JB: But they seemed to completely overlook the fact that the *staff* was having to make that trek with the objects. You know?

MP: I think the staff was included in that [comment]. It was, "Why should we spend $100,000 for an elevator, for a few people in wheelchairs and the convenience of the staff?" Yes, it was--it's interesting that--because subsequently I went to work for another museum, and I found the same lack of consideration on the part of most of the board members, for what staff people have to put up with. They do [have that lack of consideration]. It's like, "We pay them," you know? So--

JB: Very difficult to wrap your mind around it.

MP: Parallel universes.

JB: Yes. So let's talk a little bit about your other job. You were a registrar/traveling exhibition coordinator, and I read this from your resumé: "responsible for concepts, research, writing interpretive materials, design and installation of over 25 exhibitions of CAFAM permanent collection materials for schools, libraries, community centers, and corporate spaces," and I just want to say, that sounds an awful lot like a curator to me.

MP: Yeah, well I was not ever allowed to have that title, because people--these were secondary exhibitions. The museum was very active, starting when Karen was still the registrar, because I took this over [from her]. We must have gotten some kind of grant with L.A. Unified, because it was a gallery in the schools, and it was a--we were working with schools that were willing to dedicate some space in their . . . . I think they were mostly elementary schools. I don't remember dealing with any high schools. If they were willing to have a dedicated space, we would lend from our permanent collection, and then students were supposed to bring works, things from their family, or draw--they would have art classes that were specifically related to the materials or to their culture or other people's cultures, and then the gallery in the school would display the student artwork. It was a very ambitious plan on the part of L.A. Unified, and Edith was very enthusiastic about it, because that was part of her "Museum without **[00:40:00]** Walls" thing, and so she was willing to lend the permanent collection. And we didn't lend terribly valuable things, and I would personally go and supervise, you know, the installation of these things.

JB: Did they usually have display cases so that you could--

MP: They had certain basic things they had to do. I mean, the artwork had to be safeguarded, and a lot of schools managed to do it. I can't [remember]--John--the name of--I remember his face because he used to come to the museum, to have these meetings with Edith. His first name was John, I can't remember. I mean, he--

JB: This is the guy from the Fowler [Museum]?

MP: No, this was the guy from L.A. Unified. They actually had a position in L.A. Unified that was somebody who was coordinating this.

JB: I see. I was wondering how it was publicized, but I guess it was a regular program.

MP: No, the schools knew about it, and I remember the 93rd Street school--that was Ethel Tracy's school, and it may have had something to do with her. I don't know if we met her, or if she became involved with the museum because of that. I do not remember, but she and Edith went way back. And I did a couple of exhibits at that school. I mean, the L.A. Unified hit a budget crunch, you know, similar to the one they're in now, and they just had to cut out frills, and this was one of the things that went. But the museum continued to be available for [other local venues]. We had exhibits in banks, we had--I used to do them at the V.A. hospital.

JB: Now I was just wondering, though. I understand that the school had--that this was a program of theirs so everybody within the school district would know about it, know that they could request it or whatever. But how, for example, would a corporation or a V.A. hospital, how would they even know about your [lending program]--

MP: I don't know how we came to be associated with the V.A. hospital. With . . . [the Carlsberg] Corporation, we used to change exhibits over there several times a year. . . .

JB: Oh yes, because Barbara Carlsberg--

MP: Was on the board.

JB: So maybe there was a personal connection with each of these.

MP: But when they built their new headquarters, she was very enthusiastic about having these changing art displays for the employees as well as for visitors. They had a big reception area, and she had really beautiful cases designed and installed, with fairly low level lighting in them, because I think that she did ask us about that. And . . . for years we did Carlsberg exhibits. But they paid us.

JB: Well I was just going to ask, was there a fee involved? It wasn't really a money-maker for CAFAM, but--

MP: No, I used to do those mostly on my weekends.

JB: But the cost, the basic cost--out of pocket costs--were paid for by whomever was taking the show?

MP: Yeah, definitely. Well it was a way to get museum materials out, and make--sort of publicize the museum, too. I don't know to what extent, you know, people ever came to the museum because of something they saw at the Carlsberg, or at one of the schools, because we never had any way of checking up on that. But it was a way--I mean, I was willing to do it because I really did believe in making things accessible. And they could be, if a trained person was handling them, and that was me. And occasionally I might have help from the preparator, if he wasn't too busy. But no, I did [it]. And then after awhile--I don't know how--I became responsible for what was on the little mezzanine gallery after the new building opened. I did a number of shows in there. That was a tiny space. It didn't--it wasn't totally permanent collection by any means, but often it was, and often I did them, especially after there was no curator, after Laurie Beth Kalb was gone.

JB: Well, you certainly had a lot of very broad experiences.

MP: No I did, I did. It was really--I'm lucky because I did get to do a lot of things.

JB: Yes, which--and we won't get into this now, but when you went to the Pacific Asia Museum, all **[00:45:00]** of that was fairly important, that you had had that experience.

MP: Oh, yes.

JB: So--we talked about this a little bit last time, but I'd like you to talk a little bit more about the first collection development policy that you put together, and I know Ruth Bowman was involved. But did you instigate the--I mean, you got the job of registrar, and you were faced with these objects that were part of the permanent collection. So what were the main issues? What made you think that you needed to have [a policy]--and then you had to convince, I think, some of the board members [as well as] Edith [Wyle] that you needed a written policy?

MP: I've blanked it . . . but I know that Karen and I both felt pretty strongly about it. But I think it partly had to do with the kind of willy-nilly way that things were being brought in. I mean, there wasn't--

JB: Just dumped in some cases.

MP: Well yes, they were. If Edith wanted it, she would just say, OK. And I mean--it was never a thought about--well, can we take care of it? Can we store it? I mean, those Judas figures, [each of which was at least 8 feet tall] were a nightmare, because they were so huge. And moving them--each one of them had to be moved on a flatbed truck, all by itself.

JB: Were they heavy?

MP: No, they were quite light, because they were [made of papier maché and] hollow, but they had huge crates, and thank God they did, because they wouldn't have survived. I have no idea what happened to those, because they were all sold, right?

JB: I think so. [They were in the Butterfield's auction in 1998.] I don't know where they ended up.

MP: Well anyway, there was never any consideration for the conditions under which we would be keeping these things, and there were some quality issues, too, you know--and I think those were some of the reasons why--I'd have to go back and look at it all--I actually think I do have some old notes on the original collections management policy.

JB: Well it [the written policy] is in the archive, and there are some notes.

MP: Yeah. Well I think I have another file, because I took it with me. They were mine and I took them with me to Pacific Asia, and I went through a battle royal with a collections management policy there.

JB: So it was good that you had had that experience at CAFAM.

MP: Yeah. I think it was just another step in trying to professionalize the way the museum was doing things, because basically it had started out as, you know, a labor of love by non-professional people. And trustee training. I mean, you know, they don't think about those things. They also don't think about--I . . . would remind them of those things sometimes, that it's a matter--once somebody donates something to a museum, it's not exactly yours. It's--that's all the fuss about

[museum] people selling off [items from a permanent] collection, you know, is because they were given in public trust, and you have to have a pretty good reason for de-accessioning, especially if you're not giving them to some other like-minded institution, but you're taking the money and not spending the money on [the] collection. So--and there were conservation issues. I mean, we had no conservation budget. I don't think they ever did. I can't remember ever--yes, I do think I had some conservation work done on a textile once . . . . [I took it] to [the] Pacific Asia Museum; they had a conservation person early [on]. Anyway, I don't remember the particular issues. I think I just wanted to curb [the worst of the offenses].

JB: Well, I think you've named some of the important ones. I do remember—talking about dumping things--that there was quite an amazing, complicated whirligig that was literally dumped on the back--

MP: Oh, it was left behind the museum, yeah.

JB: Yeah, tell me about that. I don't remember who--did we ever figure out who made it?

MP: You know, I vaguely think we did, but somebody just wanted to get rid of it, and they brought it to the museum and left it there early one morning, **[00:50:00]** and I think the first person who ever opened for the restaurant found it. Gosh, yeah, a picture was in the paper, and--

JB: Yes, yes. So I guess you did find out a few things about it, but I don't think you ever found out who [left it for us].

MP: Nobody ever admitted it, never admitted giving it.

JB: But it was an amazing piece that was in some shows, I believe.

MP: I think so. Oh gosh, I had forgotten all about that.

JB: And then there were things like the hat collection. You remember the hat--or was that after you--after Carol became the registrar?

MP: The paper hats. Oh, no--the other hat collection--yes, that was after Carol became registrar, so I don't remember anything about the hat collection.

JB: Well, there were many odd things [given, so] that the collection kind of grew helter-skelter.

MP: It was never--it wasn't planned, so that's for sure.

JB: But you did get the policy written, and approved by the board, and I guess Ruth [Bowman] was instrumental in that.

MP: Oh I think so. She was very adamant about it.

JB: She was very active in the AAM (the American Association of Museums; now the American Alliance of Museums) at that point.

MP: She was.

JB: I was aware of that. So let's see. We just changed the subject a little bit, but this is related to the collection. In 1987, we got our first PCs [personal computers], and I think, actually, you and I shared one to begin with [crosstalk]. Was that the Marcon database software?

MP: Was that the [IBM] Displaywriter thing?

JB: Well, of course, I suppose we should count the Displaywriter as the very first [museum computer]. [It was given to CAFAM by the Getty Center.]

MP: You know, the Displaywriter made it possible for me to deal with the puzzle [Puzzles Old and New: Head Crackers, Patience Provers, and Other Tactile Teasers; opened November 25, 1986] exhibition. The traveling of the puzzle exhibition, the paperwork involved in that was astounding, and--

JB: And you had put that on the Displaywriter.

MP: It was on the Displaywriter, and the reason why I took the trouble to learn that weird little program is--and there still isn't anything quite like it--I got spoiled by that, because it integrated the list--making and sorting the--it was sort of--you could combine--it acted sort of like an Excel file, and you could have these records of things, and then because each piece of information was in a different field, you could sort them in different ways and you could create different lists.

JB: Are you sure this wasn't the Marcon program [a generic database program purchased later by Joan Benedetti for the library, but also used for the object collection]?

MP: No, it was not Marcon, because you got Marcon later.

JB: In '87.

MP: When was the puzzle exhibit? Because I remember this nice high school--

JB: Eighty-six, it was the year before.

MP: Yeah, this nice high school boy came to the museum, and he was working upstairs, and I looked at what he was doing--he was using the Displaywriter--I think that was the first program the museum had.

JB: I guess it was. I never really used it.

MP: I think the membership--

JB: It was basically a dedicated word processor, as I recall, but it did do some sorting, too?

MP: Oh, it totally did. Because--well, it was beneficial in a number of ways. Because I just saw how valuable it would be to have collection records stored that way, and nobody was doing it at that time. There were--Southwest Museum had gotten that clunky program--

JB: Yes, yes, I know the one you mean. [Argus.]

MP: Yes, and the poor Southwest Museum is still stuck with it, I believe, although maybe they've managed to get rid of it. I don't know, because they all hated it. But I remember we went and looked at it, because we were thinking, oh we should do something like this, but it cost like $5,000 [or maybe $10,000] at the time, and we couldn't afford it, and our collection wasn't that big anyway, so we couldn't really justify it. But the Displaywriter program was perfect, and I put all the information about the puzzles on that, because we were traveling that installation--complete, so that each thing had a designated place in a specific display case--but they couldn't be packed that way, because of the disparity in sizes and materials and so on. So they had to be packed--this drove people crazy when we traveled it--that they weren't packed according to the display box they went in, but it was not possible to do it. Yeah. So I had separate lists. I had packing lists, and then I had display lists, and the insurance--and then when **[00:55:00]** I had to get--you have to get a special kind of customs bond, to get things like that in and out of the country expeditiously. Because there were--I think there were 800 pieces in that show.

JB: Yeah, you know, we should take a minute to just say what that show was, because it was so amazing and, by the way, I just saw--not the whole thing--but a large part of Jerry's collection, which is now at Indiana University's Lilly library, the rare book library. His papers were given to the Lilly library in Bloomington, Indiana, and they set up this wonderful display of a lot of his puzzles, and this was just a few months ago, and I felt very nostalgic about it. Tell about what that show was, and who the collector, Jerry Slocum, was.

MP: Well, it was called Puzzles Old and New, and it was different types of problem-solving toys, games.

JB: Didn't he call them mechanical puzzles?

MP: Were they all mechanical?

JB: Well, I think mostly, yeah.

MP: Well, I think that everything involved some kind of manipulation, yes, they did. I mean, I don't think--

JB: They weren't mental puzzles.

MP: I don't think of a tangram as a mechanical puzzle, but you do have to move things around, yeah, you do have to move shapes around. And it was divided into different categories, and it had to do with the problem-solving approach that you had to use . . . . Some of them were manual dexterity, you know, those funny little--

JB: The Rubik's Cube--oh, [and] the things that were like pieces of metal in different shapes?

MP: Yeah. I remember . . . yes, right. Well because Shan [Emanuelli], actually, although it was Jerry's idea--I think she was the directing curator for that.

JB: Yes, it was difficult, because that happened right when she and Mike Kaiser, her husband, moved to New York. So she had to kind of do it from a distance. Although she started it with us.

MP: That's right, I'd forgotten that.

JB: And we would go to his-- Tell about his collection, where it was.

MP: Oh, he had built a separate little studio-gallery behind his house in Beverly Hills, the Puzzle House [was what he called it]. So it was all stored in there, and it was all climate- controlled. It was very, very nice. And I spent a lot of time there, because I must have been making lists and packing puzzles. I believe that I did.

JB: Well, and part of the agreement--when I interviewed Shan, she told me about this--part of the agreement for CAFAM to have this show was that we would catalog it, basically. We would--it really wasn't cataloged.

MP: That's right, that's right.

JB: It was organized but it wasn't--I don't know, I can't believe that it wasn't listed at all, in any way.

MP: No, he had index cards on everything, he did.

JB: Yeah, [now] I remember that, [and] he also did a lot of things like measuring puzzles, filling [in] information.

MP: Actually, I think I might have done some of that . . . . I have a vague recollection of sitting there with another person and a tape measure, you're right. Yeah. The other interesting thing was that he wanted--when it was packed, when it was crated for travel--part of our agreement with him was that he would get all the packing materials, because he wanted to be able to organize it, and travel it, create smaller exhibitions on his own, and do things with it. . . . I'd forgotten all about the packing of that. There were some big crates that had the ceramic and really fragile pieces in it, and Cooke's [Crating] did those, and they were super. But most of them, because they [the puzzles] were small, we bought these high-impact plastic suitcases that are actually used by electronics companies, people who sell . . . [electronic products]. They had foam cut-outs, yeah. I did that. I cut those out individually for all those pieces.

JB: Now, I think Michelle Arens also helped you at some point.

MP: I'm sure I had help. **[01:00:00]** I had to have. There were 22 of those [suitcases].

JB: She [Michelle] told me that she--although she had never done anything like this before--she had to figure out how the puzzles went together, because she had to write the instructions for putting them together in Japan.

MP: On ones that couldn't be shipped assembled--exactly. . . . and some of them, if people fiddled with them and they fell apart--we had a separate clause in the contract for that, that people had to pay for returning [the fallen-apart puzzle] back and forth, [by] FedEx or whatever. . . . . We had strict instructions to people not to play with them, because those wooden interlocking ones, those were killers--or the puzzle boxes that were done--the diabolical puzzle boxes--if people fooled around with them and couldn't get them back together again, then they would [have to return them to us]. I think that only happened once, that we actually had to return something. And Jerry had to do it, and then it went back.

JB: And the other part to that story is that you and Shan got to go to Japan, when it traveled [to Tokyo].

MP: Yes, we did. That was a really interesting [trip]--that was fun, because we worked--it was not being a tourist, it was going there to work with people, so we got to know people in a whole different way. And it was an astounding experience, because the big department stores there [which was where the exhibition was] have these displays, but they usually only keep them up for a few weeks, or a month at most, and then they only have 24 hours to take down the old exhibition and put up the new one. So what they do is they . . . have a design, they have everything prepared off-site, and the . . . department stores each only close one day a week. The one [that] our show was in was Matsuya in the Ginza. That's a department store chain, and this was their big store in the Ginza [district], and their whole upper floor--

JB: This is in Tokyo.

MP: In Tokyo. Their whole upper floor was an exhibit space, so when we arrived in Tokyo-- because I came early in order to unpack . . . . I went to see the space and . . . the spring garden show was there, and it had dirt and whole trees, and tubs and--I mean flowers planted in dirt! I'm going, wow! And they explained to me that . . . Thursday night (I think) was when that store closed for one day. . . . Each department store very kindly would pick a different day of the week to have their "closed today"--so . . . [they weren't] all closed on the same day. So I'm remembering . . . for some reason Thursday sticks in my mind--and by the time we came there, in the morning of the day we were going to install, the entire place--all the garden stuff--was gone! It was all painted, all the display cases were moved in, everything was set up, and we just needed to put things in place.

JB: You had been imagining--

MP: We had no idea, but you know, we got finished at 9:00 that night; and it took about 12 hours. It took about 12 hours to install that show.

JB: So they had a lot of people there.

MP: They did. They had a crew of about 50 people. They were totally organized . . . and everybody . . . knew exactly what they were supposed to do, and we just would go from case to case, and just finish [each case and] close it.

JB: Did you have a translator with you all the time?

MP: I did. They gave me a really nice--I had two of them--and it turns out they're volunteers. They work for some volunteer organization and they're people who just want to keep up on their English, and they're interested and stuff. Both of them were housewives.

JB: Well, exhibition spaces in department stores [abroad] are like--I don't know where that tradition started--but they are respected a lot more than similar spaces here in the United States, I believe.

MP: Well, I think so. I mean, the ones in Tokyo, I . . . [know], European museums lend. I think that same space later that year was going to have a French Impressionist exhibition, a big one. So the money--I think the advertising agency **[01:05:00]** for Matsuya organized this and paid us, and so it was well-funded. I think that's where the money comes from. It's advertising for them.

JB: But . . . [they're] very high-quality exhibitions.

MP: Oh yeah. Now the people we worked with were astounding. I think that they--there's a big, famous Japanese company that specializes in moving and installing artwork and so on. I can't remember their name. They're famous, and I think all the people were hired through them. So they're all used to working together and they have their ways, and I'm sure they have these giant warehouses where they construct all these things.

JB: And you were able to spend a little time, after you were done, after it was all packed up, . . . traveling in Japan?

MP: I did. Actually, I did not pack up.

JB: Or you had to come back at the end, right? There were two trips.

MP: No, I didn't go back. We did not go back for--it went to two places in Japan. It went to Osaka, I think, after Tokyo, and then it came back, and for some reason, we waived having one of us go to pack it up. Neither of us went back.

JB: [By that time], you were obviously very [trusting]--

MP: No, I saw what they did, and I saw [how they were] when they were helping me unpack. They were very professional and very knowledgeable.

JB: But you took a little time afterward, to--

MP: I did, and in fact, well, Shan and I both stayed, but we went in different directions. I think she wanted to see some museums, the other museums in other parts of Japan, and she did that, and we parted company in Kyoto, and I went to the mountains to the [inaudible] monastery, and she

went to--I know where she went [but] I can't think. Another province, anyway, because there's a big folk art museum there and she wanted to go, and then we met up again a week later in Tokyo and came back [to Los Angeles] together.

JB: But that was a really wonderful experience for you.

MP: It was. It was amazing. I was really fortunate because I got the experience of working with my fellow people, art people in Tokyo, and having the big city experience, and then I went to a totally remote area in the mountains of Japan that was like going to another century. And so I did get the best of, you know, modern Tokyo and traditional Japan. Tiny little village.

JB: And of course by that time, you had--of course you probably had an interest in Japan already--but at CAFAM you had already had the experience of working with Japanese objects and Japanese . . . exhibitions, because Edith had a special interest.

MP: Well [as a result], I think I have more Japanese [things]--I don't own a lot. One thing about being a registrar is it cures you of wanting to own things, but what I own is mostly Japanese. So I have some really nice things, actually. My furniture--I don't know if you know this--my rustic furniture on the front porch--that tree is 209 years old--would be if it was still growing.

JB: Did you bring that from Japan?

MP: No I did not, I bought it from Mr. Konishi. . . .

JB: He was next door to the museum. Yes, a little [Japanese antiquities] shop next door.

MP: And Konishi would get things for us. He was always very helpful. He really was a friend of the museum.

JB: I'm glad you mentioned him. That was very nice . . . and I'm very glad that you talked about the puzzle show, because it was so complex--

MP: Oh, computers--

JB: The reason we got onto that [topic] is because you were telling me about the [IBM] Displaywriter computer--putting all of that information about the puzzle show into this Displaywriter. Then at some point, I did want to talk about when we [first] had PCs, and we went to the Marcon database, and I believe that you put the permanent collection **[01:10:00]** into that database--or at least you intended to.

MP: I think we started.

JB: You had some other people inputting, too.

MP: Yeah, we started doing it and I just don't remember if it was ever finished. But all of our things had numbers, so it would have been possible to at least create--

JB: --at least a minimal record for each one.

MP: Something happened with--oh, was that Steven Tony [or Toney]?

JB: Oh yes. Well, no. I don't remember if Steven Tony was involved with [the Marcon database]. There was a fellow, Bob Pujat--I think his name was--who I had met at a Museum Computer Network conference when I was searching for--I had gotten the first grant from the Irvine Foundation for the library, so I had some money to spend on getting a computer and software. And I went to this MCM conference and met Bob Pujat, who was from New York but he was the programmer, the creator of Marcon. And I think that--the main reason I ended up buying it, besides the fact that it was a generic database--this was before Access, Microsoft Access--there really wasn't anything like Microsoft Access at the time. But the American Craft Council librarian, [Linda Seckelson] was buying the Marcon software, and she and I had this kind of fantasy--it turned out to really be a fantasy--because they laid her off a couple years later. But [the dream was] that we would do some kind of collaboration. And you got interested in it also at that point, and the two of us really learned it at the same time. It wasn't easy to learn, but we did do it, and created--I know the first thing I did was to create a database of exhibitions, and you know, put as much information about each exhibition as possible in. But you were interested in it primarily for the object collection.

JB: Right . . . but I don't remember that we continued with that, though, because I thought that we got interested in another program later on because of Steven Tony, because we were looking for something--

MP: Well, yeah. I wish I could remember when he got involved. It may have been with the Language of Objects project.

JB: It was. And we got to him through the Getty, because he was doing something for the Getty at that time.

MP: Yes, yes, but I don't remember what program [he was associated with]. I just don't remember.

JB: But we were [also] talking to [another] programmer, [Safier], who was going to actually create something for us, and I don't think we ever did anything with that.

MP: But as far as the object collection is concerned, I know that for quite awhile, there were people working on inputting [into the Marcon database], and Carol Fulton didn't like it, but she was involved when she first [took the position of registrar]--

JB: Yeah, maybe that's why I don't remember, because I would have just handed that whole thing over to her at that time.

MP: Yeah, I think that's what happened.

JB: I did want to talk about Carol [Fulton], because she started--well, you tell me.

MP: She started--I don't remember when she started--but [to begin with] she was the preparator.

JB: Oh, she was the preparator, I'd forgotten that.

MP: Yes. When Gustavo [Montoya] left to go to the Getty, I knew her at Cooke's Crating. She was working for Cooke's Crating and she was dying to get out of there. And we needed a preparator, and she said, oh I can do that, I'm [preparator] personified, and indeed she turned out to be. So that's--that's where I met her, because I would be going back and forth to Cooke's, because our collection was down there at the time, and she hated working there. So she came in as preparator after Gustavo. [Carol worked as the Registrar from 1990 – 1996; she must have started as the Preparator in the late eighties.]

JB: I had forgotten about Gustavo, too. He was a very good person. Gustavo--

MP: He was great. I think he went to work for the Getty. I don't know if he still--no, I don't think he does still work **[01:15:00]** for them. Somebody told me he went to work for the telephone company after he started having kids and needed more stability or something, and then of course there was Patrick McCarthy, the one-armed preparator.

JB: Yes, he had a lot of enthusiasm.

MP: Oh, he certainly did, yeah.

JB: But so he was before--

MP: Gustavo.

JB: Gustavo.

MP: I think, unless it was the other way around. They could be reversed. No, Patrick McCarthy worked on the toy exhibition. He's the preparator that walked out with me that day, and Patrick [Ela] ran out in the parking lot and begged us to come back. So that was fairly--when was--that was fairly early [Fantasy in the Industrial Revolution opened on November 24, 1981].

JB: Yeah, I guess it was. [But Gustavo was the Preparator before Patrick.] My interaction with him had to do with the photographic equipment that we had bought [and we did that before Patrick started]. Part of the money--besides buying a computer with the Irvine money, we bought--this was with the very first Irvine grant--we bought photographic equipment so we could document the CAFAM exhibitions: a nice big tripod, and lamps, photographic lamps. You know--professional equipment. Max King had a friend who was a photographer that helped me, went to the camera store with me and told me what I should buy, because I had taken--for some reason--oh, I guess because the library ended up having to deal with whatever slides were taken [of the exhibitions], and it was so catch-as-catch-can, and LACMA [the L.A. County Museum of Art] was offering a course in photography of art. So I took that course, and of course, you know, once you got even a little bit of expertise at the Craft and Folk Art Museum--

MP: It was your job.

JB: It was your job, and then we were able to get the money for this equipment. So I basically ended up either doing the photography myself, or hiring a photographer for each exhibition. So we do have documentation in slide form, for almost every exhibition. But . . . I was kind of disappointed in Patrick, although he was a delightful person in a lot of ways. But [eventually] I turned the job of taking care of all the audiovisual equipment over to him. And he proceeded to trade some of that equipment for other [I think, video] equipment, so that suddenly we didn't have a tripod or lights, and so that meant . . . we had to hire photographers. But he was a delightful person. I'd forgotten that he was the preparator.

MP: That's what he was hired for, but now I'm trying to think about the succession of preparators, because I'm going like--wait a minute. I know--Brent Rummage--I think Brent preceded Carol [Fulton], and I don't know who--Brent either replaced McCarthy, or he replaced--

JB: Well I think Brent worked there a couple of different times. I think he worked for a couple of years and then went away to school or something, and he came back.

MP: Oh, I didn't remember that. I remember he wanted to go to New York and paint, and that's what he did. He went to New York--

JB: But then he came back, I think.

MP: Not when I was there. So if he came back, it was later. Because then that's when we got Carol, was after Brent.

JB: Well Carol--what I was going to say was--it seems like the preparators didn't last very long. There was a fairly--

MP: High burnout. There was high burnout. I think--well, Roman [Janczak] was the [first] preparator . . . . Anyway, I think yeah, he was there when I came, and then there was somebody who quit in the middle of Wind and Weathervanes, [which opened March 23, 1976]. I don't know who that was. He never came back. Oh, and then maybe that's when we got Gustavo, and then after **[01:20:00]** Gustavo we got McCarthy, and after McCarthy we got Brent, and after Brent we got Carol. . . .

JB: Gustavo was there early on. So Carol started as preparator.

MP: Yes, that's what she was [when she first started].

JB: But she ended up working at the museum for quite a long time, in various--

MP: Well, she wanted to be a designer, and she had a nice portfolio, but I don't know, for some reason, Patrick [Ela]--he just didn't--he wasn't enthusiastic about letting her do it, so she never got to design anything until we got to the May Company. And by that time--oh I don't know--I

can't remember. When Laurie left, that was when [in 1989] Patrick, like, created this other job for me, the Director of Exhibition Development thing, and I just sort of managed everything. And I wanted another registrar, and that's when Carol became the registrar. But she also would supervise the installations. . . . She had a crew . . . because she had worked with a bunch of people before.

JB: She actually had her own company for awhile.

MP: Yeah, I think she did, and she brought in a crew of people, and she would oversee them. So she was able to straddle the fence there. But I know she really, really, really wanted to design. And when we got to the May Company, she got to do it there.

JB: After [we went to the May Company], the first show was designed by Joe Terrell, wasn't it?

MP: I don't know, what was it?

JB: The Hands On! Show [Hands On: Objects Crafted in Our Time, which opened November 21, 1989] that Laurie [Beth Kalb curated].

MP: Oh right, right, yeah.

JB: Well, I would like to save the discussion about the May Company, and I want next time to hear about . . . this new position that you took on, which I think did happen after we had moved to the May company . . . although you may have started talking to Patrick about it sooner.

MP: I think he did it when Laurie left, and Laurie left when we were still--we were still in the old building. [Laurie Beth Kalb took a leave of absence to work on her doctoral thesis before we moved into the May Company, but she came back to finish installing Hands On!] But we were getting ready to move [the offices and the library to the May Company], I think. We were getting ready to shut down.

JB: . . . . There are several things that I wanted to talk about today, and one of them was Laurie Beth Kalb, but there's . . . [another] thing that didn't last very long, but was pretty important [while it lasted] that I wanted to ask you about [earlier], and that was Gallery Three in Santa Monica Place. It was just one year—[October 1980 – September 1981].

MP: Well, it nearly killed us.

JB: Well, tell about that, please.

MP: We just were spread too thin, and I think at that time, didn't we have--we had Santa Monica Place, we had the Annex . . . .

JB: I think so. [No, the Annex wasn't opened until November 1982.]

MP: We had too much space and too few people, and then we added miles of commuting back and forth.

JB: Yes, well that's what I was wondering about in regard to your job. You had to go back--

MP: Well I lived there [in Santa Monica], thank God, but yeah. But still, it was transporting artwork, it was the logistics of getting stuff in and out of a shopping mall, you know, and everything had to be installed there for maximum security.

JB: It was October of 1980 that it opened, and it closed in September of '81, [exactly one year later]. And I guess the Annex actually--the Annex wasn't open at the same time; it opened the following year, [probably because by that time we had lost the Santa Monica Place space]. But, yeah, I guess this was just an opportunity that came up. Santa Monica Place, which was designed by Frank Gehry--and is now [early 2009] being radically renovated [by the way]. They had a "percent for art" [in 1980], I believe, and somebody that--I think the developer--came to CAFAM to find out if we wanted to take over that space.

MP: And of course they said yes.

JB: Yes, it was sort of a typical kind of a thing. The decisions were made at a higher level.

MP: "Sure, we can do that." (Laughs)

JB: So talk about what you **[01:25:00]**--how you were involved.

MP: You know, getting the artwork in and out of there. And I certainly would have to be there when they were installing, and I just--it's really a blur--and I remember going there and doing things. I just don't have any coherent vision of it, even of how it looked. We had some weird façade. Didn't Gehry design that for us?

JB: It wasn't Gehry that designed the façade, I don't think.

MP: Some big name. It was something that was on the outside, that was not--I don't know.

JB: You don't mean on the outside of the building?

MP: No, on the outside of our space [in the building], yeah, [that just] said "CAFAM." I thought it was him. I thought that they had somehow prevailed upon him to do it. He liked the idea of it, and he had just sketched something and it got built. [Urban Innovations Group (Charles Moore's group) designed the interior of the Gallery 3 space; not known if they designed the façade.]

JB: This was the first year. It was right when Santa Monica Place first opened.

MP: There was a gala opening, I remember that.

JB: We were the first tenants, and I hadn't realized it until I went back and looked at [the record of] what was in there, [but], they were all contemporary craft shows, and I guess Shan . . . organized it [a lot of it].

MP: No, I think she did, yeah.

JB: I thought that Ann Robbins and Susan Skinner were involved, too. Do you remember who actually managed the [space]?

MP: Well, because there was a gift shop there.

JB: Yes. Well, it was a gallery and a shop.

MP: It was a gallery and a shop, and so they had to cope with that too, yeah--with keeping merchandise there and having staff--and I don't even remember the exhibits. Except for Two Schools of Fish [Two Schools of Fish: Richard Posner, Buster Simpson; opened June 16, 1981]. Two Schools of Fish, I remember.

JB: Yes, that was the last one, and that was a beautiful show. [The exhibition record shows that that exhibition was to close on July 26, but it must have been extended to September 30 when the lease was up and the gallery closed because it was too expensive to maintain.]

MP: It was great.

JB: I think the first one was Mask as Metaphor [Mask as Metaphor: A Contemporary Artists' Invitational; opened October 16, 1980].

MP: Oh, that was the contemporary mask show, yes. Shan . . . [curated] that one, yes she did.

JB: And that was very interesting. It involved a lot of important--

MP: Some really good artists, yeah.

JB: And then after that was Introductions [Introductions: Twelve Artists, An Invitational Exhibition; opened November 21, 1980], and I think Ann Robbins and Susan curated that. . . . [Reading from the exhibition list]: Twelve Artists, an Invitational Exhibition, that was what that was. And then Shuji Asada [Shuji Asada; opened April 29, 1981—he was a textile designer] . . . .

MP: Oh yeah, I remember that. That was a lot of fun, putting that up.

JB: And then Two Schools of Fish, and that was it. It was short and somewhat sweet. What do you think were the main problems there? I mean, they had really thought that it would at least break even, if not make money. I don't think there was really a serious business plan, because--

MP: No, I think that was wishful thinking. I mean, the kind of things that were being sold there-- that was a shopping mall, and there were people there who were interested in buying shoes and clothes and cheap jewelry, and department store stuff. I mean, if the museum wanted--well this is just me--but you can fast forward to [CAFAM's experience at] the May Company. I thought they missed an opportunity at Santa Monica Place, and they missed an opportunity at the May Company, to do something that would interest another type of person, a more populist, popular kind of thing, that--I mean, I think it was a missed opportunity, because you were going to get a walk-by audience that was never going to come into the museum itself. And let's say you want to

get those people and keep them—well, then, you approach it differently, and you don't have these super-elitist exhibits. I happen to think that Two Schools of Fish was something that anybody could get into, . . . and I . . . still think that this is true.

And you know, I left behind me two exhibitions at Pacific Asia Museum that are the result of me ramming those through before I left. And they're different from what they've been doing, **[01:30:00]** and--I don't know. I just have always been very frustrated, because I think there is an elitist attitude in museums, and we could have done something more along the lines of the *kunsthalle* thing that goes on in Germany. I mean--they have these like wild things that everybody goes to--high and low--the whole high and low thing. Anyway, that was a missed opportunity at Santa Monica Place, in my opinion, but it was--also I don't know that our [small] staff could have pulled off anything any better. It was just impossible.

JB: It [the gallery] was also in a kind of out of the way place.

MP: It was at the end [of the mall]. It was at the end.

JB: It didn't have as much walk-by traffic as we had hoped to have.

MP: No, you would have [to have] had some reason to pull people up there.

JB: I know USC took it over after us, and I think they had the same problem.

MP: Yeah, nobody came, yeah.

JB: But it was exciting, kind of, to be there, in that environment.

MP: Oh, our Masquerade Ball that we had there [that October]--that was fabulous. I remember--

JB: That was the one that David Hockney came to. He was a judge.

MP: Oh, was that the one? I just remember Patrick [Ela] in the fountain in his tuxedo.

JB: I missed that.

MP: Oh, you have a picture of it somewhere, because it's in--I've seen that photograph. No, the museum did know how to have a fun party, I must say.

JB: They really did, didn't they? It seemed like [there was] any excuse for a party, and they were great. And for the most part--with some notable exceptions--we [all the staff] got along quite well, all of us.

MP: Oh no, that was true. I think the staff, the core staff of that place, most people stayed a long time.

JB: Yes, they did, amazingly. [Though] I don't think anybody except I guess Patrick [Ela] and you and I were . . . there for 21 years.

MP: I think Lorraine was there a long time.

JB: She was there a long time, yes, yes, almost as long. Well, I think that probably this is a good place to end, and we'll talk about some of these other things and other people like Laurie next time, because there's [still] a lot to talk about.

MP: That museum crammed [in] a lot in a short time, it really did. It was just amazing how much people accomplished.

JB: There was always something going on. We didn't really talk much about the publications, but when Max King, especially, was designing them, there was a period of time when it seemed like every show had a catalog--and they were beautiful catalogs.

MP: Oh yes, no, she did a marvelous job.

JB: And you were doing the copy editing.

MP: Right. Yeah, the other hat.

JB: The other hat. One of . . . many. Well, yes, we've got a lot to talk about next time--the plans for the new building and the move to the May Company, and [our experiences in] the May Company, and then [our] going to the building on the corner [at 5800 Wilshire]. So thank you again for a great conversation.

[End of Session 2: 1:33:49]

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF MARCIA JOAN PAGE

Session 3 (1:50:00), Friday, May 29, 2009. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: OK. Today is Friday, May 29th, 2009. And I'm here with Marcie Page at her home in Los Angeles for a third session to talk about her memories of working in the Craft and Folk Art Museum. And my name is Joan Benedetti. I thought maybe we ought to start by just acknowledging that someone very important in the craft world [and to the Craft and Folk Art Museum] passed on last week--Sam Maloof [January 24, 1916 – May 21, 2009].

MP: Oh right.

JB: He was 93. [Maloof was interviewed for this CAFAM oral history on October 27, 2008.]

MP: I think we talked about him as being one of the board members, because we were talking about the board last time.

JB: We did. That's true. Yeah. And I would like to talk about the [Maloof one-man] show that you worked on that--

MP: We never had.

JB: That . . . didn't happen. I think we'll wait and talk about that a little bit later, but I just thought--we both got to know him and. . .

MP: Yes.

JB: And worked with him and he was a--

MP: Yeah, I went to his house quite a few times for meetings about that exhibition. [An exhibition had been planned to be co-sponsored by the American Craft Museum, but it was ultimately cancelled.] And I had known him and Freda, his wife, for quite a while [when Sam was a trustee] . . . . They would come in the museum quite a bit.

JB: Yeah. She was really, really central to his life.

MP: Oh yeah. But when you go to the house, for instance--I mean the Native American things--I think that's her collection, isn't it--

JB: Yes, I guess so.

MP: --or at least the beginnings of it.

JB: Because she taught . . . at that Indian school in . . . Santa Fe?

MP: I mean--I think they continued to collect after they married because they would go back to--was it New Mexico? I think it was New Mexico . . . .

JB: They had a tremendous collection--

MP: Right. And amazing. She got beautiful, beautiful things early on. So--you know--that was all part of . . . [their interest in collecting folk art].

JB: Yeah. And he almost lost his house, his beautiful house. The State of California in its infinite wisdom was going to--

MP: Put a freeway through it.

JB: --bulldoze.

MP: That's right. Yeah.

JB: Just amazing. But it had a happy ending.

MP: It took almost ten years I think. They successfully held up the completion of the 210 freeway with the lawsuit--or his opposition to it . . . . I think it took about ten years.

JB: It was quite awhile. But it did happen and he lived to see his old home moved, piece by piece. And a new home, which he got to design, built there and a gallery, and his new wife, Beverly, created this fantastic garden.

MP: I'll have to go out there.

JB: Yeah. It really is worth a visit, if you can go sometime when you can go inside some of the buildings. They're open quite often but not the--the houses are not always open. Anyway, yeah, that was the passing of an era, I guess. So Marcie, I have some catch-up I want to do from last time, and then we'll move forward.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about Karen Copeland and Janet Marcus. Karen of course was registrar when you started. And then in January 1979 she became museum educator and you became registrar. Karen was educator then for only about two and a half years, although altogether she worked at the museum for about five years.

MP: But she was doing educational work in addition to registration work. I mean, basically, tours and workshops were run by her when she . . . . was [still the] registrar.

JB: [Her resumé] also included curatorial assistance so I guess she was also helping Edith . . . . at the very beginning.

MP: I think she wrote a lot of the labels originally.

JB: Oh.

MP: Yeah.

JB: And well--as we've said--everybody wore lots of hats.

MP: Yeah.

JB: But--so then--Janet Marcus was hired and both of those people were very smart and intelligent and you got to know them both very well **[5:00]**.

MP: Oh yes.

JB: I think you went to Janet--or were involved in Janet's wedding.

MP: Oh yes. Yeah. I helped her make her *hoopa*.

JB: I remember that.

MP: Yeah. That was a wonderful project. She still has that. She's saving it for her daughter.

JB: I haven't seen her in quite awhile.

MP: I haven't talked to her in quite awhile. The girls are--

JB: They must be teenagers.

MP: They are. Yeah. Yeah.

JB: Well I hope to be able to interview her. I'll have to figure out how to contact her.

MP: Do you think the mike is picking up [the sound of] that dog schlepping his foot over there?

JB: Oh I don't--I don't think it will be a problem. Are you--?

MP: He's driving me crazy. So I'd like to yell at him to make him stop.

JB: OK. Just a minute. Let me pause. **[Recorder is paused while Marcie yells at the dog.]**

MP: OK.

JB: So, I thought maybe--could you talk about both of them and kind of compare them as educators?

MP: Well it's hard to--they were both very much the new breed of educator: less what Karen and other people used to call . . . "gawk and talk." The kids would gawk and the educator or the docent would talk. They wanted to get away from that, and that was a new idea at that time. [This was in the late seventies and eighties.]

JB: To make it be more interactive?

MP: To make it be much more interactive and to really give--I remember when we had the Murals of Aztlan [opened April 28, 1981] exhibition, Karen was able to just bring the kids into the galleries and they would sit under the scaffolding and the artist would [work and] talk to them . . . [at the same time]. I think that was a really wonderful experience for those kids, because they got to meet a real artist. They got to see how he did it. And because . . . the artists were all Latino and lots of the kids were too. I think this might have been one of the first times that they had an

interaction with a live artist. And somebody they could relate to culturally. So I think that was very important. And that was encouraged, you know, questions were encouraged [and] lots of art-making activities. I think Karen always and Janet too--both of them--would always try to have some kind of hand-out. If they couldn't make it at the museum, they would get some kind of photocopied sheet of instructions on how to make something that was related to the exhibition and it was a take-home thing. Karen included food a lot, which was--I had never seen that before. I still make a Tunisian lamb vegetable stew that's the recipe that she handed out with the Tunisian rug show [Traditional Textiles of Tunisia; opened April 8, 1980].

JB: Oh I see. She didn't serve the stew. (Laughs)

MP: No, she would give [out] a recipe so that you could [make it at home]--

JB: Yeah. Yeah. What a wonderful idea!

MP: It was. I thought that was a great idea.

Now Janet was an artist herself. She was quite a good painter. And she kind of approached it partly from that point of view. She used to come up with all kinds of workshop ideas and interactive things to do during tours. I'm trying to think of--the only specific things I can remember right now are the things she put together for the exhibition that went to the Smithsonian [Experimental Gallery]. The Language of Objects one.

JB: Dress Codes [Dress Codes: Urban Folk Fashion; opened in Washington, D.C. October 29, 1993].

MP: Dress Codes--yeah. She did some really creative things because they [the Smithsonian] wanted a lot of interaction and so I think Janet devised a number of sort of activity boxes for each section of that exhibition, so kids could actually do stuff in the exhibition--that was what that [section] was designed for. I think both of them, however, were really just at the forefront of the new breed of educator.

JB: Yeah. I think CAFAM was very lucky to have both of them--

MP: Both of them. Absolutely.

JB: --and I think Janet worked for about eight years--

MP: And she came back to do projects . . . after she stopped working full-time. I think the Language of Objects project--she was on that team. But she was being paid as an independent contractor for that.

JB: Yes, and I think she may have helped . . . with the Museum for a New Century exhibition. [Museum for a New Century was one of the reopening exhibitions; opened May 10, 1995.]

MP: She did. She stayed involved in the museum even though she was no longer in a full-time staff position--because they didn't replace her with another educator--I don't think **[10:00]**?

JB: . . . . Well they did, eventually, and I was trying to remember last night . . . the name of that Korean American woman who was hired.

MP: Phyllis. Phyllis Chang.

JB: Chang. Thank you. [Phyllis was hired October 1, 1991.] But I think there was a time when maybe--well of course there weren't many shows for a while. There was a lag between the time that we moved out of 5814 Wilshire and moved into the May Company.

MP: Janet was still around at the May Company though. I think she was still around when we went back.

JB: She came back. Yes. I remember she came back but I think she was at home for a couple of years probably after she had her first baby [and then she came back as an independent contractor].

MP: Right. Right.

JB: Now—skipping [back] a little bit . . . . We did talk about the Festival of Mask and the Olympic Arts Festival, which happened in 1984. But something else very important to the Craft and Folk Art Museum happened in 1984. In July--I think probably just after the [Olympic Arts] Festival--Edith announced that she was retiring. And at that point she became Director Emeritus. And Patrick was named Executive Director. And that meant that--whereas there had been two directors--Edith doing the program and Patrick doing the administration, Patrick was now going to be in charge of the whole thing administratively and programmatically.

MP: Well, but Edith did maintain a certain interest and enthusiasm for staying in touch with what was going on.

JB: I think she had a really hard time staying away.

MP: Yes. She had a hard time letting go. She did.

JB: In fact, I know that for a long time she and Patrick had a standing lunch date on Wednesdays.

MP: Oh, you know, I forgot. That was just to keep her abreast.

JB: Yes. And sometimes Patrick couldn't make it, and she would, you know, grab one of us to be with her. And I remember times when she would kind of wander into the library--

MP: She loved the library. She was so happy to have that library.

JB: Well--

MP: I mean I'm so glad it's named after her.

JB: Yes--and I still have the sign [that was made for the reopening in 1995]: The Edith R. Wyle Research Library.

MP: Isn't it called that at LACMA?

JB: Well, yes it is. When it had a prominent LACMA website presence it was more obvious. They cut back on that but--yeah. So—no--I just meant--sometimes she would wander into the CAFAM library because I think she didn't have any place else to go. And it was a little bit sad. And we would talk, which was fine.

So when Patrick took over . . . he added design to the program. And I thought I would ask--you know--what differences, if any, did you see? What were some of the various kinds of differences that you saw after that change?

MP: Well, in fact we had design exhibitions. I'm going to look at the list here. We began to show some manufactured artifacts, which we probably would not have if that hadn't been included [in the mission]. But--I mean--I thought that it was a logical extension--if the museum was going to continue to have a really solid presence--to add that, because there were--and his rationale was that there wasn't any design-oriented institution in Los Angeles and **[15:00]** many contemporary design—manufactured--objects didn't have their origins in prototypes and traditional objects. Prototypes and contemporary . . . traditional objects because they're just part of [a] designer's inspiration. I think Alvar Aalto was--?

JB: Let's see. Where was--I have the alphabetical list here. I think I'm going to pause so we can check [the exhibition list]. **[Recorder paused.]** Yeah, Alvar Aalto was November of '86. So it was about a year and a half after Patrick took over as Executive Director that [we started to have design shows]. I guess that was the first one. If we look at the chronological list starting in '84--

MP: Well, Sidecar, the contemporary lighting . . . exhibition. [Sidecar: the Process of Design in Contemporary Lighting; opened February 25, 1986.]

JB: Oh yes. That was a very interesting show.

MP: And those were local people. That was a local--Sidecar was [based on the designs of] a local [design company that was an off-shoot of Ron Rezek's lighting company].

JB: Yes.

MP: I don't know if they still exist or not.

JB: I don't know. They were associated with Ron [Rezek] lighting--

MP: Right. That's right. That's right. Yeah.

JB: . . . and there was even an Italian connection there somehow.

MP: Oh the Friuli thing.

JB: No--I mean in the lighting show, there--I think that Ettore Sottsass [16:44]--some of his works were involved--oh I can't remember. But Patrick was--he had friends in the design community.

MP: Yes.

JB: I'm not sure how that all happened. But it turned out that he had quite a--

MP: Pacific Design Center.

JB: What?

MP: We had some relationship with them because they were letting us use space over there . . . we had a gallery [there].

JB: Yes. Well he knew the fellow who was the administrator over there, Jim--now I've forgotten his name. [His name is James Goodwin.] Much later [in 2004] he took over as director of CAFAM for a year.

MP: Yeah, I saw that.

JB: So there was that connection, which--you know--I think was based on friendships of Patrick's. Patrick had a lot of friends and, you know, I think he really made use of those connections. Of course. But I guess my point is that a lot of those friends were design-connected in one way or another.

MP: Well, he's always been friendly with artists too, the arts community as well as design, because he collects [art] himself. And [looking at the exhibition list] after Alvar Aalto was Puzzles Old and New. Did we discuss that?

JB: We did discuss that quite a bit last time.

MP: You don't need to hear anything about that?

JB: . . . that certainly did occupy you for a long time.

MP: Oh yeah. Years. Years. Probably about five I would say, ultimately.

JB: Let's see. Alvar Aalto, when did I say that was?

MP: '86.

JB: '86. . . . Alvar Aalto [: Furniture and Glass] opened in September '86 and Puzzles [Old and New] two months later.

MP: Both of those were really big exhibitions. I mean--that's the kind of thing that we used to do. You know-- in two months! Two floors of [Finnish] design had come and gone and [then] those 800 puzzles were installed.

JB: Yeah. Now, the Alvar Aalto [exhibition] had come from MOMA in New York.

MP: It was a traveling exhibition. I think originally [it was] organized by the Swedish government. I thought so.

JB: Maybe so. . . .

MP: --it came from abroad. So I don't know where it had been but I remember that we did have one of those situations where the customs people had to--we couldn't open the crates, they were all sealed **[20:00]** and a customs person had to come to the museum. And then we broke the seals on the crates so that he could do his inspection. So it must have--it had to have come from out of the country.

JB: Because it was advertised as being a MOMA show.

MP: Well it might have been and it might have gone to Canada or something. Japan maybe. You know I think maybe that was it. I think it--

JB: Had been to Japan?

MP: --had been to Japan. Yeah, because they're very interested in contemporary design.

JB: Well, just thinking about the museum during that first year or two [after Edith Wyle retired], besides exhibitions, were there any other differences that you noticed with Edith more or less on the sidelines?

MP: You know I never thought of her as being on the sidelines (laughter).

JB: Yeah that's really not a very good--

MP: It didn't seem--

JB: --way of putting it.

MP: It just didn't seem like a major change to me because she was still [so much] a presence and an influence. And I think that Patrick must have suffered from it somewhat because I think he wanted to make something--

JB: [Put his] stamp [on it].

MP: Yeah, leave his own stamp--and I don't know how enthusiastic she was about that design thing. I mean a lot of people didn't like it. I remember that some trustees were like, “Why are we doing this? What does it have to do with that?” It was the usual resistance to any kind of change from the status quo.

JB: Well, I remember having some questions at first, but I really, the more I thought about it the more logical it seemed.

MP: Well, when you think about the library, for instance, that library . . . [has] a very unique point of view. It represents a whole written evidence of connections among all of those different areas. But I don't think it exists anywhere else. Maybe at some place like Cranbrook. I don't know. But that's a more academic institution where you'd expect they’d have a research library that covered

a lot of different points of view. For a museum as small as . . . [CAFAM] to have that library, it's an amazing feeling that it remains intact, because they did want to disperse it. And it would have been really stupid.

JB: Oh yes. At first [in 1997 when the museum was down-sizing] they wanted to pack up just half and disperse the rest of it among the offices. This was before the decision to actually close the museum at the end of 1997 happened. And it was clear to me if any part of it was packed up it would be forgotten. And there was no way even if--because by that time I had been laid off--and there was no way the books could be dispersed among the various offices, even if the museum had remained open, without losing a lot of them. . . .

MP: Oh I would've thought that Edith--because I wasn't around by that time, so I don't know what was going on--but I would have thought that she would have had something to say about that library.

JB: Oh yes, well we--I think you were still there--we formed a committee--

MP: Yeah, back when you were looking into doing a search for people [at other research libraries] who would be interested . . . in keeping it intact.

JB: Right.

MP: That was the--

JB: And she [Edith Wyle] was on the committee. She and Elizabeth Mandell and Wally Marks. And we did a really good job hunting. And it wasn't that hard because it turned out there were eight different libraries that were interested. [They were all headed by ARLIS/NA members that I was able to contact directly.]

MP: But not all of them wanted to keep them intact. I would think they wanted to get rid of duplications and things like that.

JB: Well, yeah, there were some concerns. At the Getty they were concerned because they already had a sizable collection. I think [they] had about a third of the titles listed. But LACMA took it as a whole and has kept it intact [although they did de-accession most of the duplicates].

MP: Yeah, for somebody doing research, just to have access in particular areas--I think that that's a very unique library for different points of view. You won't find all of those things in any other place altogether. . . . I mean [with] the Internet now it's much easier to make those connections, but as far as the [CAFAM] staff was concerned--I loved that library. I still miss it. I wish it existed as a place I could just go rummage like I used to **[25:00]**.

JB: Well you warm the cockles of my heart. (Laughs)

MP: No, I was really happy to see it go [to LACMA] . . . and have its own space.

JB: Yes, it took a while to get it--it was unpacked almost right away--but it was put into what used to be the linen department--

MP: At the May Company?

JB: --the linen storage department at the May Company . . . on the third floor at the back [because there were already shelves in that area]. And they were really old, awful wooden shelves. But we had kept the good, steel shelving that we had had [at CAFAM], which I'd been able to buy with the money from the Irvine Foundation. All of that was kept and eventually put together. And yeah we actually had a space where people could come. Of course there weren't that many visitors there. Really, I made an exception when I had someone come to that space, because the normal procedure was to page things from the main library. But anyway, yeah, it's still intact.

But that point of view [of including design in the museum's program], really, I have to give credit to Patrick for including that and making us all see that there was a continuum . . . [that] really--in a sense--I think made the combination of folk art and contemporary crafts more obviously connected. Because there had always been questions about that.

MP: I just don't think the museum was ever able to really develop that [programmatic concept] . . . I'm looking at [the list]--because the money thing got so severe, they were never able to do the kinds of exhibits--big exhibits, traveling exhibits--that could have really made a name for it I think.

JB: Yes, there were many . . . lost opportunities. The staff worked incredibly hard. And I really think that if the museum had not been lucky enough to have the talented people that it had--amongst whom you were very prominent--who were willing, who were not only intelligent enough to be able to articulate some of this, but were willing to work those long hours--

MP: Lots of overtime. But it was worth it, because all of us [who] were there, [were there] because we were really interested. We certainly weren't in it for the money.

JB: No.

MP: And I think at the end there, the museum owed me three months of paid vacation because I could never go on vacation. I couldn't take off more than a few days at a time because--

JB: Well--especially when you were registrar, right?

MP: Yeah, eventually when I was in charge of exhibit development, we didn't have any staff curators. We just had . . . outside curators and that was my job to coordinate all those people and their efforts. And there were always exhibits coming, you know, down the assembly line. It was a never-ending process. And people did like what they were doing and they put their hearts into it. I think it really showed.

JB: So let's just talk about Patrick [Ela] at this time. We really, I think relied on--we had to rely on him certainly for fundraising, although we did have a full-time development officer. But he, as the

head of the museum, a lot of decisions which otherwise maybe could have been made easily waited upon him. . . .

MP: No. He could procrastinate. I mean I don't know. I know we all used to get really aggravated with him. But, he too, worked very hard.

JB: He did actually.

MP: And his job--unlike the rest of us--when we finally went home we could be home. But he had all that socializing **[30:00]** to do that's part of the fundraising, and schmoozing on behalf of your museum. And you think—oh--another party, another dinner. But really he was--

JB: That was very important.

MP: --he was working. He was working.

JB: Yes that's true. And he was a very attractive face for the museum.

MP: Yes. He got very tight with [the L.A. Department of] Cultural Affairs too. Was that when Al Nodal was in charge?

JB: Well, he got very tight with Al Nodal. And as it turned out, it was very lucky for the museum that he did, because eventually--

MP: That's why it came back again.

JB: That's why the museum was able to reopen, because Al Nodal interceded on behalf of the museum.

MP: Well he had a history with Edith too, didn't he? I mean--

JB: Al and Edith?

MP: --maybe [because of] the Olympic Arts Festival.

JB: Maybe so. . . . I'm not sure about that. But yes, [from] working with the Craft and Folk Art Museum archives, I'm very, very aware of just the sheer amount of correspondence that Patrick was involved with every single day.

MP: And he always had pretty good assistants.

JB: Oh yes. Well, both Edith and he were lucky in that regard, [although] there was some--there was a good deal of turnover. Although there were a few people that stuck it out. Brenda Hurst--

MP: I remember Brenda.

JB: Jennifer in particular I remember. And then Lisi Rona, who Patrick ended up--

MP: Ultimately married.

JB: --marrying.

MP: And . . . [then because of marrying him], she couldn't be his administrative assistant anymore.

JB: No. But, yeah, all those people helped a great deal. But it was different after Edith was not in that office anymore. And I think in some respects, [after she left], we were all thrown on our own resources even more than before. I know for myself one of the attractions of working at that museum was the fact that it was not a government agency. It was a private non-profit [organization]. And, as such--because there was a small staff and small budget--when there was a budget at all--we each could be very--we had to be creative in order to, you know, survive--in order for our jobs to survive--and for the museum, which we all believed in very much--[to survive] as you said.

MP: No, I think that for quite a long time there was a core group of people who were there for over ten years altogether. And I think not having a huge turnover in staff was probably a good thing, because when you have people coming and going--I mean the museum [that] I just stopped working for—[the Pacific Asia Museum]--had extremely high staff turnover. And you're always having to form new cliques and relationships--and deals under the table--and all that kind of thing. (Laughs)

JB: Yeah well--

MP: And with us, everybody pretty much knew going in who was--

JB: --what everybody's quirks were.

MP: --what everybody's quirks were. Right. Yeah. So I think that was one of the things that made it possible--in spite of the lack of funds and lack of staff--to do as much as we could [was] because we could work together.

JB: We worked together--and we were able to bring forward projects and, you know, initiatives that I think--I know from working at LACMA for a while, would be almost impossible [at a large governmental institution].

MP: Right--because of the amount of bureaucracy that's there . . . and departmental [competition]--you know--territorial things like that.

JB: Yes. So if we were willing to put in the long hours--that was of course the catch--a lot of volunteer time--

MP: Although the museum had lots of good volunteers too.

JB: Oh yes.

MP: They really did. I think that's the other thing that made it possible for [CAFAM] to survive as long as [it] did is that there was a lot of unpaid labor involved--not just from the staff but from people who came in [as volunteers] hours and hours and hours every week.

JB: Well--both of us were volunteers to begin with.

MP: That's right. We both started as volunteers.

JB: And around the time when we were ready to open--reopen **[35:00]**--[after being closed for about two and one-half years, while the renovations to 5814 Wilshire were being done] in the . . . [mid]-90s--there were over 100 volunteers at one point. That's something I haven't tried to track in the archives, but I know there were a lot of volunteers. And some very good volunteer coordinators, which made it possible. I think those volunteer coordinators were usually paid part-time.

MP: Yeah. I think so.

JB: Not always, [sometimes they were volunteers themselves], but at least most of the time. Well, I'd like to talk about someone who came into the museum while we were still in the original building. I guess this came about--maybe you can explain this better than me--the hiring of Laurie Beth Kalb as curator. Did it have something to do--this was--

MP: It was after Sharon [Shan Emanuelli] was gone right?

JB: Oh, so that was part of the reason?

MP: Yes, I--

JB: October '87 was when she was hired?

MP: --that's right. That's right. Because Sharon left [in 1984]. The Puzzles exhibition was toward the end of '86, and she had already moved to New York, but I think [it was] only the previous summer she had gone to New York. [Sharon (Shan) Emanuelli moved to New York City in 1984.]

JB: OK. So--

MP: And then Laurie--they wanted to have a full-time staff curator. Sharon had been that.

JB: That's right. Yes.

MP: Yeah.

JB: So that makes sense. I was thinking--I guess it was just a coincidence then that the Capital Campaign started around the same time. You know--the announcement of the Museum Tower and all that started the Capital Campaign.

MP: But I think they felt that in order to have you know the right [image for a museum]--

JB: They needed a curator.

MP: --yes.

JB: Yeah. Now you were very interested in--were you ever interested in actually being a curator?

MP: No.

JB: You weren't. OK.

MP: No, when I got the chance to be--I liked being responsible for overseeing [the] organization of exhibitions. But I was not terribly interested in curating per se. I mean I had done some small shows for the . . . smallest galleries for schools and for little theme shows from community organizations. But . . . [the objects were from] the [permanent] collection, because I knew the collection better than anybody else.

JB: So after a search, Laurie Beth Kalb was hired. She was a folklorist.

MP: Right. I can't remember where she came from. Oh, I know. It was the Millicent Rogers Museum [in Taos, New Mexico].

JB: That's right. Well she had worked several different places.

MP: But that's where she had been [just before coming to CAFAM].

JB: Yes. Yes. In fact Patrick may have gotten to know her then because he was on the board of the Millicent Rogers.

MP: Right. I can't remember exactly when that was, but it was . . . after his friend became the director.

JB: Oh. The fellow who had been at the Southwest Museum.

MP: Yeah. Patrick [Houlihan].

JB: We'll fill in all these names later. (Laughter) So Laurie Beth was a folklorist and I just have to interject here that I heard Edith say more than once that she preferred the anthropological point of view to the folklore point of view.

MP: Oh, that's right.

JB: And, of course, Laurie was hired after Edith retired, but I'm sure that Edith had input in her hiring.

MP: Oh, I'm sure she did.

JB: So here she was--a folklorist--and very active in the folklorist society, [the American Folklore Society], published, and working on her dissertation for her doctorate degree. And yet she was hired. And everyone was very excited, I think, to begin with. I had the impression that she was interested in the permanent collection and really tried to take it in a different direction. Do you--

MP: Well I think she would have liked to. The problem was that the--I think the Santos were her focus, because that's what her dissertation was about.

JB: Right. Right . . . [and so was] her [master's] thesis.

MP: I think that she very much wanted us to have a collection of those, [but] because they are so collectible, they're very expensive **[40:00]**. And the museum couldn't pull that off. But I believe that she did, in fact, put together such a collection for the Autry Museum.

JB: Oh. I didn't know that.

MP: I don't know why I'm saying that. You might want to double check that. But I believe that she wound up doing a very extensive exhibition for them. They purchased the material. And I could be inventing that. But I don't--

JB: No I think you're right. I remember vaguely something like that. But she did put on a pretty extensive exhibition [at CAFAM].

MP: Oh that was beautiful.

JB: I thought I'd--I did want to ask you about the permanent collection, but . . . [Laurie] worked for the museum for just a little more than two years. And as I counted it up, she curated or at least organized twelve exhibitions between November '87 and the end of '89. And you obviously had to work very closely with her, and some of those shows were a little bit difficult. I think the first one was Art Dolls. Do you want to talk about Art Dolls? [Art Dolls: 1900 – 1930; opened November 24, 1987.]

MP: Oh that was the first one that she . . . you know, for some reason I think she had something to do with the Mahabharata thing, because didn't LACMA [the L.A. County Museum of Art] lend us those?

JB: Probably. It was [Pratapaditya Pal] who was the actual curator of that show. [The paintings were borrowed from LACMA; the puppets were borrowed from the UCLA Museum of Cultural History.] But Laurie--

MP: But I think it came--I don't remember.

JB: September 9, 1987 . . . [was the opening of] Performing Pictures: [Images of the Mahabharata], which was the [title of the] Mahabharata show.

MP: Right and then [the opening of] Art Dolls was [November 24, 1987].

JB: Yeah--and I don't think Laurie actually started until October, until the month after the Mahabharata [opening].

MP: I do sort of vaguely remember Art Dolls, not great.

JB: Well I thought you would remember because the collector, [Stephanie Farago] was a little--

MP: Eccentric?

JB: --strange. (Laughs)

MP: She had a wonderful apartment that was filled with all these dolls.

JB: It was that whole house wasn't it?

MP: Yeah, it was a duplex over [in the Fairfax area]. You know, I didn't really--I'm not sure why we had that show. Probably it was a local collector. I can't believe Laurie was happy about that.

JB: No I don't think anybody on the staff was really that happy about it.

MP: People loved the dolls. They were right. Tons and tons of people came. I think I still have [the catalog].

JB: Well doll collecting--you know--Lorraine Trippett, [who was CAFAM's bookkeeper and then the Controller] on our staff--

MP: Oh yeah. No, she loved them--

JB: --was a collector.

MP: --and they were, you know, in terms of craftsmanship—yes, they were beautifully made. Their clothes were beautiful. I think in a way that may have sort of tipped Lorraine over to that thing that she got into.

JB: Well she started making--

MP: She started making dolls--

JB: --wonderful dolls--

MP: --yes she did, and she developed her own style. Maybe that had something to do with that doll maker who used to do things for the shop. Ruth something was her name. What was her name? What was her name? She made beautiful dolls.

JB: That were sold in the shop?

MP: Yes. And I think maybe she--they were all hand painted, but they were molded I think. . . But anyway. Now--the Art Dolls. Well--but it was popular. There was a rationale for the craftsmanship involved. [The title of the accompanying book was] *The Magic and Romance of Art Dolls.*

JB: Yes and it included . . . photographs by--I don't know if he was her husband but I think Bob Dennis--yes he was her partner.

MP: They [the displays] were all closed in little--

JB: Yeah little dioramas--

MP: --yes.

JB: --and that's how they were displayed, wasn't it?

MP: Yes. Well I'm sure that was dictated by the collector.

JB: I was thinking that that must have been a difficult show to be your first show. It must have been--

MP: Well I think it was--

JB: --hard for Laurie.

MP: --because it just went against--I'm sure [what she thought the museum should be doing]. I honestly don't remember. Plus we were all trying to get to know each other too.

JB: Yeah.

MP: I'm looking at [the list]. Then after that it was something called Painting on Clay: the Surface as a Canvas; [opened November 24, 1987], but I don't think that she curated that. That may have been a traveling exhibition.

JB: Well, I **[45:00]** remember her getting very involved in describing it. There wasn't a catalogue, but there was some written material. You know, a flyer that I think she wrote up. And I don't recall if there was a separate curator. Then [came] the New Spirit in British Craft and Design [opened February 18, 1988] that was definitely a traveling show--from the U.K. Craft Council. [They continue looking through the exhibitions list.]

MP: Modern Jewelry, New Design [opened March 29, 1988] was one of those Italian things, wasn't it? [Collector Cleto Munari commissioned pieces from post-modern architects.]

JB: I think so--yes.

MP: From a famous architect, [Enrico Sottsass], who--

JB: Oh yes.

MP: --yeah. It was all very functional and Italian . . . [in the] downstairs [gallery].

JB: And then the next one [American Visions: Arlette Gosieski's Appliqué Paintings; opened June 8, 1988] was another odd one.

MP: Oh, well. That was Carolyn Ahmanson's housekeeper.

JB: Oh . . . I never knew that.

MP: Yes.

JB: You mean Arlette Gosieski was her housekeeper?

MP: Well, I believe so. I have her quilts and I think--by the time we had the exhibition, I think--God this is such gossip, and I could be so wrong--I think they had some falling out. But I believe that at the time, we were thinking that we would get on Carolyn's good side. One of . . . [the quilts] was in her house and we had to go and pick it up, and it was quite a large piece . . . .

JB: Tell a little bit about what those were.

MP: Well they were sort of like picture quilts, is all I can--I mean they were appliquéd, but they were quilt-size, and I believe the woman had gotten involved--I don't think they were actually quilted. I mean, it's not that they weren't very competently done, but they were not--the imagery in them was sort of Grandma Moses meets Currier and Ives in appliqué. But--you know--they were skillfully done, and--you know--the composition was fine. And they were not amateurish. Although they were"competent amateurish."

JB: I think that . . . part of the problem was--you know—[that] they were in that category of things that are sort of quote folky unquote, but not by [a folk artist]--Arlette Gosieski was not a folk artist in any sense that we had ever talked about folk art.

MP: Yeah, I think they were Grandma Moses-y. That was the rationale was that she was sort of like Grandma [Moses].

JB: Sort of like the pictorial--self-taught pictorial people [or "memory painters"].

MP: --right.

JB: Well, and then [looking at the exhibition list], finally--and I'm sure that Laurie must have been working on this all along--

MP: She was very excited by this exhibition. She knew--you know--all the people who made them. She certainly knew where the historical ones were--

JB: You're talking about the Santos, Statues, and Sculpture exhibition. And that title was important. Tell about that and how that title came to be.

MP: I actually don't remember, but I just remember that they were all contemporary artists from [New] Mexico . . . all of whom she had known, because they were part of her research, and . . . her work at the Millicent Rogers [Museum] would have brought her into contact with some of those people. But I don't know how that [title] came to be.

JB: Well, I think she was trying to establish the distinction between the tradition of the Santos and--

MP: And the tourist things that are behind . . . the Santos.

JB: --and then sculpture, which fell into the fine art realm. And there were not very many of those in that show, but there were a few sort of semi-abstract.

MP: Because some of the people who make the Santos, I think, also do these other things . . . .

JB: But that was a lovely show and there was a beautiful catalog produced.

MP: Yeah. Yup. She was very excited about that. She had had articles published, but I don't believe she had had a book published.

JB: No. No.

MP: And Max [King] came through, as usual, you know. [The catalog was actually designed by Gerry Rosentswieg, a graphic designer who was also on the CAFAM board.]

JB: Yes. So maybe she thought getting that done was worth some of the trial she had . . . [gone] through before.

MP: Yeah.

JB: **[50:00]** How would you compare Laurie's style of working with—well, with Sharon I suppose, the previous curator?

MP: I recall Laurie as being much more rigid than Shan--less flexible about letting things happen rather than trying to control it. I think she always tried to second-guess everything. And it was very frustrating because at CAFAM, you know you have to be--

JB: You have to be flexible.

MP: You have to be prepared for the unexpected around every corner and you had to go with it. You know, sometimes it just wasn't going to work the way you thought it would. So, yeah I think she had some difficulties.

JB: And then, oh, well, Palms and Pomegranates: [Traditional Dress of Saudi Arabia; opened August 16, 1988] was an interesting show of--I think it all came through the Saudi Arabian . . . government.

MP: Yeah. Beautiful textiles.

JB: Gorgeous. We have some wonderful slides of that show. That show--Janet Marcus really put her heart and soul into that. I'm not sure [why]--I guess because she had money to spend. The Saudi's . . . gave quite a bit--

MP: Yes. That's right.

JB: --of money for education. So she was able to hire. . .

MP: I did. I'm starting to remember a little bit.

JB: The calligrapher.

MP: Yeah. That beautiful calligraphy. The Islamic calligrapher.

JB: Yeah. And a number of other [craftspeople]--

MP: Money is always nice.

JB: --yeah.

MP: Of course, then poor Laurie . . . I think that one [Guatemalan Masks: The Pieper Collection; opened October 25, 1988] was just the end for her.

JB: So talk a little bit about Jim Pieper, who we knew because--

MP: Oh yes. He was a trustee. So here we have a trustee's collection--

JB: Of Guatemalan masks.

MP: --of Guatemalan masks and that trustee is adamant that he doesn't need any curator telling him how to install or interpret or anything else. He had very--and you know there was some catalog--I can't--

JB: Oh yes--and Pieper paid for it.

MP: --yes he did--and he also wrote it.

JB: And I think [he], you know, had a design.

MP: Yeah . . . a very controlling person. He wanted absolute control, and he got it because he was paying for it. It was his collection. And it turned out--it was fortuitous that that collection was seen and documented--because [in November 1993] it burned. And he--

JB: That was in the Malibu fire. [The Malibu fire of 1993 was officially known as the “Old Topanga Fire,” because of its point of origin; it lasted three days and the response represented the largest mobilization of emergency resources within a one-two day period in the history of the United States to that point. It destroyed approximately $250 million in private property damage—268 homes, including the Pieper home.]

MP: --right. And he did save a few [masks]. I don't think he saved more than a handful of them, the most important ones, the oldest ones, the ones that he liked the best. That red shaman's mask that was [on the catalog’s cover], he saved that. So in that respect, because it was an amazing collection--and we did have some contact with the local Guatemalan community-- it turns out that there is a huge one in Los Angeles. They started coming here early on [especially after the Refugee Act of 1980] because of what was happening to them in the highlands of Guatemala. And to my mind that was one of the first times--they weren't involved when we were putting the exhibit together. They came later. I remember, we had a family day and there was a big festival. And they were all laughing at this one diorama that was downstairs. . . . My daughter [who came with me to see it] is fluent in Spanish. And I said, “Find out what they are talking about,” because they were fascinating to me. And it turned out we had made some dreadful *faux pas* [when we] had put the [diorama] group together. And they all thought it was hilarious.

JB: Were you able to fix it?

MP: No we didn't. Well it was so funny because it was like, “the monkey has no hat.” Well it turns out that the monkey is a character that does this dance. The monkey traditionally, at the end of the dance or during the dance, goes around to the crowd with his hat--and he gets--people offer--up money.

JB: I've seen that--in Mexico City, you know, the tourist version.

MP: Right. So they were laughing and laughing **[55:00]** because the monkey had no hat.

JB: Yeah . . . . He wouldn't serve his function without a hat.

MP: But the other thing--I mean it was nice too--I think that might have been one of the times that made me think: you know, we ought to really have people who are from these places consult on some of these things before we put it out there, because they also thought that it was highly amusing that these things [the masks] were in a museum. They did not think of them as art. They didn't think that--they didn't see any reason why they should be on display like that. They were useful artifacts in their culture, and were important to them, but not that way. And so they were genuinely nonplussed by the fact that those things were there.

But it was a fun day, and there was lots of food. And there was wonderful music--some local group. I think the museum might have gotten to know some Guatemalan performers that they didn't have on their roster as a result of that exhibition. But we also found out that the tradition continued in Los Angeles. And that was . . . another thing I thought: that we hadn't really looked at what was going on in our own place. It was always—oh--go to Guatemala, and collect these things. You don't find out [what] these displaced Guatemalans are doing in L.A. And it turns out they were doing these performances. And they did them somewhat in the same way in that somebody in the community was appointed every year to go to Guatemala to get costumes. And everybody chipped in for plane fare--

JB: Oh yes, I remember hearing that . . . . So we learned a great deal.

MP: We were not aware that they had this big festival over in the Pico Union neighborhood, which is where most of them were living. And they had a queen. And they had dance performances and days and days went by.

JB: Now did Jim Pieper know about that?

MP: No he did not. He did not know about that. That anthropologist, who came from UCLA--he had lived down there for quite a long time. And then he gave a lecture, and he was the person that provided us with the link to these people. And they were [all from] one particular language group. There's a number--

JB: They're Indian.

MP: Yeah, there's a number of indigenous languages, but for some reason there are a whole lot of one group here and I can't remember which one it is. Actually my daughter knows that. I think she was in school at that time. [Andrea Page says they are the Kanjobal from Huehuetanango.]

JB: They're maybe refugees.

MP: Well they were. They were coming in because they were being--like routinely--exterminated. They were being accused of being guerillas and . . . [the government soldiers] would just shoot them, because they were too much trouble. So they came to L.A. . . . The result is that there's a large, older community of Guatemalans.

JB: Pieper had a good deal of knowledge, I guess, about the masks in--

MP: Well I think he did [know] about the [earlier] history--

JB: --in Mexico. I remember hearing for the first time--I guess this shows my naiveté--but hearing that the true collector only wants masks that have been danced.

MP: Oh yeah, that was the stipulation of his. He was quite scornful of ones that were not used--hadn't been used.

JB: Well it was a beautiful show, and it was difficult for Laurie I think. I can't help but wonder what it would have been like if Edith had been the curator in charge or the museum person in charge when [that exhibition was being developed and mounted].

MP: Well, I don't know, I mean--Jim could bully Laurie, but I don't see him doing it to anybody else.

JB: No, I don't think so. [His temperament] would have been even more exposed, if that's possible. So let's see—[looking at the exhibition list] there were a couple of other shows that were at the original building--5814 Wilshire--before the gallery at the May Company was opened. Is there anything else that we want to say about Laurie? She did curate--organize and curate--and collect some of the things . . . that were in the show [Hands On!] that was the opening show at the May Company. So I guess she was probably working on that for a good while before the move. Do you remember anything about that, [or] about **[1:00:00]** the controversy of some of the things that she wanted for the collection? You know, she had to have them approved by the board acquisitions committee--

MP: Right--because by that time we actually had a policy.

JB: Yeah.

MP: You know I've blanked on that exhibition. I don't even remember--

JB: The Hands On! Exhibition?

MP: --yeah. I don't remember what the museum--

JB: Well I don't know that [at that time] you were that involved anymore than we all were.

MP: Well-- but I would have had to collect the pieces and arrange the shipping.

JB: Yeah, that's true. You were still registrar at that time.

MP: I was. And I do remember going to Liz Mandell's house--I think that may have been in conjunction with that show.

JB: What was that [the Mandell house] like?

MP: Oh it was wonderful.

JB: She collected contemporary craft--primarily glass.

MP: Well she had---a gallery [the Elizabeth Mandell Gallery, whose files were given to the CAFAM library after her death in 1997; they are now a separate collection at UCLA Special Collections].

JB: Yes.

MP: And so when the gallery closed, she and her husband did have their fabulous collection. And her house is very contemporary.

JB: Very. Alan, her husband, gave all her papers, all her files from the gallery to the [CAFAM] library and they are now at UCLA.

MP: Oh that's good.

JB: Yeah.

MP: That's a good thing.

JB: And it has all been organized--

MP: Yeah--because she really was the first--I think the Egg and the Eye was totally the first gallery that showed these people in L.A., but I think her gallery came along fairly early. Didn't do very well because people weren't buying that sort of [thing] in the early ’80s. [It opened on November 30, 1979 and closed on July 11, 1982.]

JB: No, it was only open for about two and a half years--

MP: And we were all excited----because you couldn't go--for me, because I was a textile person--you couldn't go see contemporary textiles anywhere. And she was showing them. People like Fran Jacobs.

JB: Oh, and she had all the top glass people

MP: I think we might have borrowed. . . yeah contemporary glass people [and ceramics]. Adrian Saxe. That was the first time I ever saw Adrian Saxe was there. I mean that was just an amazing, amazing place.

JB: Well . . . I was still thinking, you know, about Laurie and the hard time that she had getting some of the items approved.

MP: Like what?

JB: Well I remember in particular that the *corona*, the little--

MP: Oh yes.

JB: --was it made out of--

MP: It was bread dough.

JB: --bread dough.

MP: That was a beautiful thing. Did they sell that?

JB: Oh I think everything they could sell was sold [at the Butterfield's auction in 1998].

MP: The people who made that--now it's coming back to me--I went and picked that up at some dry cleaner's in the [San Fernando] Valley where that family worked. That was the most amazing piece I had ever seen.

JB: Oh, I thought it was beautiful, but--

MP: And the committee didn't like it?

JB: --well, you know, I should be careful what I say, because I don't remember the specific objections to specific items. But there were several items that the committee--and Pieper was on the committee, the Board Acquisitions Committee or whatever it was called--objected to on aesthetic grounds.

MP: I can't imagine why that was--

JB: No, now that I'm thinking about it I can't imagine it either--

MP: We did wind up getting it.

JB: Yes, and there were several other pieces which were in the Hands On! Show.

MP: There was a saddle-maker.

JB: A saddle-maker.

MP: We got something from him.

JB: And there was kind of a doll, a paper doll--

MP: Oh--the piñata.

JB: Oh--a piñata--of course.

MP: That was a piñata and it was a Gina Poblana, that's what it was. Yeah we got all of those things. Maybe they were judging that--because basically that was a birthday piñata--it just happened to be--but we already had piñatas in our collection. They were made by that Mexican family in Mexico City. And donkeys--come on. We had the piñata donkey thing or whatever it was.

JB: Yeah, there were some objections to it--to some of the pieces that she wanted. And I had the impression that she was advocating for them as a folklorist.

MP: She wanted them because they were local. These were all local artists. Now it's coming back to me **[1:05:00]**. She researched these people. And she interviewed them. She did look at it from the folklore point of view. But they were genuine folk art because they actually came out of a tradition that continued to that time. I think those bread dough wedding things, those were from Guadalajara, and I think they're still made in the same way.

JB: Yes. There was also a Hmong--

MP: Oh, a Story Quilt.

JB: --yes, which Beny and I ended up with [because it was sold in the 1998 Butterfield's auction of the CAFAM permanent collection that we attended].

MP: I had one by that same woman--

JB: Su Lee.

MP: I bought it. Yes. Ali [Marcie's grandson] has it in his room. You can have a look at if you want to because it's quite nice. It's a Noah's Ark kind of thing--but from that [Hmong] point of view. And I bought [mine] from the auction that the Pacific Asia Museum had. . . . it was donated by somebody and I paid $50 for it. So I was very happy to get that. No these were all local people. I do remember and she--I mean there was nothing wrong with those things.

JB: No.

MP: They were totally in the folk tradition.

JB: No--I agree. But it was a very difficult time for Laurie. I know she was very disheartened at one point because they were objecting so much to these things.

MP: Well, I think--but partly, you know, it was aesthetic and it had to do with that [connoisseur's] point of view and [had] nothing to do with what is or isn't really folk art. I don't think it had to do with that. These things were indisputably in the folk art tradition.

JB: Yes. Yes. But it had to do with what certain people on the board--or at least on the [board acquisitions] committee-- thought was folk art--or wanted to be able to choose from the range of things called folk art only those things that fit their--you know--description of things that should be collected [by a museum]. And that was quite different from [Laurie's point of view].

MP: And there is--you know--there was a point of view that used to make me mad. They were always talking about “rapidly vanishing traditions.”

JB: Oh yes.

MP: Well every single thing that she wanted to buy from that show--now that I'm remembering it--were traditions that hadn't gone anywhere. They [the makers] might have been displaced people here, but they had brought that stuff with them and they were making it--however they could make it--with whatever they could get their hands on here, and then in the case of that saddle-maker, who did that silver work, that's a long-standing tradition.

JB: Oh yes.

MP: And that's been done for quite a long time I think.

JB: Very much in evidence at the Rose Parade--

MP: Rose Bowl Parade.

JB: Well, you know, it occurred to me that if you think that a culture or a material culture is rapidly vanishing, especially if the people who made it are not visible [or if you don’t see them], then it's very easy to make up your own scenario of what culture is all about, and really dispense with all the unpleasant stories, and think only of how beautiful, in your opinion, the thing is hanging on your wall. And I think there were--a number of people [on the CAFAM board at that time, who thought like that].

MP: There was a lot of that attitude there amongst Edith and her friends, that if it wasn't old, it wasn't good. And I mean . . . [with] Guatemalan *huipils*: “oh, well, they don't have natural dyes in them.” Or—“oh, those people are using commercial embroidery thread in their weaving”—which, actually, I found out--in terms of Guatemalan *huipils*--is a tradition that goes back quite far, because for some reason that French embroidery company--I can't remember what their name is--now they still make like every conceivable--thousands of colors of the rainbow in silk, wool, and cotton embroidery thread. And they, early on, went into the Guatemalan Highlands, and were vigorously selling their very well-done and fast-colored embroidery threads to the Indians in the markets there and that's a very old tradition. A friend of mine went down there once and bought a book [about it]--what was the name of that company? They're just so famous. They've been in business since the 1700's.

JB: A French company?

MP: Yeah, and, anyway, he bought these books in--you know--a junk shop or market--you know--a flea market **[1:10:00]** or something down there. And they were embroidery pattern books from the 1900’s from this company. Then they had gone down there and that’s the reason why *huipils*--and I’m sure that Caroline what’s-her-name, the *huipil* person from UCLA, remember her?

JB: The *huipil* person?

MP: Oh God, she was a cultural expert.

JB: At the Fowler?

MP: Yeah.

JB: Pat Altman? No.

MP: No she's not the one that's the big *huipil* expert. It's Caroline somebody. Anyway I'm sure she knows--

JB: Oh, I know who you're talking about. [Caroline West] Yes--

MP: I'm sure she knows about this.

JB: --yes.

MP: Those books, which came from Europe--

JB: Yes.

MP: --influenced local *huipil* designs because the Indians were copying them and using . . . [this company's] embroidery thread. But that's the kind of thing that the museum never really looked at. They never really looked at outside influences--

JB: Well--

MP: --and they're there. They're always there.

JB: I think that [during] this period--there were a lot of things happening all at the same time both inside the museum and outside the museum. A kind of ferment was happening in the late '80s which was leading all of us--certainly anybody that was working in museums at that time—[we] were beginning to look at our objects in a very different way. And cultural context--which was something that Edith had talked about for a long time--was suddenly beginning to be understood. And these thoughts that you mentioned about needing to have [input from the] people from the community [that were the subject of an exhibition] and needing to have people that represented the community today involved in our shows, this was part of what we all began to talk about. Now I'm going to pause so we can take a little bit of a break. **[Recorder paused.]** OK.

We're back. I just wanted to say one more thing about Hands On! And that was the breadth of material that was shown. The idea was--well I guess quite a lot of it was from the permanent collection.

MP: Some was. Yeah.

JB: Yeah--there were some major things that were borrowed, but it was fine craft on the one hand, crafted as fine art. And on the other hand--very traditional folk art. And it included design and. . .

MP: I think some of those lamps, because of the--

JB: Yes.

MP: Sidecar [exhibition]. [Sidecar: The Process of Design in Contemporary Lighting; opened February 25, 1986.]

JB: The Rezek--

MP: --Rezek--

JB: --lamp.

MP: Yeah, [Ron Rezek] had donated some to the museum.

JB: And the pieces that Laurie had acquired. There were two rocking chairs, maybe there were more, but two . . . [is what] I remember. One, of course, the Sam Maloof rocker that's so famous. And the other was that funny rocking chair that was lent to us by Michael Owen Jones.

MP: Oh yes. I remember that. That really odd thing.

JB: Yes. Long ago, when he [Jones] was a young teacher, he wrote this book called *The Handmade Object and its Maker*. And it was about the guy [referred to in the book simply as "Charley"]--

MP: --who made that chair.

JB: --who made that chair.

MP: Yeah. I read the book.

JB: Yeah. So anyway, I just wanted to mention that was, I think, the first time that we had had examples from the full range of--

MP: Of what the museum was supposed to be about.

JB: --currently was about. OK.

Now in December of 1987 we were still in our places [at] the original building at 5814 Wilshire. And, of course, we [also] had the little cottage around the corner, [at 731 S. Curson, which] was where Max King, the graphic designer was. And the . . . library . . . was there. And various other people had offices there from time to time, including you I believe.

MP: Yeah, I did.

JB: And Mort Winston had been the chairman of the board for eleven years at that point. But he was having some problems with his little oil company, Tosco, [The] Oil [Shale] Company. They

weren't **[1:15:00]**--it had to do with not being able to get oil out of the shale anymore or something like that.

MP: Right.

JB: Anyway, he had been a very devoted and enthusiastic board chairman. But he decided he had to step down. And Frank Wyle became chair at that point. And one of the things that he announced right away was that he and Wayne Ratkovich, a developer who had become well-known for the renovations that he had done of historical buildings [in L.A.]--

MP: Right, we had done something with him with the opening of the Wiltern Theatre, didn't we?

JB: That's right. . . . The Wiltern was one of his projects. [Frank Wyle announced] that he and Wayne Ratkovich were putting together a proposal for a Museum Tower that was going to be a high rise--

MP: With the museum below.

JB: Yes, it was really ahead of its time, the concept, because it was a concept of mixed use.

MP: Right, condominiums. It was supposed to have condominiums [and] offices.

JB: The Tower was to be condos with the museum on at least the second and third floor and retail on the first--

MP: On the first, right.

JB: --floor. So that began. Starting in late '87, early '88 a whole new chapter [began] in the museum's history, . . . a lot of what we were involved with. Both of us were on the Space Planning Committee, which also involved . . . Jim Pieper, [who we've already talked about.] So I'd like you to talk about--I know you were very busy with other things as well--but we were both--we were involved [with the space planning] because we had both heard horror stories about what happened when staff were not involved.

MP: [When staff] were not included in the design of new spaces--

JB: Exactly.

MP: --for museums. Yes.

JB: So there was this committee that we managed [to get on]--it was a board committee, I believe, but there . . . [were staff too], at least you and I were on it. There may have been some other staff on it as well.

MP: And--I think so. I think whoever was curator was on it.

JB: You think—well, it would have been Laurie.

MP: Yeah I would think so.

JB: Laurie, and of course Patrick and Edith [and Lorraine Trippett, as Controller, as well].

MP: Right.

JB: So just talk about that period of time. Do you remember when that announcement was made and what--?

MP: I remember talking about it and looking at the plans, the preliminary plans. And wasn't there a cake or something?

JB: Well, the public announcement happened in May--

MP: I think there was a cake model of this proposed building.

JB: --yes--it was really fun. That didn't actually happen till a year--year and a half later--May of '89. But, yeah, there's some wonderful pictures of Mayor Bradley--Tom Bradley was still the mayor at that time. And, of course, he came to all such events. And there were several other, you know, public figures there. But that was kind of the culmination [of the planning]. [The real work] . . . was behind the scenes, nobody knew about it outside of the staff. But we had been very busy for at least a year, a year and a half, before that, making our plans, trying to make our voices heard with various people--

MP: You know I don't have a lot of recollection. I mean, I know that it was talked about, and I'm sure that I was passionate about--

JB: You were.

MP: --art delivery and storage. And I'm sure that's why I bothered is because--I mean, the way artwork got into that museum was horrible. But I don't remember any particulars. I mean, it seemed like it--it seemed very farfetched, that's what I'm remembering. But at the same time, doable. It was only money. And they were all so enthusiastic. I don't know--it was such a grand scheme. But I think it did seem doable for a while. I mean, the money thing. That was the beginning of an economic downturn as I recall. . . . A lot of arts organizations were hit pretty hard. By '89 I think we were all **[1:20:00]** just . . . .

JB: Yes, I came across a flyer [in the CAFAM archives] that we got from--I think it was from the California Arts Council, one of the big government grant- making agencies that actually said, "We are in the biggest economic downturn since the Great Depression." Does that sound familiar?

MP: Actually, I don't think the California Arts Council ever came back from that, because prior to that--

JB: I think you're right. [The California Arts Council is—as of this writing in 2013—still an active grant-making organization.]

MP: --you could get some pretty decent grants from them. And they never had more than a pitiful amount of money to give away since then. And I think because it was an economic downturn--the same thing that is happening now [in 2009]--happened then. Wasn't Citibank a big supporter of the museum at that point? I remember going downtown and doing something at their gallery. They used to have a gallery when they had that big building. I'm not sure they even have that building anymore.

JB: I'm not sure about Citibank.

MP: I think it was Citibank. Citibank was a big contributor to the museum--oh no, it was Arco.

JB: Arco. Yes. Yes.

MP: And they did. They had a gallery, a collection.

JB: They had a gallery and Patrick was friends with that director.

MP: Right, and we lost funding from them. We lost California Arts Council money. I mean Tosco.

JB: But at the time when Frank first made the internal announcement to the board and the staff about this project, it seemed as if the finances were--as you said--doable, partly because—supposedly--a lot of the upfront money was supposed to have been covered by Ratkovich.

MP: Right.

JB: I don't think that turned out to have worked out--

MP: No, he--by this time had moved on--I'm remembering now--he had moved onto that other big project. I can't remember what that's called--it's over on Sixth Street.

JB: Oh yes the--

MP: It was a nice renovation job that they did there.

JB: --yes--they tried to get us to go in there on a temporary basis instead of going to the May Company, but--

MP: The space wasn't very good, though, for us.

JB: No.

MP: But I think he couldn't rent that place for a long, long time--and I think he lost money. It was just--the economic downturn . . . affected him like it affected everybody else.

JB: Yes, recently, because of what is going on now in the economy I've been really aware [of the other recessions we went through] in reading through the archives. It's amazing to me--

MP: The similarities.

JB: --the similarities--that happened a couple of times in the history of the museum. And I think, as staff members, we were not necessarily personally affected, you know, in our personal finances so much. But . . . we would certainly be aware of the museum going through a hardship period. But really--to me it was only in retrospect that I realized that it was those recessions that slowed us down.

MP: No, they did, and I know the museum . . . had a lot going for it but, as soon as the private donations and public ones too [began drying up]--although I think most of our money came from private places--not the government.

JB: Well, I don't know about most of it. You know working on this [CAFAM] archive could be a lifetime's work and I'm going to wind it up fairly soon. But I am working right now [in the CAFAM archive] at UCLA on the CAFAM development files. And it's six cartons of files on all of the grants that we ever applied for as well as the ones that we got. And it's hundreds, hundreds of different private and public agencies that--not that we got all of them--but it was a constant effort to get money. And we got a lot. And I don't know--it would be interesting to see which, [public or private that] we got the most from. But we got some major grants--challenge grants from the NEA--over $100,000, both when we first started out, and then later during this time period.

Anyway, one of the things that the Space Planning Committee did early on [during this period] was to hire a consultant to work on the building program. That [building program] was the narrative **[1:25:00]**--well there were some charts too--but primarily it was a narrative to describe each space that we needed, the actual physical needs of the various different departments.

MP: Who was that person?

JB: Her name was Marcy Goodwin--

MP: Oh yes. OK.

JB: --the person that was hired.

MP: Because I knew--I blanked totally on who it was.

JB: But you were involved in all of the--

MP: Oh yeah, no, I was. I remember meetings with her.

JB: Yeah and meetings with the other candidates [for the position of building program consultant]. There were three very good candidates it came down to, and there was . . . [a] big meeting in some Century City offices . . . for them to make their presentations. It was really--I thought--an interesting process. So Marcy Goodwin had done the same thing [served as building program consultant] for MOCA, [the] Museum of Contemporary Art. And Frank liked her a lot and so she was hired. And she worked for at least six months with each of us.

MP: And she produced this huge thing. It was a big tome, a giant notebook or something. I sort of vaguely remember that.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. It was revised a few times, even before the project as a whole was scuttled. But I think it basically included, at least our minimal needs for our spaces. Now how did you feel about what, you know--

MP: Well, I mean, as far as the process, it seemed like the right way to go. I don't remember that I was seriously impressed by her. But I can't--now I remember her. I can see her face. I remember talking to her. And I remember the big giant thing that she produced. I'm not sure--I don't remember feeling terribly enthusiastic about it.

JB: Yeah. Well I remember being disappointed. I wasn't absolutely that enthusiastic about her to begin with. There was one of the other candidates that I liked better. But I thought--you know--she had the experience and--

MP: Yeah, she did have the experience.

JB: --and she was very articulate. But I don't know that she--I think she was really influenced by who she saw as having the power, which of course was Frank--

MP: Right, no, I agree with you.

JB: --and Patrick. And so, things got edited out. You know, I think we had plenty of input at the beginning, but I think the final thing--although it did include our minimal needs--there were things that were not included that—well, of course, toward the end of the process, it became clear that the plans had to be downsized somewhat from what we had originally [envisioned]--

MP: And so, was that document the basis for what Hodgetts + Fung eventually did? [The architectural firm of Hodgetts + Fung, who had been among the firms considered for the design of the museum planned for the Museum Tower project was chosen as the designer of the CAFAM renovation and merger of 5800 and 5814 Wilshire Blvd.]

JB: Well, sort of. I mean—yes, in the sense that those were our--you know--our dream ideas, even though it was less than maybe what we would ideally like. It was still a lot more than we were going to get in what was eventually built. But the basic needs were [stated] there, so Hodgetts and Fung--they were given that. They looked at that. But, of course, that was a whole different situation. Now, in June of '89, in the middle of the space planning for the Museum Tower and the search for an interim space, it had already been decided that—because, of course, the whole basis of this plan for the Museum Tower was that they were acquiring the air rights--the Ratkovich Company was acquiring the air rights--to our building [at 5814 Wilshire], which was . . . just in from the corner of Curson and Wilshire. And--I'm getting out of order a . . . bit but at some point--

MP: But it would have had to include that corner [building at 5800 Wilshire], right?

JB: Yes, well, that was what I was about to say. While we were in the May Company was when **[1:30:00]** the bottom kind of fell out [of the economy]. The financing, [which had been sought around the world] didn't materialize for the Museum Tower. But at the same time, there were negotiations going on for this corner building, because that would have to have been part [of] . . . the footprint for the Museum Tower. And the assumption by everyone--I think both on the board and on the staff, was--and certainly Frank and Edith both said this many times--that that building was going to be purchased--the building on the corner [at 5800 Wilshire]. As it turned out, it was leased [by CAFAM], to begin with, from someone else who--depending on who you talk to, there are different versions of just how this happened--but there was a couple who purchased that building kind of out from under the CAFAM people.

MP: But I think it was because the CAFAM people were dragging their feet on buying it and at that time it was a steal as I recall. It was run-down--

JB: It depends on--

MP: --it wasn't rented. It was--

JB: --what time you're talking about. There was a time back in 1976, I have a letter in the archive that Edith wrote to all the members saying the building . . . [was] available for $360,000.

MP: I knew that they had failed to buy it at some point when it was very low, because all the real estate in that area was deteriorating in value . . . .

JB: She wanted it, and that's when it should have been purchased.

MP: Oh yeah. Well I remember that guy who bought it and he just decided that we had a very rich, important person on our board who would give him anything he wanted. I did not have--I can't remember his name--but I can see his face.

JB: Well it's on the tip of my tongue.

MP: We all had to be kind of nice to him whenever--he'd come to a lot of stuff at the museum. I remember we had to be pleasant to him . . . .

JB: She was Italian. I don't remember if he was, but she was Italian--

MP: I don't think so.

JB: Longo, Elena Longo, I think her name was.

MP: Oh, the Longos. Yeah.

JB: She was related to the Toyota people down in Long Beach or wherever that was.

MP: Whatever. At any rate, I don't know if he's the worst thing that ever happened to the museum. But I never understood the deal that was made with him in the first place. I mean we were supposed to lease it at some exorbitant amount of money--

JB: Oh it was horrible.

MP: I think it was $17,000 a month.

JB: Yes. A month! Needless to say we fell behind in the payments as soon as--

MP: In the rent, yes. But there wasn't even an option to buy it at an agreed-upon price.

JB: Well, I remember being told that there was an option to buy in the deal. But the price--as far as I can tell--was never specified.

MP: No, it wasn't. And the rent should have gone towards it . . . .

JB: Yes, that was the other thing that was my assumption, was that the rent [would apply to the price of the building].

MP: That wasn't the agreement though, I remember. The guy drove a really hard bargain [on the rental price] and for some reason the board accepted it.

JB: Yes, it was very, very peculiar because then what happened was that--of course--we had to move out of the May Company.

MP: Right.

JB: I'm skipping over some things that hopefully we're going to go on and talk about in another session. But when we had to move out of the May Company, we had to go into another space. And, you know, the museum itself [i.e., the original building at 5814 Wilshire] was not ready to--

MP: Oh that's right--

JB: --the renovations [and earthquake retrofitting] had not [yet been done].

MP: That's why we had to go . . . into that [5800 Wilshire] space. I remember they looked at some other spaces there.

JB: Well, we looked at some other spaces before we moved to the May Company. But then the May Company offered us this free space. It was really a proverbial "offer they couldn't refuse."

MP: And it wasn't that bad. I mean--I didn't think it was bad. We had enough room for our offices. You had the library. The gallery was functional. The collection was even stored there.

JB: I didn't think it was bad at all, but a lot of the board did.

MP: Oh they hated it. They just hated it. I thought they **[1:35:00]** were really stupid, because they had an opportunity to really give the museum . . . much more presence to a wider group of people and they just wanted to keep it the same. And they wanted to keep it to themselves. So they did.

JB: Well, we will talk about that next time. There's just one more thing that I'd like to talk about before we stop today and that's the restaurant. I know that we've talked about it a little bit already, but at the end of the time at 5814 Wilshire, which was, I believe, the end of July of 1989, the museum had to move out of that building--not because--as it turned out--not because . . . the building was being demolished for the Museum Tower, but suddenly--

MP: Seismic.

JB: The City of L.A. stepped in and apparently had been warning the museum--

MP: Yes they had--

JB: --that some [seismic] work had to be done.

MP: . . . . I think that was why they started that whole Tower thing because they knew that either it had to be torn down or it had to be fixed. They [the city was] . . . not going to give us stays of execution indefinitely. They had already said that. I think that was clear to all of us--

JB: At any rate--

MP: --that something had to happen.

JB: --they did give us a date when we had to get out and that was--I'll have to fill this in but it was in the middle of the year in 1989. [It was June 30, 1989.] And at that point--I know I had not really thought about this [before it happened], and I wanted to ask you if you had thought about--how it would be to exist as the Craft and Folk Art Museum without the Egg and the Eye Restaurant--before it was actually closed. Because it had to close at that point forever.

MP: Yes.

JB: Although we did visualize having a restaurant in or nearby to the new museum, but while the earthquake work was being done--and we knew that that [plus the merger of 5800 and 5814 Wilshire] was going to be at least a couple of years if not more--you know the staff of the restaurant couldn't just take a furlough and then come back later.

MP: I don't think the restaurant was doing very well at that point. I don't think Ian [Barrington, the manager, part owner, and chef] was making a lot of money. They were only open for lunch and their patronage had dwindled. I'm not sure why, because the food was still very good. But they--I don't think he was very happy with his situation. I don't think he was making money. So it probably would've changed hands anyway. But, you know, that [the closing of the museum] just

precipitated closing it. I don't know what he did after that, but he certainly didn't open another restaurant.

JB: No. Well he became sick--

MP: And then he got sick. Yeah.

JB: --yeah. Can you just tell us a little bit [about that]? You got to know Ian fairly well, I think.

MP: Yeah. We were really good friends.

JB: Tell [us] about Ian and his background.

MP: Well it was in linguistics I think.

JB: I think you're right.

MP: I think he had a Ph.D.--

JB: I think he did.

MP: --from USC, I believe. And it was in linguistics. He was a really bright guy. I don't remember how he said he had gotten into the restaurant business, or what he had done before coming to The Egg and the Eye. But maybe it was that he just needed a job. And you know, for a lot of people, working in restaurants while you're a student, or doing your thesis, or whatever is just a way to get by.

JB: And he was a waiter [at The Egg and The Eye] for quite a few years--

MP: That's right.

JB: --before he took over the management.

MP: Right--and he did introduce some new ideas to the menu. I think he was really trying to sort of update it and stay current. People started being leery of eggs [and the restaurant specialized in omelettes.

JB: Oh yes. Yes.

MP: Right. But he did have the advantage of having **[1:40:00]** a full bar, but something happened to that license at some point. And then it became wine--

JB: Yes, well, it was when Ian . . . had a partner--

MP: Oh, that's right.

JB: --a business partner . . . [and they] formed a company to take over the management and whenever that happens, I guess, the [liquor] licenses get thrown back into a pile and there's a process that you have to go through.

MP: It's very expensive . . . to get a full [liquor license].

JB: And just, you know, it takes time, I think.

MP: Well, at any rate, I do remember that at the end there, he was not happy with how the restaurant was doing. The restaurant--I just think it was past its prime. That's all. It was never going to be what [it had been]. Like everything else, it needed a new look . . . . If people go someplace else [outside of the museum] to eat they usually don't come back. You want them to stay there, and look some more and shop some more. And I'm sure the museum would have done something. They talked about all kinds of [food] things when the building reopened.

JB: Oh yes. And they're still talking about it--

MP: Yeah, but nothing has ever materialized, because the space isn't there [since the renovation].

JB: Yeah.

MP: I suppose it could be, if they totally expanded into the courtyard, but I don't know. But, yeah, the museum would definitely need some kind of food service for [it to return to it's former prominence].

JB: But what about Ian? What made his [restaurant] management so special?

MP: Well, as I said, he was interested in sort of staying current with restaurant trends, while maintaining the old Egg and the Eye favorites. And he tried different things and he would have--I remember he went to Italy and took a cooking class with Marcella Hazen in Venice . . . . Something I had always wanted to do but I had never had the money and I told him about. And he was just intrigued with the idea. And so he actually got the information and off he went. In those days the Cipriani Hotel was closed in the wintertime and they let her use it for her cooking classes, so the people who came stayed in the hotel. And then they cooked in the hotel kitchens just with her. And that must have been quite an experience.

He came back from Italy all fired up with ideas for introducing a different kind of Italian element up there. And I remember polenta. I think I ate polenta the first time cooked by Ian. And both of us were interested--I mean I was very interested in cooking too. So we used to sit and drink wine and talk about food. And, you know, we just became friends, so I would see him outside of that context as well. I think he could have done a better job in a different place. I don't think that was the best place for him either.

JB: Well, John told me that he had difficulty trying to please--again--a board committee that wanted changes in the restaurant menu but were not real clear about just what they wanted, and they would come and he'd have to have tastings for them. And it was very stressful I guess.

MP: Well I can say that cooking in a restaurant--I did manage and cook in one for eight months and people are always saying you should--

JB: Where was that?

MP: In New England [at the Stage Coach Tavern in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1972-1973]. I'd always wanted to cook publicly. And I have done it and you could not pay me enough money to do it again. It is a horrendous amount of work and responsibility. And it wasn't my restaurant. I wasn't losing any money. So [I think it would be impossible to own and run a restaurant.]

JB: Yeah. That's what I've heard. Well so . . . . I know I never had really thought about what it would be like to work at the museum without the restaurant, but in retrospect, we really missed it. And I'm sure--as you said--it would've changed.

MP: Yeah it would have had to. I mean The Egg and The **[1:45:00]** Eye [Gallery] was a great idea when it started [in 1965]. And it continued to be a great idea for quite a long time actually.

JB: Yeah, and people have such--

MP: Fond memories.

JB: --nostalgic memories of it.

MP: Yes they do. But would you eat an omelette that big today? (Laughter)

JB: No, of course not.

MP: With cream and cheese? Ham and all of those things?

JB: But those were very tasty.

MP: Yes they were. OK.

JB: So Ian did give us--I don't think he *gave* it to us--the museum must have paid for it--but we did have a final lunch there with all of the staff. But then--I don't know if it was a year later, it wasn't too much later--I remember hearing that Ian was sick. Did you continue to be in touch with him?

MP: Yeah. He moved down near Palm Springs. And as he got sicker, he eliminated people from his life. The last time I saw him I had gone down there--my mother-in-law was there, retired and living down there. And . . . I would go visit her and visit him too. But I think I specifically--I think he called me, and he said, "If you want to see me, you better come now." And I did go, and we had lunch together and it was really, really nice. And I gave him a hug and that was the last time I saw him. I think John Browse continued to see him right up until the end, but I think--you know--he got those lesions on his brain, and I think it was pretty sad. Yeah he was a brilliant man. Brilliant, interesting man.

JB: He certainly was. Was there a memorial service, do you remember?

MP: Oh yes. Oh, now I remember. It was in some park and all of us came, just--

JB: Could it have been in Griffith Park because that's where--

MP: Maybe.

JB: --he used to have those picnics.

MP: Yeah, he used to have those. The Egg and The Eye picnics [with the staff of the restaurant and the museum staff]. And then he had had one once, I remember, out at this place he inherited from his uncle that was up near Idyllwild someplace, where they had been planting daffodils forever. And they had like acres of them all in bloom at the same time. But he was still feeling good at that point. You know, maybe it was [with] his friend Giuseppe. Do you remember Giuseppe? Giuseppe worked in the restaurant.

JB: I don't specifically.

MP: Anyway, Giuseppe was the person that stayed with him until he died. And Giuseppe did have this memorial, and we all came and brought food. It might have been in Griffith Park.

JB: You know, we have very little in the archives about the restaurant. There is some material, but there's only one menu from later, not from the early period. And I've often wondered what happened to all of those files from the restaurant.

MP: Well, I don't know. They probably were in his office. Who knows? Nobody would save stuff like that in those days. Somewhere there's a picture of what was her name? Rodessa?

JB: Oh yes. [The original chef], Rodessa [Moore], was famous. I never met her.

MP: Me either.

JB: Oh there's some wonderful pictures of Rodessa. She was the sort of founding manager of the restaurant when it was part of The Egg and the Eye Gallery. And she created the basic omelette recipe that was even published and passed out. There's a wonderful picture of her and—again--Tom Bradley (laughs) when he was just a councilman, before he was mayor, and some other dignitaries. You know, she got to be quite famous in The Egg and The Eye Gallery. [When she retired, Tom Bradley gave her an honorary plaque from the City of L.A.]

MP: Did she and Edith have some falling out?

JB: Gee, I have no idea. I've never heard that.

MP: No, I don't know why I say that.

JB: I don't know. I think she got to have such a reputation that she may have gone off to start her own business of some kind, but I don't know. Well, I wish we could go longer today--

MP: No-- it's OK.

JB: --but both of us have other lives.

MP: Yeah, swimming [with grandson Ali] is today.

JB: But we will return one more time. So thank you . . . .

MP: OK.

JB: All right. Thanks Marcie. **[1:50:00]**

[End of Session 3: 1:50:00]

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF MARCIA JOAN PAGE

Session 4 (2:25:02), Friday, June 5, 2009. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti

JB: . . . Today is Friday, June the 5th, 2009, and I'm once again with Marcie Page in her home in Los Angeles [in the Mt. Washington neighborhood in Highland Park], talking about the Craft and Folk Art Museum, and my name is Joan Benedetti. So, Marcie, when 5814 Wilshire had to be vacated . . . ([that was] the original site of the museum [at] the end of June of 1989). . . . I didn't remember this at first, but in looking it up, I realized we didn't immediately move to the May Company. We had to move to other temporary quarters, [and] we happened to have—the museum owned a duplex on [South] Curson [Avenue], right [around the corner], next to the little cottage [where the library was], and that's where everybody moved. Well, I was going to ask you, do you remember if you moved to the Duplex, or—I know you had a place in the cottage, for a while.

MP: I did, and I think that's where I was [at that time]. I never had an office in the Duplex. The collection was stored on the second floor [of the Duplex], but at some point—and I don't remember if that was then . . . I don't think so, because I think the whole staff would have had to occupy that building.

JB: I thought the offices were mostly on the second floor, and I remember that the objects were on the first floor later, but you're saying they were on the second floor to begin with?

MP: I think, at one point, they were—well, maybe not--I sort of lost track of what was going on, because I wasn't really taking care of the collection at that point [because Carol Fulton had most of the responsibility as she became the assistant registrar], even though I certainly was aware of it . . . but, I don't think there was enough room, just on the first floor, for the whole thing.

JB: Well, yeah—I mean, I don't remember exactly how big it was, but I'd be surprised at that.

MP: I think it stayed at Cooke's [Crating] until we...until the May Company gave us space, and we were trying to save money, so then it all got moved to there.

JB: Yeah—staying at Cooke's would have made sense for that time--

MP: Because I don't think that the collection went to the Duplex until after we came back, because [now I remember], that's where it was stored when we came back from the May Company.

JB: Yes--that I remember. Now, I guess it's possible—because [in the fall of 1989] the May Company apparently gave us permission to move into [what became] the gallery, [which was created out of the May Company's former furniture department on their fourth floor]. That's what happened during that first year, when we were still on Curson--the planning, the design, the building-out of

the gallery on the fourth floor of the May Company happened, and the first show that was there—Hands On!, which was curated by Laurie Kalb--all of that happened. It opened in November of '89, and I thought, as I was reading that , . . Well, maybe the objects [were moved at the same time]—because . . . the objects were moved into the back of the gallery--

MP: Right, they did wind up along there.

JB: So, maybe that happened early—maybe Carol moved over there...but she wasn't really the registrar [at that time] That didn't happen until February of '90 . . . . [Carol was Assistant Registrar at that time.] . . . **. [Phone rings]** Oh, I better pause.

MP: OK. **[Recorder paused]**

JB: Well, what I was going to ask you was whether or not you were involved in the designing or planning of that gallery in the May Company.

MP: I'm sure that we had—that there was a committee, and I would have been somewhat concerned with it. I do remember meeting with the architect that designed it, and--I can't remember his name—you probably know who it was.

JB: Well, I don't have...now, I'm not sure. **[5:00]** Joe Terrell was the one who designed the gallery space itself—are you [maybe] speaking of the entryway?

MP: No--the entryway.

JB: Well, the entryway was designed by the firm of Charles Moore--and Patrick--

MP: He didn't deal with him [Moore] though.

JB: No, there was another person, and I'm sure his name is in the file somewhere, but I don't have it right now. But that was the entryway--so the gallery itself--

MP: Well, it was pretty basic, because it had to be reconfigured all the time, with some kind of walls that move, I remember—I don't know exactly.

JB: Well, tell us . . . about it—what it was, and why it was, you know, really such a good choice for a gallery.

MP: Well, it—of course it was in the middle of the department store--and I'm recalling that we were up there with housewares—I think there were linens and television sets and things on one side, and china, and silverware, and towels and so on, on the other side of the entry--so I guess they wanted the entryway to really kind of distinguish itself, which, in my opinion, it certainly did! I was not fond of it, so—and it was horrible--if you recall those little kiosk post things they had—they were horrible, horrible, horrible to install [objects] in, because you couldn't get into them very handily, and the artwork was just perilous.

JB: I had forgotten about that. There were little niches--

MP: Niches, yes, and they were all going to showcase craft, folk art, or design objects relative to what was in the gallery, and, it would look pretty, especially when it was all lit up, but it was not very good to work with. And then there was some kind of gate . . . that locked across the front [of the gallery], but I think you could see in—you just couldn't get in [when the museum was closed].

JB: Oh, yes—yes, I think it either was a sliding gate or--

MP: Yeah, something like that. So, I mean, it did stand out, and people who would just come up for the white sale would just wander in, and of course it was free—that was one of the conditions of our having the space, is that we couldn't charge people to come in [whereas, we had been able to charge a small admission fee at our previous gallery at 5814 Wilshire].

And, I think we did get many people there who would not have come to the [original] museum—they just happened on it accidentally. And, I don't believe that there was ever any effort made to cultivate those people, or keep track of them—which I always thought was a big mistake, because I think that we could have brought a different audience back to the museum with us, when we reopened [in 1995]. But they—I mean--they were sort of ordinary shopping, middle-class people, and the kids—I remember we had a bunch of [classes] that [came into] the eyeglass exhibition [What a Sight! Spectacular Spectacles; opened May 17, 1991], because there was a great interactive [installation]--

JB: Oh, yes. That was fun.

MP: --that was connected with that, and once kids found out about that, they made their parents bring them back. I used to see the same kids in there, and it's because they would nag their Moms to take 'em . . . .

JB: Well, that's really interesting. So it wasn't just school visits.

MP: No, not at all. It wasn't. And that made me think, too, that having something in the space for people to do, especially families, was probably a good idea, and, of course, lots and lots of museums are doing that now. They weren't so much back then.

JB: Well, there were a lot of changes going on in the museum world at that particular time. I guess I'd like to—to talk a little bit more about the entryway, or just to ask you, do you know how it came about that Charles Moore's firm (which was Urban Innovations Group) came to do that? Was this one of Patrick's friends, or--

MP: . . . I would assume so, because he had those connections, but Charles Moore, Charles Moore . . . . Edith had some kind of connections.

JB: You know, I just remembered that he was involved with the Vernacular Architecture show, in that he was one of the editors of the book **[10:00]**, and I think may have given a lecture. So there was that connection.

MP: No, I think there was something more personal. I'm not sure why I say that, though. So—and Patrick doesn't remember? You haven't asked him?

JB: I don't think I did ask him that. I should have.

MP: Yeah—he should [know].

JB: Yeah, he should, he should.

MP: I'm sure we all knew at the time, but I eliminated that bit of trivia (laughter)--

JB: Yeah, I remember being very shocked when I found out how much it was going to cost us.

MP: I think we were all very shocked, because we [supposedly] didn't have any money.

JB: No. Even if we had had some money, it would have been shocking. I think it was something like $40,000, just for [the entryway]—and, we had to do all of the painting ourselves. I think the . . . [architect] from the Urban Innovations Group came to put it together, to help put it together, but there must have been six or seven of us [staff members], in the day or two before the show opened—we were all painting.

MP: Yeah, that was typical. Put the money into [the] façade, by all means . . . and then the staff has to work overtime. (Laughter)

JB: Yeah—it was kind of peculiar. You want to talk a little bit more about what it looked like?

MP: Well, it was sort of—it's hard to describe. I just remember it as pretty ornate, and a lot of different components, and many colors—there were lots of colors. I don't know. It had a sort of a grandiose movie theater aspect to me--you know--something like those grand movie palaces that would have all of the decorations—it just, I didn't like it. I thought it was very overdone, and not a good background for the artwork that was in the kiosks.

JB: It sort of overshadowed what was in the kiosks--

MP: Yeah.

JB: --but it did attract attention.

MP: Yes, when you got to the top of the escalator, you stepped off the elevators, there it was, ta-da! I mean, all it lacked was the blinking marquée.

JB: Now, your new position, as Director of Team Exhibition Development, and Carol--Carol Fulton's [position] as registrar--didn't become official until February of 1990, the following year, and we were all still in our offices on Curson. But I want to ask you about how the idea for that position came about.

MP: It came about because I took part of the Guatemalan Masks exhibition to the Field Museum in Chicago, and I traveled with it, to unpack it—because, you know, it was Jim Pieper's collection,

and he was willing to lend it on the condition that somebody from the museum go there and unpack it, and be around for the installation. So, it was a smaller exhibit than we had had [in L.A.], because it was for a smaller gallery—I think, actually, in the basement of the Field Museum. But, what was happening at the Field Museum, and [what] I saw—that was the museum that I was familiar with, because I went to school [there]--

JB: You had lived there.

MP: I lived in Chicago, and we had taken my kids, when they were little, to the Field Museum a lot. And when I got there, they had already reinstalled their Egyptian collection in a whole different way, and they were just embarking on something—on "community outreach," which took a long, long time, and, I guess, was pretty rancorous—on the African American diaspora, and they wanted to significantly interface with . . . [the African American] community. So, that's what they were all talking about there. I think it was the Kellogg Foundation that had funded the research—and they were transitioning, and of course there was a lot of fighting going on between the old guard curators, and the new people, and I do believe that Michael Spock [was there at that time]?

. . . . [Michael Spock was Vice President for Public Programs at the Field Natural History Museum in Chicago, Illinois, 1986 – 1994.]

JB: Oh, yes.

MP: So, the person that I worked with was very enthusiastic about this new idea, and that's what they had there. They were doing these exhibition teams, and I saw how they worked together, and I thought: this is a great idea. And there was a whole lot of material that had been written about it. And she sent—the woman that I worked with--I cannot remember her name—she sent me all this information, so I said to people--Patrick and whoever . . . . I'm not sure if Laurie Beth was out by that time **15:00:00**

JB: Well, I'm not sure what time--

MP: Because I don't know when—this would have been after the Guatemalan Masks exhibition.

JB: The only thing I know for sure--because there was a press release--was that you and Carol—your new positions were announced in February 1990. So maybe--

MP: Well, I mean, that didn't happen until after she [Laurie] was gone, because . . . it couldn't have happened unless she was gone, but I think—because the museum was cutting back again . . . so cutting out the full-time curator was a way to save money, and frankly, I was very tired of being registrar. [Laughter] . . .

JB: Well, you had been registrar for ten or eleven years at that point.

MP: A long time, right. And I was really enthusiastic about what I had seen at the Field, and I guess I talked them into it. I don't really remember. But other people liked the idea too, and especially

Janet Marcus, because it meant the educator would be an integral member of the [exhibition] development team. And, I mean, I was in favor of getting away from curator-centered exhibit production, and we managed to do that with some success, I think. Not everyone was enthusiastic about it. We could never have—I can't remember what the first exhibit was that we did under the new system.

JB: Well, that's—yes, I was going to ask you that. It could have been Intimate Appeal, couldn't it? Or the Ed Rossbach show?

MP: No—well, maybe--

JB: Marcie's looking at the list.

MP: Yeah, I am—so this would have been...

JB: After Hands On!.

MP: It would have had to be—yeah, that's when it would have started, because Hands On! Was the last one that Laurie did, and actually, by the time it opened, she was gone?

JB: And Hands On!—actually, yeah--Hands On! Didn't close until May of 1990, so . . . but, of course, you would have been working on whatever the next show was.

MP: Yeah, we were working on all the things coming up. Ed Rossbach: [40 Years of Exploration and Innovation in Fiber Art; opened December 5, 1990] was a traveling exhibition. So was [George] Nakashima: [Full Circle; opened April 4, 1990]. Of course, we didn't have--we did that in cooperation with the JACCC [the Japanese American Community Cultural Center, which was in Little Tokyo], and most of it was there—we only had a few pieces at the May Company. Yeah, I think—that was it, we all began to... I think the first one that was really a full-blown team developed [effort] was this: What A Sight! Spectacular Spectacles. And, it really showed in the [way we worked together]. . . . Carol was designing by then, and Janet [had come back part-time as] the educator, and . . . I really felt it—oh, I know--we had several components to that exhibit. It wasn't just the L.A. Eyeworks collection. There was another collection that came from what's now, I think, a museum of ophthalmology—

JB: In San Francisco, yes.

MP: It was a collection of an ophthalmologists' organization up there. It was really cool, and [it had] historic eyeglasses, and . . . other types of things related to seeing. Denise [Wakeman, who had been Patrick's administrative assistant, did that—that was part of my enthusiasm . . . [to] get staff members involved who are capable of doing small shows on their own, but never have, and never have been allowed to, and Denise--

JB: That's right—she had come up with a couple of ideas--

MP: She was very enthusiastic, and she did a great job on this small historic exhibit that was in conjunction [with the L.A. Eyeworks collection exhibition], and then Janet Marcus pretty much designed the interactive--

JB: Which was a large section of the [gallery]--

MP: . . . Yeah, we had the space, because the other two [parts of the] show didn't take up that much room, and Carol did a great job of taking three separate things and putting them **[20:00]** into that May Company Gallery, which wasn't really that big—and it worked.

JB: Oh, yes—I really never thought of it as being three separate [shows, but]—now that you describe it--

MP: Well, everything was related, but they were quite disparate, and it's the kind of thing that an old-style curator would never have allowed. I mean, one of the objections to having interactive elements in the galleries is that they're messy, and you can't have this messy corner. And it was a mess—it was a mess all the time!

JB: It seems really funny now, in retrospect, but, of course, you're right—at the time, that was part of the curatorial ethos, I guess--

MP: The aesthetic was very, very important to [traditional curators], and they wanted total control over everything. So, that was the first exhibit where everybody got to do their own thing--but they had to do it working together.

JB: Talk just a little bit about how this [the exhibition development team] worked in reality. I can remember attending some meetings—in fact, I remember that they were in the cottage, in the back room of the cottage. It's coming back to me, where you were sitting—you had a desk in that back room.

MP: I did, yeah. And Janet Marcus was there, too, for a while.

JB: Well, Janet was there for quite a long time, before that. And, of course, that's where the library was. Anyway, I was on the team for a little while, anyway, until I got so involved with some other things—but I did provide some research, at least for the historic section.

MP: Oh, right—I mean you were always--

JB: We were doing some inter-library loans, and it was really fun, for me, to—at least just to sit in, and feel like I could make comments from time to time . . . But talk about how, from a practical point of view, it worked, from—I don't know, from the time that the idea came up . . . I mean, wasn't part of it that you actually had people deciding whether they were interested in doing a show at all?

MP: Aha...I'm looking [at the exhibition list] at what they were--which ones were actually organized by us. Because—Folk Treasures of Mexico: [Highlights from the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection; opened September 5, 1991], that was traveling [from the San Antonio Museum of Art]. Of course, we added our own component to that.

JB: Yes, I mean, we added a lot to just about every show, I think.

MP: Well, that was interactive as well, because of the altars, the family altars.

JB: Those were wonderful. [One was made by Dr. Miguel Dominguez and the other was designed by Frank Romero with *papel picado* artist Olga Ponce Furginson.]

MP: And then, Lathe-Turned Objects: [Challenge IV; opened February 7, 1992] was traveling, America's Living Folk Traditions [opened July 1, 1992] was traveling. Native America [Reflecting Contemporary Realities; opened October 9, 1992]—that one, that was the one that you were the managing curator with the guest curator on—that was, I believe you were, weren't you the production manager, or something?

JB: Yes, yes, [you and I were co-producers] and I do want to talk about that—I guess we could talk about that now, if you want to.

MP: Well, because that would have been the next big exhibit--

JB: That was actually the last show in the May Company. But, let me just interrupt—we'll go back to that, but, I do want to get in—because I think this had to do with team exhibition development—your coming up with the initiative for something called the Language of Objects, which was a very, very big thing--

MP: Yeah, and I don't remember—I'd have to go back to my notes—why that happened.

JB: Well, I guess I always had the idea that—I know that Patrick [Ela], at some point, after the new Museum Tower project was announced, he said to all of us, in a staff meeting, that he wanted us to come up with some initiatives that would be appropriate for an expanded space. And I thought that the Language of Objects was basically your contribution to that. It had something to do with that, I think.

MP: Oh, I just don't remember, because I don't remember what it was that caused me to go, you know, “Boing!”

JB: Yeah—well, it really was a brilliant idea. Could it have had something to do—I know that also, at that time, we were a little more flush, because of monies coming in for the Capital Campaign, and so on [and we had all had our consciousnesses raised about diversity issues] because we were going to some museum meetings, to the AAM and to the Western Museums Association meetings--**[25:00]** remember Kate Sibley, who was the [Executive Director of the] Western [Museums Association]?

MP: Yes—I think that it might [also] have had to do with the fact that we were trying to rewrite the mission statement of the museum, and looking at—and I think that I had pretty strong feelings about modernizing—about making us relevant in urban society, because that's where we were located—[in the middle of Los Angeles].

JB: Yes. (Laughter)

MP: And, also—maybe because of working on the Festival of Masks--and getting out—I got out into the community a lot. I was in schools, and doing those little bank exhibitions, and so on, and—maybe it was because of that. I honestly don't remember, but I just thought, you know, we could—we need to stop looking at the *past* all the time, because, we were—in [exhibiting] folk art we certainly did—when there's all this urban folk life going on that nobody is really documenting. And I don't think they were at the time. I think maybe Seymour [Rosen was]. [Rosen documented what he called “folk art environments,” like Grandma Prisbrey’s Bottle Village.]

JB: Well, folklorists were, and I think that was—you know, one of the things that became so controversial about Laurie Kalb's tenure--

MP: Oh, that's right. She was the one—you reminded me, because for Hands On! She had gone and found these people who were still working, and were right here, and doing it, and--you know--it's probably all connected.

JB: Oh, sure, and there was so much just going on in the community, in terms of talk about diversity and inclusion, and at those museum meetings that we went to—that was [also] around the time that the Native American Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) [was being written and passed].

MP: That's right. That sort of came in right around the 500th anniversary [of Columbus’s “discovery” of America] thing, yeah.

JB: So, I think that we were really very conscious that the Craft and Folk Art Museum . . . ought to be looking at things differently than they had been. And, you got quite a bit of money--

MP: From the Getty--

JB: From the Getty and the California Arts Council. I came across a reference to--altogether, $160,000. [These grants were to develop a collection database that would take into account the cultural context of objects and their appropriation by other cultures, especially in an urban setting like Los Angeles.]

MP: That sounds about right.

JB: I'm not sure—I'm sure the Getty part of that was larger.

MP: It was $125,000.

JB: And the rest was CAC.

MP: Right—yeah, I think they gave us 40 [thousand]—CAC gave us 40 [thousand] and Getty gave us 125 [thousand]. I remember being absolutely astounded that they were going to do that. But, they liked the idea of it. They were willing to take a chance, and I guess they had plenty of money at the time, so they said, well, let's just do it.

JB: Well, they were preparing for their new building too, so I think they had people on their staff who also were beginning to look at new ways of displaying [and documenting] art. So--go on and talk about what the project ended up being primarily—it really was a lot of different things—if you can encapsulate it. (Laughter)

MP: I don't remember that we ever thought that we were going to get a specific exhibition out of it. More, we were just asking to get somebody—a professional person, which turned out to be Deirdre Evans-Pritchard—who was open to the idea of looking "outside the box," at what could be considered folk art and folk life and so on--specifically urban.

JB: And she was a folklorist also. [Evans-Pritchard had a B.A. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from Durham University; an M.Phil. in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University; and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Folklore from UCLA.]

MP: She was, and she came out of an anthropology background--

JB: Well, her father was the famous [social anthropologist, Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard—known as E.E. Evans-Pritchard].

MP: . . . At any rate, she was a good person to do that, because she was a very open-minded...she didn't dismiss anything, and she was--you know--aggravating, as I am too (laughter), so we would get into it from time to time. But the reason why there ended up being an exhibit [coming from the Language of Objects materials] was because she wanted to do one, and she heard about the Experimental Gallery at the Smithsonian. She wanted to apply for that, and in fact--

JB: That's how that came in.

MP: Yes, and she and Carol got together when—I think I was gone, I think I was on vacation—and [they] wrote up that whole . . . [proposal], and then it was a done deal when I got back.

JB: The exhibition, which became Dress Codes: [Urban Folk Fashion; opened in Washington, D.C., October 29, 1993].

MP: Right. **[30:00]** So, I did not really want [the database] project to get sidetracked onto that exhibit at that time. I thought we would be collecting [and documenting] all this material that would be the basis for exhibits down the line, but Deirdre and Carol both wanted to see something up front. So, in the end, we did it, and it was based on...I mean, we started with ten objects that we had picked, but--

JB: For the exhibition?

MP: No, for the [database] project. There were ten things we ended up--

JB: Oh, ten types of things, yeah.

MP: --ten types of things we were going to look at, and in fact, there just turned out to be so much material out there that we sort of abandoned a few of them, and we ended up concentrating . . . when the exhibit came up, then we ended up looking at what we could pull together in a coherent exhibition, and that turned out to be [primarily] cloth—textiles--so that's what that exhibit was about--the Dress Codes. It was looking at traditional cloth, and how [four types of] traditional cloths from four different cultural groups worldwide were now in the United States, and how they were being used [in recent history and] today.

JB: And not just by the--

MP: The original [culture—how] . . . they had gone on into the larger culture [and been transformed] in many ways. And people instantly could recognize...they made associations, when they would see these textiles.

JB: Yes. I don't know if we can remember all that there were, but kente cloth and kimono were two [of them].

MP: It was kente, kimono, bandanna, [and] the native and Pendleton blankets—those were the four. And every single one of those things is very much alive and well in contemporary American culture.

JB: And all of those objects that were collected are now at UCLA [Special Collections], and [also] all of your research files (laughter).

MP: Well, you know, a good thing came out of it, in that the woman who did the research on the kente section, she was Elizabeth something [Betsy Quick]—Deirdre knew her from UCLA. When she saw that—when CAFAM was closed, and nothing was going to happen—[that is, the Dress Codes exhibition was not going to be mounted at CAFAM]--she went ahead and used the kente . . . [for] the kente cloth in modern society exhibit that the Fowler had—that was hers. She was the curator of that show. And they collected far more—I mean, their permanent collection now includes a huge amount of [kente] stuff. And I think that's a traveling exhibition now. So, the good of it is that it did get a wider audience—I mean, we [CAFAM] didn't do it [in L.A.] in the end. That would have been a really good thing, but I could never have talked people into buying kente souvenirs—those graduation scarfs that kids wear, African-American kids wear, and the dolls, and . . . I mean, all that stuff--

JB: But you did get some interesting donations—one of the most interesting--of course, this was not [from] Los Angeles, but the McDonald's [outfits]—remember the McDonald's? Tell about that.

MP: Oh, the McDonald's uniforms. That was so amazing.

JB: How did that come about anyway?

MP: You know, somebody somewhere saw these people being interviewed on television . . . . They were newsworthy because they were franchisees in Harlem . . . [who had] decided that they wanted to decorate their McDonald's in a way that pertained to African American culture, and they got special permission to deviate from the McDonald's standard uniform.

JB: That must be a whole story in itself.

MP: The woman's name—the one who...

JB: I think there is some correspondence in the files [which are in the CAFAM archives at UCLA Special Collections].

MP: Yeah, they're in the files, and they actually donated one of the kente design McDonald's uniforms, and I think we had a photo blow-up too of their tiles, because they tiled the [walls of the] restaurant in kente designs . . . .

JB: Yes, there's a photograph, and there are actually several uniform parts. It's more than one—

MP: Well, I think they probably gave us the male and female versions. No, when we started looking, we found it everywhere. That's why we had to— [**phone ringing]**

JB: Oh, gotta pause. **[Recorder paused.]** OK, we're back. You found [kente] things everywhere, basically.

MP: We did. We realized that we could probably go on forever.

JB: And the focus—even though, serendipitously, . . . these things [came] from New York, **[35:00]** really, the focus was on Los Angeles, I believe—on the communities of Los Angeles.

MP: Right. But, I think we were also actually looking at just the American kaleidoscope of how all of these things are here. You know, somewhere in that [audiotape] footage [archived] at UCLA . . . [is an interview] that Deirdre . . . [did]—she went to an Army / Navy store down in . . . . I don't know, someplace like Carson, or Long Beach, or someplace there, because it was the place to go to buy your bandannas if you were, A, in a gang, or B...I mean, the bandanna as an accessory, and a badge—if you knew the language, because there was that whole thing with gay bandannas, and—I mean--you could have spent a year and a day on just bandannas, but...

JB: The vocabulary of bandannas.

MP: Well, that store is [or was] actually a Los Angeles sort of cultural monument, and it doesn't exist anymore, because the week after Deirdre interviewed that man in his store, it burned to the ground.

JB: Was that at the time of the riots?

MP: No, it wasn't—it was just, you know, it was wiring or something. But, I mean, a lot of people might not think that that's important, but, in fact, that was a place where [movie] people would go buy . . . clothes, when they were doing costuming. It was also a favorite place for rock musicians to outfit themselves. He was a very interesting man.

JB: Do you remember the name of the store, or the name of the proprietor?

MP: No—I mean, it's in...I mean, her notes were all--

JB: It's in the file, I'm sure, yeah.

MP: She was very thorough about that. And then, of course, the Virgin of Guadalupe stuff that we found—now that was an exhibit that I had been hoping we would be able to have, and in fact, I was talking to Sister Karen at Self-Help Graphics, about putting together an exhibition jointly that would be artwork from all of their artists, from their files, plus the popular culture things that we had come up with, because that, too--it's religious, and it's Mexican--but it's jumped those boundaries.

JB: Oh, absolutely. Now, there were two, actually—two women that you studied that were—I don't know how to describe it, I want to say auxiliary to those main topics, but really, they became very important. One was the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the other was Barbie!

MP: Yes, and I can't remember why Barbie got into it.

JB: Barbie gets into everything, doesn't she? I mean, that was, again—once you started looking, you saw Barbie everywhere. (Laughter)

MP: But I don't remember why Barbie got added to that mix, and I had some problems with her, because, of course, she didn't start out...but she was one of the objects, and I think that we wanted to do a Barbie exhibit . . . . We had ideas for lots of exhibits as a result of this [Language of Objects] project. So, you know, it's just sad that they mostly didn't come to be. . . . People have done Barbie exhibitions, but, of course, as we found out, Mattel is very, very picky about what you do with Barbie.

JB: Yes, yes. Now, I want you to talk a little bit about the aspect of this project for which you got the grant, which really, in a way, was the basis—I think we got carried away with collecting things, and having programs, and the exhibition--but really, the fundamental basis for the grant was this database [system] that you were going to develop, which was going to be a different kind of database [system] from . . . [most] collection management systems—I don't know that we referred to it that way, but . . . .

MP: It [the database] was going to be multimedia—it was going to have all those pictures, and all that video, and some music recordings, I think—all of that was supposed to be incorporated into it.

And a program to run all of that didn't really exist at that time, I don't think, and we were talking to a programmer abut designing something for us, but--

JB: Well, you'd **[40:00]** hired a consultant who worked—I did read about this aspect of it, because I've been working on the [CAFAM] grant files and development files at the archives [at UCLA], and you did hire a person [Emil Safier] to work on it—it was the [Microsoft] Access database [software] that he was using to develop it. Well, tell about that—there were several glitches in the progress of that aspect of it, and I think...didn't one of the [problems] have to do with the fact that we had the money to pay the consultant, but it took a while to get money for the hardware, or--

MP: Yeah—the Getty didn't fund...they wouldn't fund that kind of thing, right. Gosh, you know, I really don't remember.

JB: Because he worked on it off and on for a long time—for at least a couple of years, I think.

MP: I—you know, I'm just sort of blank on that.

JB: OK. But the idea was that we were going to develop a software program [based on Access] that would reflect the changes in attitude of museums—at our museum, at any rate—toward [the documentation of] objects, that it would not simply be a physical description of the objects, with--you know--a few subject headings describing the culture. . . . It was going to be much more enriched . . . .

MP: Well, it would have had to allow for meaning to migrate.

JB: Yes, yes, and that's why I guess the Access program was chosen, because it had just been developed as a kind of generic [relational] database that could be [searched across all the database fields].

MP: But I think that project did—as I recall--towards the end, it did get kind of sidetracked onto developing [the] Dress Codes [exhibition].

JB: Yes, I think you probably were (laughter) smart to [have been] hesitant about [starting to work on an exhibition].

MP: Yeah, because it did—it sucked the energy away, and then--all of a sudden--we had a final report due to the Getty, and I remember Deirdre and I were scrambling around, and she was in despair, thinking, “oh, they'll never—this isn't right, and this isn't right.” But it turned out to be fine. They seemed perfectly happy with what they got. And we actually did something with the material. I mean, we did produce an exhibition. It went to [the Smithsonian’s Experimental Gallery in] Washington, D.C.--I think 250,000 people saw it.

JB: Yeah, well, we might as well talk about Dress Codes now. You mentioned the Smithsonian Experimental Gallery. You went there—several of the staff went there--to install the show, right?

MP: I didn't go to install. Deirdre and Carol did.

JB: Oh, you didn't go at all?

MP: No—only two people could go, and it was their show, and so they went, and...I gather that there were some fireworks—because I think the woman who was directing that gallery at that time was somebody who was a pretty strong-minded character, too, and she was having problems because there were politics going on there. That show was, in fact, the last show they had at the Experimental Gallery--

JB: Yes—although they did [extend] it, I guess, after they found out that they weren't going to be able to have any more shows, they decided [to extend it].

MP: Yeah. Well--and it was very popular. I was always sorry that CAFAM could never have the version that [was at the Smithsonian]. I mean, because we did a smaller version of it [as part of the "Museum for a New Century" re-opening show, which was basically an overview of the history of CAFAM], when the museum reopened, but we didn't do anything like what they had [at the Smithsonian. It was much bigger there. And a lot of people saw it, and they had a really good time.

JB: So you never went to Washington? I thought you did.

MP: I did go, at the end, because I went to pack it up, so I did see it.

JB: So you did see it. OK, well, tell us what it looked like.

MP: Well, it was divided into the four sections, [one] for each textile, and...Oh gosh, I just don't remember. I know Deirdre did the research, so she had the historical background for each textile, and then all the permutations that it had gone through, that we had examples of . . . and then each section also had an interactive component that Janet Marcus **[45:00]** came back [to do. She came] out of retirement from motherhood, to design the packages—the interactive packages. I think she went to Washington, too.

JB: I think she did, too.

MP: Yes, I think the three of them went to install it. And she set up the interactive stations. But the most fun—and I think this was the most fun for people in Washington too--they actually had it on TV there--there is some TV footage of people using--

JB: Yes, I think that's--

MP: Did we get a copy of that?

JB: I think so, yes.

MP: Because, what we did was we had—I think it was a design student from FIDM, or something? I think that's where he went, the Fashion Institute [of Design and Merchandising in L.A.]—and for

not too much money, he made the dress-up [part of the exhibition] interactive. They were basically [square] pieces of cloth, in the four patterns. We went down to the garment district, and we just rampaged through, and we'd buy the gaudiest printed versions of kente, and Pendleton, and kimono, Japanese fabrics, and—what's the other one--bandannas? And, well, but the bandanna originally came from a type of sari, in India, yeah, so that opened up some possibilities. So we bought all this fabric, and Velcro, and then we gave it to him, and he did rectangles and squares, in different sizes, and put Velcro snaps on them, so it was possible to make skirts, tops, jackets—you could snap things together, and you could make these wild mix-and-match if you wanted to. And some people would studiously stick to one pattern, and other people would just mix them up. And, we had some drawings and examples of [the] traditional use of these materials, but then of composites, you know—and it was very inexpensive—I don't think we paid very much to him. He sewed—he did all the sewing, and everything.

JB: He was still a student, you said?

MP: Yeah, he was a student. And, of course, they were washable—everything was washable, so we saved them, and when we did have a version of the exhibition at CAFAM [as part of the re-opening of the museum] several years later, we did resurrect that part of it, so we had the dress-up section.

JB: Was that in Part Two of Museum for a New Century?

MP: I think so, yeah.

JB: OK. Now, I just want to mention that, in addition to the objects that you collected as part of the Language of Objects, the Dress Codes exhibition had pieces that were borrowed—there were quite a few pieces that were borrowed...

MP: I think we might have had to borrow historical things.

JB: Yes, I'm pretty sure Gloria Gonick was involved with lending some kimonos...and I think there were borrowed items in each of those [sections]. You know, I never saw it, but I have a very vivid image of it!

MP: We did—we borrowed a beautiful piece of kente from somebody. It may have come from the Smithsonian.

JB: Maybe so. That would make sense.

MP: I just—now, if you have the loan records at UCLA, you could look and see who the lenders were to that, but I don't remember.

JB: Yeah, we have some of those--

MP: You know, if we hadn't been so dumb, we would never have tried to do anything like that (laughter), but it actually turned out to be a lot of fun.

JB: Well, it was an idea that I think most people were really turned on by, when they would hear about it—both the Language of Objects project and the Dress Codes exhibition. So, it was easy to sell. The—I wish I could remember her name, the woman who was the director of the Experimental Gallery. She was very active in the AAM--

MP: Yes, she was, and she was a big promoter—Kimberly something.

JB: Kimberly, yes! I don't remember her last name, but I'll look it up. [Kimberly Camp.] I remember you showed me a letter she wrote, saying yes, she would love to have this show, that it was exactly the kind of thing she was looking for. So she was really very supportive of this idea.

MP: Yeah, and they were doing an evaluation—you know, they had a sort of catwalk, where their people could be up above, watching what people were doing in the exhibit [below]. And, they were always—they said they would send us the results of what they had observed, but I'm not sure that we ever got that, because **[50:00]** their unit sort of fell apart, later on . . . .

JB: They lost their funding.

MP: Yeah.

JB: By the way, where was it, in relation to...I mean, was it attached to one of the Smithsonian museums?

MP: Yes—it was a space that was in...it was funny—in the old building. Yes.

JB: Really--in the “Castle”? [The Castle is what was the original Smithsonian building designed by James Renwick and completed in 1855. It is now known as the Smithsonian Institution Building and is nicknamed "The Castle."]

MP: I think—it was in the Castle, and you came in, and there were all these musty cases, glass cases, on either side, containing I don't remember what. And then you kind of walked through, and then the gallery itself was sort of--

JB: That's a good location! You should have gotten a lot of traffic.

MP: I think there was a large visitorship there, yeah. Large.

JB: All right. Now, I want to talk about something that happened—this actually took place before Dress Codes. Dress Codes was October '93 through March '94. [When we were still in the May Company, in early 1992], we had started to make plans for Native America: Reflecting Contemporary Realities. And--well, why don't you talk about that Native American show, and how that came about, and why both of us were very eager to have that--

MP: Well, we wanted to have something, because it was--

JB: The Quincentennial [of Columbus' voyage to America, 1492 – 1992].

MP: The Quincentennial--and other museums were doing it, and we wanted to do something that involved Native Americans.

JB: The Quincentenary of Columbus's so-called "discovery" of America (laughter).

MP: Right, right. But, I think you're the person that came up with the idea, and you're the person that found Sara [Bates].

JB: Yes, I think that is right. I found Sara because somebody—I can't remember who—told me about this organization--

MP: The one in San Francisco.

JB: Right, called American Indian Contemporary Arts. And [Sara] was an experienced curator, and all of their staff—I think there were only (laughter) two or three on the staff, but they were all Native American, and they were devoted to the exhibition of contemporary Native American art. And, at that time, Native American art generally—certainly in Los Angeles--but really everywhere in the Western world (laughter) tended to be displayed in museums of "natural history"—even the contemporary stuff. And this was a big complaint that we had heard when we went to museum meetings, and so on—we had heard Native American [museum staff] stand up and describe, very poignantly, how they felt. . . . I remember one person who had been at the Oakland Museum, looking at [an exhibition about their tribe], in the history part of the Oakland Museum, and had overheard this woman and her young son talking about, you know, the Indians in the past. And...so, . . . you and I had talked about this, we had been to some of the same meetings, and the Columbus Quincentenary was coming up, and contemporary craft made by Native Americans just seemed like such an appropriate thing for our museum to [organize as an exhibition]. But I remember that it took some persuading, on both of our parts, at meetings with Patrick, and [at staff meetings].

MP: Well, because there was always that dragging of their feet, wanting it to all be . . . from the past. Or, if it's contemporary, then, you know, it's that "Santa Fe" stuff. Which is fine--

JB: But that's not what we were interested in--

MP: Yeah. The craftsmanship is certainly there, but, basically, they're catering to white taste.

JB: And, also, I think there was some aversion to anything that was political, don't you think?

MP: Oh, yeah . . . there was always **[55:00]** that—although I remember when we had the Guatemalan exhibit, they did allow a statement at the beginning of that exhibition that referred to what was happening to the weaving traditions in Guatemala, as an offshoot of what was happening politically in Guatemala.

JB: Yes, I don't know that Patrick necessarily had an aversion to the political, but he was just—he was very sensitive to what might be the reaction of board members . . . and it was very difficult to cut through that.

MP: I don't even think we got any outside funding for that, did we?

JB: . . . . Well, we must have had money for Sara—she was paid.

MP: Yeah, but I think she did it for not too much money.

JB: [There was a grant—$5,000 from Casey Danson, Ted Danson's wife at the time.] We had—I don't know if we promised, but we certainly talked about having a catalog, and I know that she [Sara] really wanted a catalog, and was assuming that that would be part of the deal, and we . . . [could] not have one. [There was no money for it.]

MP: I think originally we had hoped to travel that exhibition—and I think they did have a version of it at the gallery in San Francisco, because I went up there for it--

JB: Yes, and I remember it was taken by one of those companies--

MP: Oh, that's right. She [Sara] did it—she took it over from us, because we were...getting ready to . . . [leave the May Company and] we certainly were not in any position to deal with that [traveling that show], but she did, and that may have been the condition under which she curated it, was that they would get possession of it—that their gallery would get possession of it, and be able to travel it. I think it did travel for about five years—some version of it, anyway.

JB: Yeah, I . . . [tried] to find out about that, and I even called one of the places that supposedly had it, and, I think by that time, whoever had been involved had moved on. And I couldn't reach Sara. She, I think, became ill.

MP: Yeah. I mean, there's still a phone that answers with her message on it--

JB: Yeah, I remember, a couple of years ago, trying to reach her, because they wanted her—it was more than a couple of years ago, about four years ago--

MP: It was when the Native American Museum [the new National Museum of the American Indian] opened [on the Mall in Washington, D.C.], they wanted her to do [one of her mandala installations for the opening], yeah.

JB: In Washington. They really wanted her.

MP: I don't think she's been doing those big installations for a long time, because she told me she's not going to be able to do them—the last time I talked to her personally, which was quite a while ago. She said, "I have to work small now, so I'm doing a whole different kind of thing." So, I don't know what happened to her.

JB: Yeah, she was an artist herself, and did some absolutely fabulous--

MP: Oh, I loved her pieces.

JB: --installations [using all kinds of natural materials, like pine cones and shells].

MP: . . . . We didn't have her do one, in connection with the exhibition [she curated for us], which is too bad, but I don't think we had the space for it. But I did see the one she did in New York, and the one she did in Orange County, and they were just amazing.

JB: Well, it was very instructive doing that show, getting it put up. There were a lot of hurdles, but I think--

MP: Well, and there were a lot of criticisms, too, that had to do with quality. Because, I remember there were things that some of the Native American collectors on the board, for instance, were like, “that isn't—you know, that isn't museum quality.”

JB: Well, there were one or two pieces that I had a little bit of a concern about, but there were some fabulous pieces, too. There was a wonderful piece by James Luna; Kay Walkingstick, I think, had one; oh, the fellow who did the hard hat, the painted hard hat. Was that Bob Haozous?

MP: Maybe. No—because...

JB: [It was Richard Glazer Danay, who was Mohawk.] These are all important contemporary artists. They show in major galleries. Although they all had the problem of [how to deal with] being identified as Native American artists; still, they were good enough, most of them, to have broken through. But they were very aware of the problems.

So—well, I think we need to move on. The May Company did close, after the Native American **[1:00:00]** show, very suddenly—we hadn't expected to have to move. But, at the end of—I think it was announced at the end of 1992--and we had to get out by the end of January.

MP: That's right, I remember.

JB: But, Frank Wyle and Patrick, and so on—the powers-that-be at the museum, in the meantime, had been negotiating for the building to the east of our building--[which was] at 5814—the building known as 5800 Wilshire. And there was an agreement to lease that building with an option to buy. And I did find a letter [in the archives], just last week, that mentioned . . . . the Ratkovich development was all over with. The finances fell through. There was a bad recession going on at this time. But there wasn't—there had been, apparently, an agreement with Ventress--Joseph Ventress--I think his name was, who owned that building. It had been hoped that the museum was going to be able to buy that building, but this other fellow came in and bought it, and then leased it to the museum. So it was available for us to move into when the May Company closed. And so, we moved. Do you remember how that was, having to [move so suddenly]—and we had to move everything out of the May Company, not just the offices.

MP: Yeah, the collection—that's when the collection went to the Duplex.

JB: Yes, I think that's right.

MP: Oh, it was just another move. We were also working on whatever was going to be in the new building when it opened, at the same time.

JB: Well, we had been working on the Ratkovich Museum Tower. That's what that big building program was that Marcy Goodwin worked on with us.

MP: Right, but we didn't have specific exhibitions lined up for that, and I remember that we were scrambling, because, I don't think we had any money at all.

JB: It was a really hard time. There was money coming in for the Capital Campaign, but apparently it had slowed while we were in the May Company—although I think you and I talked about the staff being pretty satisfied with the facilities that we had in the May Company, which were free. There were people on the board and others who felt like we had just disappeared—don't you think that was right?

MP: Well, it was partly that, but also partly the fact that they just thought that—they looked down their noses at it, as a setting for the museum. They never saw the possibilities of cultivating a wider audience, which were there, and we never worked on that.

JB: Yeah, and there were problems with the May Company's employees. I don't really know if there's—you know, I think there's blame to be assigned on both sides, as far as that goes, but for whatever reason, people would come into the May Company, and ask the May Company employees there in the perfume department (laughter), “Where is the museum?” And, of course, the offices were on the fifth floor, the gallery was on the fourth floor, and the library was on the mezzanine, so you can understand why it would be confusing. And it was very hard to get the May Company employees to help with that.

Anyway, we did have to move, and **[1:05:00]** I believe that the earthquake stabilization [of the 5814 Wilshire building--the original building] had been done, or was being worked on. But, the building was not [yet] fit to move back into.

MP: No, I don't think it had any doors in it at that time. I think they had been taken out . . . .

JB: So, they came up with a new plan, and Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung, the architects, who had been hired to do the interior of the Museum Tower—the museum part of the Museum Tower—were then hired to do a renovation which was going to merge—the assumption was that we were going to buy the building on the corner, which we [had] moved into—5800--and that it would be merged with our original site—5814--and we were paying $17,000 a month for the 5800 building, which, I think, most of us assumed was going toward a purchase. And I don't think that was the case.

MP: No, it wasn't.

JB: So, we moved into 5800. But it was about—I think I figured it was something like 28 months that we were without a public [presence—that] we didn't have an exhibition [space] up on our location.

MP: No, because there was no place to do it. I mean, we . . . [had an exhibition space] at the Pacific Design Center. That was better than nothing.

JB: Yes, and that was partly why Dress Codes, I think—that was one of the reasons that the idea for Dress Codes came up, even though it [would be] in Washington, D.C . . . .

MP: Well, we always assumed that—we'd try it out there, and get the quirks out of it, and then bring it back as one of the opening exhibitions in the new museum, but that didn't really work out.

JB: I started to tell about what happened in April of 1992, and even though it means going backwards a little bit, I think it's important to mention this. It happened to be a day when we had planned to have a meeting with Sara Bates, and I had gone to the airport to pick her up from her plane coming in from San Francisco, April 25th, 1992. Can you tell about that?

MP: Well, I had to take her back to the airport, and . . . we had to vacate the May Company, because they were closing, because...a controlled mob was moving down Wilshire Boulevard. So they told us they were going to, you know, lock it up and turn out all the electricity, and--

JB: Tell why this was happening.

MP: It was an explosion, starting in the African American community, but it really . . . once it got out of control, you know, the mob mentality took over. It was originally in response to the beating of an African American, [Rodney King], by the police.

JB: It was videotaped.

MP: It was videotaped, yeah. And--how quickly we forget—was this the result of the fact that they [the police] were exonerated?

JB: Yes, that's right.

MP: OK, it was—the trial verdict came down.

JB: The arrest had taken place a year before--

MP: And everybody had seen the videotape [on TV], and there were really high feelings about that. And it spread into the rest of the community too, because obviously there's a lot of resentment across the board about the way minorities are treated by the police. And, the much larger Latino population in some of these neighborhoods [also] got involved, and . . . it was a pretty out-of-control mob. I mean, it was very scary. And Sara—everyone was gone. I'm trying to remember—we [Sara and I] went to lunch. We didn't know about it. We went to lunch and [when] we came back, they were closing the building. So—Sara was like, “I want to go home *now*.” (Laughter)

JB: We didn't have the meeting. (Laughter)

MP: No, we didn't. We were supposed to have it in the afternoon. **[1:10:00]** And so, we got in my car, and we started driving, and I had—I don't know. I didn't know what was going on. I don't know that anybody was telling you to stay away from certain areas, but for whatever reason, I chose *not* to take La Cienega Boulevard to the airport, which was (laughter) a very good decision on my part. I went way around into West Los Angeles, and I think we wound up going through--

JB: You were living in Santa Monica.

MP: I was living in Santa Monica, and we wound up going through Palms and Culver City, on National Boulevard, I think--I took that. And then we got into this line-up to go to the airport, and it was a big traffic jam. It was so surreal, because we were—I don't even remember the name of this street. You could see the big clouds of smoke rising.

JB: Well, La Brea Boulevard was where it was mostly happening—the burning.

MP: So, the smoke—I mean, the air was full of smoke. And, it was--

JB: It was all over the city.

MP: But we were in this line of cars that was barely moving down some main street going toward the airport, lined with jacaranda trees. They were totally in bloom. And, Sara—the artist—she said, "You know? Since we're not going anywhere, do you think it would be OK if I get out and collect some of these, because I want them?" So she collected—her art pieces were made out of natural materials, and these were such a stunning color--so—she whipped a plastic bag out of her purse [and] she said, "I never go anywhere without it," and she hopped out of the car, and we crept along, with Sara scooping them up until she had filled her bag. So, we finally did get to the airport, and I dropped her off—and there was nobody there. And then we were afraid—and [later] they did close it. Her flight—she got on her flight, and she actually got home. She called me later. But she...they did close the airport, I think right after her flight took off. And, I remember, I was able to get out of the car—there was nobody telling me I had to move on. We went inside and there was this poor tourist who had just arrived from, like, Australia, and she said, "What did the pilot mean, when he said Los Angeles is currently undergoing a state of civil unrest?" So, we took her outside, and we pointed to the smoke (laughter), and we said, "It's over there." Anyway...that was a very weird day.

JB: It was a very weird day. I lived downtown at that point—I mean, near the museum.

MP: Oh, that's right, you were living over on Sycamore, yeah.

JB: I lived just a block from La Brea [Boulevard], and, the building that we lived in had a rooftop [you could go up on], and Beny and I and the other people that lived in that building went up on the top, and looked down La Brea.

MP: Sure—yeah, you must have had a ringside seat, actually.

JB: And Beny [Joan's husband] actually went and helped [at] Samy's Camera, which was right there—it was burning-- [they showed it on the TV news that night]--and he went out and helped with the fire hose, to help put that out. I remember being—I remember my daughter calling me, and she was very, very worried, and she said, “Mom, you just gotta get away from there.” And, I never--

MP: That wasn't a good place to be. It wasn't, you know, because you were right off of La Brea.

JB: But I never felt in danger—maybe I was foolish not to, but Beny and I--I think both [of us]--felt a sense of exhilaration, in a way, because...in my mind, and I think for a number of other people--this was kind of the culmination of everything that we had been talking about—I mean, even the Native American show was--

MP: Well, you know, where people are disenfranchised--and, you know, they're just not going to take it forever. I mean, back at the May Company, that crowd did make it there, and they did break into the building.

JB: That was scary.

MP: The museum was—we didn't know what we would find when we went back, but, in fact, the museum and our offices were fine, because the only place there was light in that building was downstairs where the windows were, and of course the jewelry was there [on the first floor], and that's what was taken. Television sets and [electronic] things were up on the fourth floor, where our artwork also was, but they never made it there, because all the elevators and escalators and lights were turned off, and there were no windows up there. So, that was smart on the part of May Company's security.

JB: And I don't think—I don't know how many people actually broke in. They broke windows **[1:15:00]**, on the first floor, but I don't know...

MP: No, I think they smashed the jewelry cases.

JB: Really?

MP: Yeah, because that's what there was. But I guess we were able to get back in fairly quickly, just to see what was going on with our stuff.

JB: I wish I had thought to look up what day of the week this was—it seems to me that it was close to the weekend--

MP: Yeah, I think it was a Thursday--

JB: --so we may have had the whole weekend, then. I do remember going up to the library at some point, after lunch, and we had been told to get out, and I had to decide what to take, and I took—

oh, a couple of things that I considered precious--the exhibition catalog from MoMA, from 1932, that was, I think [one of the first] folk art [exhibitions], yeah. Yeah, I remember being scared, but we did come back to the museum, I think, the following Monday, and we had a staff meeting--do you remember that meeting?

MP: No, I don't—nothing--blot.

JB: Well, basically, we . . . made a lot of promises to each other, that we would be [more] involved [in the community], and Patrick was very [intense]—I remember him talking with a lot of commitment to that, at that time—that we would consider all of these issues in everything that we did, from then on. And I think there was [more]--

MP: We had much more community involvement. We did. I think that's how we came to be involved with—gosh, I can't remember his name now, and he was so helpful to us—teaches at Cal State, Dominguez--

JB: His name was Dominguez--

MP: Oh, that's right. Yeah.

JB: I can't remember his first name [Miguel], but yes. He was wonderful.

MP: He was wonderful. He helped us with the family altar project, because he was very interested.

JB: And wasn't Phyllis Chang the educator at that time—she was very [community-minded].

MP: She was working for us, yeah. Well, she [had done] that great project at Crenshaw High School. It was a family altar the students did collectively, in their library. That was part of that [altar] project [that was done in conjunction with the Folk Treasures of Mexico: Highlights from the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection; opened September 5, 1991]. I'd forgotten that, but I went to that, and it was very moving. It really was. We always had had more contact with communities, mainly because of the [annual] Festival of Masks. And so that was pretty helpful, because we already had contacts out there. And then we made some more—some through the Language of Objects, actually—we met some interesting people through that.

JB: Well, and CSAC—the Center for the Study of Art and Culture, [an adjunct program of the library, funded by the Irvine Foundation], was happening. I think all of us were more aware—when I look at the evolvement of CSAC, I realize that at the beginning--although, you know, the concept certainly was relevant to issues of intolerance and diversity, I was not that aware, until after our first National Advisory meeting, of the importance of including people, on--for example--the [CSAC] advisory board, who [represented diversity], in some way. We did have Paul Apodaca, who was Native American, and Pratapaditya Pal, who was—I think he was from Bangladesh—he was a curator at LACMA, but--am I forgetting someone? [Willie Collins, who was African American, was head of the L.A. Cultural Affairs Folk Arts Program.] I think that may have been it.

We did have several women on the board (laughter) of what was otherwise dominantly white male.

MP: Well, some white females, too.

JB: Well, yeah, we had a few women, but it was definitely predominantly white male, at the beginning. So, I think that most of us on the staff, in whatever we were doing—whatever our projects were, were much more aware after the various events (laughter) of 1992, **[1:20:00]** of being more directly involved in [diversity and inclusion] action, not just in talk.

MP: I remember—when was the Nelson Rockefeller collection at the May Company—when was that?

JB: You've got the list there.

MP: OK, I'm looking--that was in '91—because I remember that we had decided that we would have bilingual labels, and—we got a translator, who was from the [Latino] community, and [it's a] good thing we did, because our labels were unimpeachable, . . . but LACMA had to redo theirs entirely (laughter), because of the criticism from the [Mexican American community]—yeah . . . they were having that huge Mexican show that was traveling, I think—I can't remember what it was called. It was a citywide thing going on--

JB: Right, there was a festival, actually, and I think we did that instead of having our festival that year—we cooperated with LACMA. . . but it was a specifically Mexican, Mexican American festival.

MP: Right. But anyway, that taught me a lesson, and it's that you really need to have people who are from the [relevant] community read your labels, because--if they're in their language--because, again, there's a big difference between--

JB: Textbook Spanish.

MP: --textbook Spanish, and local. And the thing with local, that most people didn't realize, and I didn't either—our translator came from *La Opinion*. And he explained to me that you have to be really careful, because—and my daughter teaches Spanish, too, so I know this, and I live with a Salvadorean, and—there's, like, Salvadorean Spanish, and there's Mexican Spanish (laughter). And you can say some things in one, and some things in the other, that don't mix, and you'll be severely criticized. So, *La Opinion* is very, very careful about their vocabulary, because it had to be Pan-Latin American Spanish. It can't be specifically Mexican, and certainly not Spain Spanish, which is apparently entirely different. I mean, yeah, everybody gets on the bilingual or trilingual bandwagon for labels, but you really have to be careful when you're messing with people's language, you know? And cultural ideas, too—because I remember Miguel—that was his name—Miguel Dominguez--when we asked him about the altars, he said, "OK, but I'm not

going to do one just for show. It has to be *for* something." So we had to come up with something that was real.

JB: Do you remember what that was?

MP: Yeah, we were doing—it was for Day of the Dead, and—he was going to do--well, he did three of them, actually. He did three different ones. But the one that he did for Day of the Dead was—he said there was a special one that was done for little children, and it was all different and everything—it was white, and would include toys and kid foods and things like that. So, that was the first one that he did, and it was for child victims of violence. We had had a lot of drive-by shootings that resulted in little kids getting killed that year.

JB: That's still going on.

MP: Oh, yeah. So, it was an altar dedicated to child victims of violence, and then we asked people [who came to see it] if they had somebody they wanted to remember—we had little pieces of paper and pencils there. We said, "Write down the person's name and you can put it there, and it will be added to, and at the end, the museum will dispose of them respectfully," which actually turned out to be a big problem, because we didn't realize how many we would get. They were piled up, and people wrote notes, and some of them were kind of quirky and funny, but others were just sad and touching—and they weren't all for children—I mean, people got--it was whoever they wanted to remember.

But, they did it, and so I would go and gather them up, because there were too many to leave there all the time. And, I put them into a big box, and when it was all over, I had hundreds and hundreds of them, and I didn't know—I thought, what am I going to do with them? But fortunately, I have some friends who make their own ashes for Ash Wednesday. And they said, OK, you bring them over, and we're—they're sort of an outsider religious group—and they said, "If you bring them over, we'll burn them." They usually have—ashes from the campfires that homeless people—is what they use, for their Ash Wednesday service, but they said they would mix the ashes from these prayers in with those, and then they would use them. So, I thought **[1:25:00]**, well, that's good, they'll get burned, and burning is a good way to deal with these things, anyway . . . auspiciously, in many cultures. So I did it. But there were a lot. And they had a lot left over (laughter). And so here they were...and you can't just dump them in the garden. But this artist came along who makes things out of the remains of other things. And when she saw them, she loved the idea. So, somewhere those pieces of ash exist in a wax sculpture that this woman did.

JB: So they all were burned, but--

MP: Yeah, they all were burned, but they didn't all get used in the--

JB: In Ash Wednesday--

MP: --in Ash Wednesday, because there were far too many, so this artist took them, and she cast them into this wax thing. So they form a sort of floating pattern—I've seen it. Her sculptures are see-through, and she lights them from behind. And, you know, they're very mysterious. So, that—I'd totally forgotten about that.

JB: That's a wonderful story.

MP: But that was how that ended. And, it was really getting involved, though. We didn't know what would happen when we did that, or how people would respond, or what—or where it would all end.

JB: Yeah--listening to that, it occurs to me that the archivist in me—you know, we do have files in the CAFAM archives that have the evaluations that people gave--the little books that you put out for people to write comments in. And those were so interesting, and I'm sure that [if you had put those Day of the Dead notes into your files, they would have ended up in the archives], but that [burning them] seems absolutely appropriate: what happened though [to the notes instead].

MP: See, that happened at the May Company, though. I'm not sure that we would have had the response in the other building that we had at the May Company.

JB: That's really interesting.

MP: The other . . . [exhibition that elicited visitor responses] at the May Company was America's Living Folk Traditions; opened July 1, 1992].

JB: Yes, which—[the artists] were all contemporary people.

MP: They were all contemporary people, folk artists, from all over the United States. [They were all winners of the National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowships.] But what we did . . . for the interactive part was that Carol painted blackboard paint on the walls of each section, and we had questions at the top, and people would write their memories about—[the questions] were relative to different things—there was a food one [and] "what objects and images remind you of home?" That was another one, and people were fascinated. They covered [the blackboards]. They hardly ever put pornography up there, but sometimes they did. And we'd have to erase them and wash them and start all over again, but we would write everything down.

JB: Yeah, well, some of [those comments are also] in the archives, and I remember you did a kind of test-run of those questions with the staff—I remember filling those out. Well, I think we have to move on. It is amazing to realize what all happened while we were in the May Company, but we did have to move out--

MP: We did have to go back, yes.

JB: And, after many other things—I mean, we're talking about being closed for 28 months--I think it was, altogether, two years and four months that we had *no* public space within our home base

there. And yet we were all very, very busy all the time. Unfortunately, I think we don't have time to go into all that a great deal . . . . You continued to be on the Space Planning Committee, which now was focused on the renovation, and the merging of the two buildings, and . . . various opening dates were announced, and then postponed. But finally, in May of 1995, we had what we called our Homecoming. So--

MP: It nearly killed us (laughter).

JB: Well, tell about that—I think you were really on the firing line there, with the opening of all those shows.

MP: I know, and there just [was]—not enough time, not enough money, not enough people. I know Carol Fulton, [the designer] was just beside herself, and I think the night before that opening—I think she and her partner, who was helping with the installation—they slept on the floor of the library **[1:30:00]**--they didn't go home. And I think I went home for a couple of hours, because I had animals to take care of, or something—and came back again. So we worked pretty much 24 hours, for the last day before it happened. Ugh.

JB: Well, first of all, I do want to spend some time just talking about the weekend, but, describe the new spaces, the new galleries, and then, I want you to talk about the exhibitions, but first, just describe the new gallery spaces.

MP: Well, the main gallery space in 5814 was what I always thought of as the third floor. Where there was a balcony, now there's a mezzanine—that doesn't count quite as a full floor. But [the floor above] it had been a pretty large gallery with offices on the perimeter, previously, and the whole thing was opened up [in the renovation] into one big space. The ceiling was taken out, so that the truss supports for the roof were visible and it was very pretty.

JB: Beautiful new floor—[end-grain wood floor].

MP: Yes, very nice new floor. I think there was a stairwell—the stairwell had this three-story glass window in it which faced . . . [south], which was unfortunate.

JB: Yes, it got very hot.

MP: It got very, very hot there, and it was the only way to bring artwork into the gallery.

JB: Yeah, we [*still*] did not have an elevator! (Laughter)

MP: They vetoed putting an elevator in—it was too expensive.

JB: Amazing.

MP: Yes, right--so all the artworks, again, had to be schlepped up there, but at least it was easier than the old days, because then, you had to jog through the restaurant with the artwork, and this was a much wider stairwell, so it was more convenient to bring artwork up. I think some kind of movable

wall system was designed, so you could break the [gallery] space up if you needed to. I don't remember if that was part of Hodgetts + Fung's [design], or whether Carol Fulton did that. The opening exhibition was the Warmbold collection . . . [which] was donated to us—Mexican folk art.

JB: Tell a little bit about Ted Warmbold.

MP: He was a newspaper--

JB: --publisher.

MP: --publisher, OK--I couldn't remember--from San Antonio, and he loved Mexico and used to travel there a lot, and he had a wonderful collection of Mexican folk art, a lot of it by the artists' [whose work] . . . we already owned . . . .

JB: --in our permanent collection.

MP: --in our permanent collection, [because of the show we had back in 1978], . . . Artesanos Mexicanos. And I really don't remember why his wife decided that we should be the recipients of that collection. I'm not sure why. Or maybe--

JB: Let's see--Patrick did know the fellow who was the director of the--

MP: At the San Antonio Museum of Art.

JB: Was it that museum, or—there's another museum there. At any rate--

MP: We borrowed the Rockefeller Folk Art Collection— [Folk Treasures of Mexico, that was mounted in 1991, was from the San Antonio Museum of Art.]

JB: That was the connection, yes.

MP: So, maybe they didn't want it because they already had that kind of thing, and they recommended us, but at any rate, his wife did contact us, and we agreed to take the collection, and have it as one of the opening exhibitions.

JB: He had died--

MP: Yes. And, I think—I mean, part of it...he had actually died of AIDS, and—you know, it was hard for his wife, because I think that a lot of things had been hidden. I mean, that he was gay, and so on--

JB: Well, she didn't even know that he had AIDS for—I think until after he died.

MP: He did. He hid it from her. And she just felt that it was so horrible, that he had had to hide--even from her—and she obviously did love him very much. So, I think part of the conditions of giving us that collection were that we would talk about that [in the exhibition installation] and we did.

JB: Yes. Well, that's the reason I wanted you to talk about it, because. . . you know, that was an important part of the exhibition--

MP: Yes, it was very important.

JB: [There were] . . . statements from him, and statements from her. And it **[1:35:00]** was a wonderful collection.

MP: It was, yeah. Sad, that they don't [belong to the museum anymore].

JB: Now, that didn't take up the whole gallery, but most of it, I guess, and Carol did design that. Did she design all of the opening shows?

MP: She designed all [of them]—yeah, she did. But she also had to install them, and that was really stretching her thin.

JB: What were the other shows that were on the third floor?

MP: . . . There was a contemporary section. I think there was an effort to get people to donate to us as part [of the opening festivities]--and I'm trying to think--I know there was a contemporary section, and there were really beautiful things that we got. That section was much smaller--

JB: Was that Bob Stocksdale, that gave a small collection of--

MP: I think so.

JB: --turned wood bowls.

MP: Oh, right, turned wood bowls, yeah. I think that's what it was. But I think there were some ceramics, too.

JB: Maybe so, yeah. [Those were part of what was called “The Homecoming Collection,” and it included turned wood bowls donated by Ruth and Daniel Greenberg, Susan Steinhauser, Mari and Irving Lipton, and Arthur and Jane Mason.]

MP: I don't remember. You'd have to show me slides of that one.

JB: But now, the overall theme, as I recall, was—I think you called it Points of View: [Collectors and Collecting], and it was [about] collecting, right?

MP: Yes, I think that's how we kind of unified this (laughter)--

JB: Right, but it was really interesting—one little section focused on collectors—Jerry Slocum, [the puzzle collector, was one of them].

MP: Right, we had Jerry Slocum...I don't remember the rest of them.

JB: I don't either, but there were two or three different ones.

MP: Yeah, we had statements [from them]: “why we collect,” and...

JB: Yeah, . . . that was an important theme, I think, of what we were doing, . . . focusing on how collections get made, what the motivations of the collectors are, and, I think for some of them, it seemed like collecting was sort of—it was almost a religious experience for some of these collectors.

MP: Yeah, we must have had statements from a bunch of people, and examples of what they collected. I'm hazy on that section.

JB: So—and then what was on the--in the--

MP: In the mezzanine—I don't remember at all.

JB: Was there anything on the mezzanine? I guess there must have been.

MP: There had to have been something. But I don't--

JB: Whatever it was, it wasn't one of the main opening shows, because there were really just the four—the three, Point of View [exhibitions]--

MP: The shop might have been using it—is there some possibility that they might have had something up there?

JB: Oh, maybe so. So, where was the other gallery—there was another [gallery].

MP: Well, we had a gallery in the 5800 building, but that didn't open simultaneously, I don't think.

JB: It didn't—oh, yes, I think--

MP: It did? Oh, God, that's why it nearly killed us.

JB: I think so. Yeah.

MP: That timeline—it came from the graphic designer, like the day before the opening, and it was in the wrong format. And it had to be cut up and pieced together in a different way to fit the space that we had, because there was no time to redo it. I remember hysteria set in over that one.

JB: I think we were all involved at some point—I know Janet Marcus was—in the installation of the Museum for a New Century. But tell about that show.

MP: Well, that included a history of the [Craft and Folk Art] Museum, beginning with The Egg and The Eye Gallery, and then going into early CAFAM, and, we ambitiously chose to put that in the setting of the whole--

JB: History of museums.

MP: Well, history of—not just museums--it was a history of folk [exhibitions] . . . remember--we started with expositions of folk—and we had--oh, Chana Smith came, and did--

JB: She did a lot of research on that.

MP: Oh yeah, she did, and she found some wonderful stuff. We had some great historic photographs. You know, the whole artist movement, and the WPA projects, the stuff—the Native American crafts . . . . I mean, that was fascinating. I'd totally forgotten about that.

JB: Well, yes, there was a part where we talked about—you [talked], I should say—I think you wrote a lot of the label copy.

MP: Well, some of it. [Chana] wrote the timeline. . . . The timeline was hers.

JB: But there was a section that I particularly remember about **[1:40:00]** how folk art—the different ways in which folk art were first exhibited, and it was happening simultaneously—there were venues like the Newark Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art, where Holger Cahill was the curator, where these objects were shown as art, which is what, you know, The Egg and The Eye Gallery and the Craft and Folk Art Museum had done. But, simultaneously, there were these other exhibitions in some of the World's Fairs--

MP: World's Fairs, and various types of expositions, yeah. But there was some big thing in Washington—I remember Chana came up with. I don't remember where that was. And it was literally—it was a huge American craft exhibit that would have been in the '30s or the '40s, and it was state by state. [Marcie is referring to the Index of American Design, which was a WPA Federal Art Project run by Holger Cahill, 1935 – 1942; artists were hired to paint watercolors of traditional American arts and crafts made before about 1890, most of which is now considered to be “folk art.”]

JB: Yes, and the point being that these kinds of things had been shown for some time in exhibits, but in a different context—in a context that was really more cultural, included some cultural context, whereas the Holger Cahills, and the Abby Aldrich Rockefellers, were collecting folk art and displaying it as art objects [in museums], without any context at all. So, that was interesting.

MP: It was against our original philosophy to do that, though. I mean, that was Edith's thing . . . she did appreciate them aesthetically--very much so—I mean, that was, I'm sure, her first attraction. But she also wanted the context.

JB: Yes, she did. Well, we could probably talk all day just about that, but--moving along--we had our big opening, it was a whole weekend [May 12 – 14, 1995], and I know that you were involved with just getting these exhibitions up, but they did all open on the Friday night of that weekend, for the gala-under-the-tent-dinner hoo-hah. It really was very exciting—you were probably exhausted--

MP: Yes—well, everybody was exhausted.

JB: Yes, we were—I can remember commiserating with [staff] people about how when they would get home, they didn't even want to hang up their clothes (laughter), they were so tired—they just fell into bed. But I think we all showed up for that dinner.

MP: Yeah, I sort of—I have a vague recollection, [of] going up and down the stairs, and saying whatever I had to say to people (laughter). I do remember being there; I don't remember anything about it.

JB: So--but there was a dinner on Friday night, and then there was, on Saturday, there was a day that was supposedly just for members. And I think we all took a turn at—we had some tables set up in the front **[phone rings]**--oops, hold on. **[Recorder pauses and is, accidentally, not turned back on right away, so some of the interview is not recorded. The conversation turned to the exhibitions that were mounted after the re-opening.]**

MP: . . . I think I was just making the point, relative to The Splendor of the Dragon: [Costumes of the Ryukyu Kingdom; opened November 10, 1995], that that one, we did have a serious community involvement with, and it paid off.

JB: Oh, yeah, and there was a grant from the NEA for that. That was Gloria Gonick's show. School of Fisch was the Arlene Fisch show—[she was an important teacher and designer of jewelry].

MP: [The show was of her work] and her students'--contemporary jewelry.

JB: And Carol Fulton--I think—she was the designer for all of them?

MP: She designed all of them. I don't think we had an outside designer. . . . I don't think any of the rest of those exhibitions had an outside designer. I mean, I wasn't there for the last two, but I'm sure she must have done [them]—there was almost no staff by that time, so they wouldn't have had any money [to hire an outside designer].

JB: Well, she really wanted to be a full-time designer, which she finally did become, but not before she left the museum. [Even after she started designing all of the CAFAM shows, she continued to have the position of registrar—though she had an assistant, who did a lot of the actual cataloging.] And then [looking at the exhibition list], The Eye and the Hand: [Arts and Crafts of Morocco; opened May 3, 1996], you got to know the curator of that show pretty well, **[1:45:00]** James Jereb. He had been to Morocco, I guess--

MP: James Jereb, yes. I think he'd gone quite a bit, because he'd been, I think, a dealer, and he bought things, and then he would come back and sell them to people, and the exhibition consisted of some things in his personal collection, but mostly things that he had collected, and then sold to various collectors, and he borrowed back for the exhibition. And that had a pretty extensive publication [*Arts and Crafts of Morocco*] that was a [1996] commercial publication from [Chronicle Books], that documented most of what was in the show, but had quite a lot of good, interesting material in it about the different traditions in Morocco.

JB: I think that was a really popular show--

MP: I think so--people really liked it.

JB: And it included those [Jean] Besançenot photographs [taken in Morocco between 1934 – 1939].

MP: Right, which were difficult to obtain, because the daughter of the photographer had the copyright on them, and she was very difficult to deal with. But in the end, she finally did allow us to have a small collection of them. [The reprinting and matting and framing of them was paid for by the Ethnic Arts Council—an L.A. collectors' group not associated with CAFAM—and then they were given to the CAFAM library, which went to LACMA when CAFAM closed temporarily in 1998; the photographs were consequently given to the LACMA Costume and Textiles department.]

JB: And then, the Bauer pottery show [Bauer: Classic American Pottery; opened May 25, 1996]—tell about that.

MP: That was curated by someone from LACMA, who was not a curator—he was the senior editor, actually, of their publications, and I can't (laughter) remember his name—I feel really bad about that.

JB: I can fill that in. [Mitch Tuchman.]

MP: Right, but I think this was mostly his collection, because he personally collected Bauer, and he [and Peter Brenner] had written a book about it that was published by Chronicle Books [*Bauer: Classic American Pottery*, 1995], so, again, there wasn't a catalog per se, but most of what was in the exhibit was documented in one of his books.

JB: And, there was another fellow that was involved who had worked with CAFAM in the past--Bill [Stern]—he's a collector of California pottery, and I think he may have--

MP: He may have lent to that also?

JB: Lent to it, and maybe even gave a lecture—I don't remember.

MP: That's possible. I don't remember him.

JB: And then the Lia Cook show, which was--

MP: It was stunningly beautiful, but I don't think it was very popular. I just . . . . I don't remember seeing a lot of people in there—I thought it was really sad, because her work is unbelievable in both technique and in sheer beauty.

JB: That was in the 5800--

MP: The 5800 gallery, yes--and Carol did a wonderful [job with the installation design]—I think when Lia came to see the exhibition, she was very surprised by the color of the walls, because normally, she had seen her things displayed on white walls, but, I'm remembering that Carol took some purple and blues...

JB: It was kind of a burgundy color, wasn't it?

MP: Well, a purply maybe...but, maybe it was burgundy. I don't know...it just made those weavings just pop off the walls, and seem to float in space. Lia was really excited when she saw it, because she had not thought about using color as a background for her pieces.

JB: I remember finding out that she had, I think, an undergraduate degree in theater, and her pieces—for our show, anyway—a lot of them were [images of] theatrical curtains. They were draped...

MP: Yes, and the illusion—it was illusion . . . allusion and illusion--right? Because they did look three-dimensional, especially in the light and in the way they were displayed.

JB: And the technique used was a classic French tapestry technique, which, as you said, it was amazing. [I think we found out she had studied at Aubusson.]

MP: It was very difficult, and time-consuming, and fussy, and all those things. But they were very beautiful.

JB: Now, before we go any further, I think we've got to—in spite of the late hour...how are we doing for your time?

MP: Oh, well, the kid [Marcie's grandson] gets home—I have to leave at 2 o'clock.

JB: Well, all right—if it's all right with you, I'd like to continue--

MP: Just finish—we're almost at the end.

JB: Because, at the same time that you were doing all of this work, and all of us, really, were proceeding as if the museum was going to continue into eternity, there was a lot of drama going on administratively. First, on a happier note, in July, right after we had reopened, a couple of months after we had reopened, Frank Wyle resigned as board chairman—I say happy, because **[1:50:00]** he had served through this really critical time of getting the museum a new space, and he was happy to relinquish it [i.e., the chairmanship] and they found this fellow, Bud Knapp, who had been head of Peterson Publishing, to be the new chair, so that happened, and I think at that moment, in July of '95, we all felt like, you know, here we are sailing into--

MP: Whatever the new thing is.

JB: --whatever the new thing is. Now, you may want to fill in—I have as the next sort of drama that less than a year later, in April of '96, Patrick announced his resignation. Do you remember anything that was going on between those two?

MP: Yeah—I mean, there were certainly undercurrents. I think--at the time, I thought that the board was scapegoating him [that is, Patrick]—that was my opinion—and, I don't know if it was a personality problem, or what. I certainly, personally, was not a big fan of Bud Knapp, but, you know, it's easy to not like the president of your board (laughter) when they're making decisions

that are unpopular with the staff. But there were—I just remember that money really had become increasingly the object. I mean, it wasn't happening. And I'm not sure exactly if you could pinpoint any blame there.

JB: Well, I think there was a confluence of events, not the least of which was a period when there was a major economic recession.

MP: Yes—well, that's true, and we didn't recover--I mean, we didn't really have enough money to finish the rehabilitation of the building, and I believe that—I think that was made possible by Lloyd Cotsen stepping in--

JB: He did give a million dollars—earlier--he gave a million dollars.

MP: But, it was in order—you know, I think that was out of his loyalty to Edith, because he just didn't want to put any more money there, and I think that was true of a lot of people who had been the regular donors over the years—they just felt drained, and, I don't know if people thought that Patrick could be beating the bushes for more money, or something—you know, I just don't really remember anything except that I did feel that he was being scapegoated, so, my opinion about that can go on the record.

I didn't think our board of trustees was doing their job, which is, if you vote a budget in, then you're obligated to get out there and help raise the money, and they weren't doing that. And, I think there was also this attitude on the part of Bud Knapp, and maybe some other board members—I can't remember, some of the newer ones--you know, that was the point at which it was like, “Well, museums should be run like any other business.” Well, they're not. And they never will be, and when you get these business types onto your boards and they're in control—and, you know, they're just looking at balance sheets--you can't always put a dollar value on community involvement. I mean, you have to, but philanthropically speaking, there are people who are willing to give for that kind of thing, but they do have to be approached. I think that Patrick spent a lot of time trying to make friends and get money for the museum.

JB: He did.

MP: And he was probably seriously broken down himself, because of that whole—and probably tired of being blamed by both the staff [and the board]—because we blamed him, we were always sniping at him...

JB: Well, he—I think we mentioned this before—he wasn't always available when we thought we needed him, but I do know that he was working for the museum a lot of the time when we didn't necessarily know where he was. We did have a new development officer that came on-- I don't remember if it was before...I think it was—I think Sue Sirkus was still with us during the Homecoming.

MP: Yeah, I think so, because **[1:55:00]**--no, she didn't go until she got unceremoniously dumped. Don't you remember?

JB: No. Sue Sirkus?

MP: Oh, no. That was the one before. Kim was the one.

JB: Sue quit, I think, out of frustration—not being able to accomplish the financial goals that she wanted to. [Sue Sirkus resigned 18 months before the re-opening.]

MP: And then Kim [Litsey] came in.

JB: And then Kim came in. [Kim Litsey was hired in April 1994.] . . . Nancy Fister had been--

MP: Her assistant.

JB: --her [development] assistant, and then, very suddenly, after Patrick announced his resignation, it was made known for a very short time that they were looking for an acting director, and I think most of us were kind of shocked when suddenly, we realized that Nancy Fister had volunteered for that job. I don't mean volunteered; [I mean applied.]

MP: No—she went to Bud Knapp and she convinced him that she could do it, that she had the right stuff. So—she was very ambitious.

JB: Very—and it was she who was responsible for Kim's leaving very abruptly.

MP: Well, that was her first official act, was to escort her out of the building. That was really ugly. She—I don't know what she was thinking, because it blew her chances, in my opinion anyway, of having the rest of the staff, you know, have any respect for her whatsoever. I mean, I certainly didn't.

JB: Yeah, I didn't know what to think of her. I thought when she was first hired that she understood what the library was doing—and she did support the library. Well...as much as any other department.

MP: Well, she supported my Low-Rider exhibition, to the tune of taking it to the Petersen [Automotive Museum, which was where she went after CAFAM closed], but that was after the museum [CAFAM] had closed, so it was obvious . . . [CAFAM wasn't] going to be able to do anything with it.

JB: Well, after Kim was let go, there were a number of other cuts that didn't include either you or me, but I think our assistants—I had two part-time assistants at that point--

MP: I had one, but she was—that was Carla, but she had a baby, and she couldn't work anymore anyway. So, I just never got another one.

JB: Yeah...well, either people were laid off, or positions were frozen during Nancy Fister's time. And then, at about the same time, there was a kind of final attempt to buy the 5800 Wilshire building, and for reasons that I have still not completely discovered, that was never--that couldn't happen. Joseph Ventress, the owner, simply refused to sell the building for the price that Frank Wyle—[or] basically the CAFAM board--offered.

MP: I think Wally Marks was the real-estate person on the board, wasn't he?

JB: He was helping a great deal.

MP: I think he said that it was overpriced—I mean, Ventress had him over a barrel, and he knew it, and he was going to hold out for as much as he could get. So, and once that fell through, you know . . . .

JB: Well, apparently--I don't know, it may have been coincidental, but Bud Knapp did resign just a couple months after that happened, in August of '96, and Frank Wyle, very reluctantly, took over as board chair, again, and I believe that at that time, Edith Wyle was already ill. She—you would still see her--coming in with Frank once in a while, but now, I want to mention something else, which was very wonderful for you, and for all of us--and I was very impressed by--the article that appeared in *Artweek Magazine* in November of '96.

MP: Oh, the one by Colette Chattopadhyay?

JB: Yes—oh, I'm so glad you pronounced her name (laughter)...

MP: Well, because she's done two exhibitions for PAM [the Pacific Asia Museum]—that's why.

JB: Well, it was a very interesting article—I have a copy of it--

MP: I do, too.

JB: Well, I would certainly think so.

MP: No, that was fun. She interviewed me over the telephone, actually, you know--and I read it sometimes, and I think, yeah, I sort of knew what I was doing.

JB: I thought--**[2:00:00]** I re-read it again last night, and I thought it was very articulate about craft, and function, and--

MP: Well, those were all things that we were struggling with at the time, and ideas, and so on. I just think the museum had so much potential, and I'm sorry it just got bogged down in all of the unfortunate things that it did. Because we were headed in the right direction.

JB: We were, we really were, and we had some really talented people. We don't have time to talk about them [all] individually, but when we were talking about some of the changes we made, back in the early '90s, one of the changes was, we really aggressively went after people of color to be on our staff, and there were quite--

MP: Oh, that's true.

JB: I mean, that was when Phyllis [Chang, who was Korean American] was hired [as Museum Educator], and—I'm blanking out--the Chinese American woman who was our publicist—lovely woman, who went on to the Getty. [Jean Miao.] [And my part-time assistant for a while was a UCLA library school student, who was African American—Latonya Jefferson.] Anyway, there were quite a few [more] people that made our staff more diverse than it had been. So, Nancy Fister was the acting director for [just] a few months, really.

MP: Yeah, and then they brought in that other person.

JB: Yes, in January of '97, a fellow named Paul Kusserow--

MP: I couldn't remember his name. [Laughter]

JB: You had blotted it out.

MP: Blotted it out, yeah.

JB: He was touted as being--

MP: Oh, Edith was—she just loved him.

JB: --partly because he had worked at [Colonial] Williamsburg. Well, he hadn't worked as a curator at Williamsburg, or on the art side--

MP: He was more like a businessman.

JB: Yes. He [had] worked in the finance department there.

MP: Well, I think that maybe that was one of the things that attracted them to him. He came highly recommended by somebody they—I can't remember.

JB: John Walsh, who was the director of the museum at the Getty—I think Paul's wife was related to him, or something like that. There was a connection.

MP: Yeah, it's coming back to me, sort of. So, that's how the museum—he wanted to come back to California [from Williamsburg], and I think that John Walsh then said, “OK, here is this little museum that needs somebody like you . . . .”

JB: So, when he was first hired, I mean, we were, kind of—I think our heads were spinning from all of this stuff that had been going on, but, we wanted to [laughter] believe that he was going to turn the place around—that was what he was hired for. And he had a series of meetings [with staff]. You remember the meetings--

MP: Yes, I do, . . . he had a personal interview with each one of us, and he asked a bunch of questions, and I remember that I said what I thought. I mean, I was not very political. So--and I think he didn't like some of the things I said.

JB: Well--but that was shortly after he was hired, so you weren't saying things about him, personally--

MP: No, not at all. Just--what did I think the main problems of the museum were? And I said some of the things that I felt.

JB: Do you remember what any of those were?

MP: Well...I think that I said that in spite of the respect that I have for her, that I thought that Edith was a factor, that she could not let go of a certain idea of the museum. That it was a founder's mentality, and [the board] was still being—trying to be--controlled by that. And the time had gone for that. It was—we needed to move into a different philosophy, and she needed to let go. And I just—I really did feel that she was a holding-back factor. Because she still had a ton of influence.

JB: Well, I was going to say, it wasn't her just hanging around the museum that was the problem--

MP: No, not at all--

JB: It was her influence on the board.

MP: On the board, right, which, Frank Wyle, her husband, was chairman of . . . more often than not. I think that—I did think that was a problem—that she didn't let go in the way that she should have let go. She still wanted it to be her vision of what she had when it was first started, and it couldn't move on. It was stuck in the water. I mean, we were trying [to progress]—look at all this stuff we tried to do.

JB: Yes, yes.

MP: But **. . . [2:05:00]** . . . I also was probably highly uncomplimentary to our board, too.

JB: Well...that's understandable.

MP: I mean, I blamed them for the fact that we had money problems. First of all--what were they doing voting in budgets, if they didn't know where the money was going to come from?

JB: It was kind of a Ponzi scheme, in a way. (Laughter)

MP: Yes, it was--it was--because they'd vote the budget in, then know the money wouldn't get raised, and then you'd have to cut programs, or staff, or something, in order to balance the budget.

JB: They were always hopeful that grants were going to [save us]. The number of grant proposals that were written in this whole period, in the '90s, was amazing.

MP: Well, we had full-time development people, and Nancy Fister wrote a lot of them [in the last few years]. And I thought she was a good grant writer. I didn't fault her on that. She worked on some things that were ideas of mine.

JB: And then Paul hired Martha Lynn to be curator.

MP: Well, not until after he got rid of me, because he couldn't hire Martha--

JB: Oh, is that right?

MP: Yes. My position—he eliminated my position--from budgetary considerations—that's what my severance letter says--and then he took my salary, and jacked it up by $5,000, because I was making, like, 45 [thousand] or something, and then he hired Martha Lynn for 50 [thousand]. And they thought that they were going to get—yeah. I got axed, and Martha Lynn came in.

Now, I could see that they wanted a big-name curator—she . . . was a very validated curator--but, once again, it's like, "OK, let's backslide," because you get somebody like Martha Lynn in there, and she is a totally traditional curator. She's not going to go for team exhibition development. In fact, they were never going to be able to get a curator of that type into that museum, no matter how much money they had, as long as we had team exhibition development. She was not open to new ideas. What was her first show? Collectors—it was the Kamms' collection, right?

JB: The teapots, I guess.

MP: Right. Well, what was that? [Tantalizing Teapots: The Felicitous Union of Form and Content, Selections from the Collection of Gloria and Sonny Kamm; opened September 19, 1997.] Well at least Sonny wasn't on our board anymore.

JB: So, you were let go then in--

MP: I was writing the label copy for I Once Was Lost when he came over to the cottage to tell me--

JB: When was that?

MP: Well, when was that? February 21, 1997.

JB: So it was February '97. I guess Martha must have been hired right after that.

MP: Well, obviously, he already had it all planned, but he needed to get rid of me, because he didn't have any money. He said I was too burned out to be useful to him in rebuilding the museum—that was the reason he was getting rid of me. But, I went, "Phh..."

JB: Well, I [was] laid off [a few weeks later]—I remember that I was still coming in--

MP: But you were working for nothing!

JB: I was, you know . . . . [I was trying to salvage the CAFAM library—and, later, the archives.] But I remember talking to you on the phone right after that had happened—that was a very, very sad time.

MP: Well, I mean, to me, [the museum was] backsliding—because I considered the hiring of Martha Lynn to be backsliding, into the old ways of looking at things. [I thought it] was the death knell for

that museum anyway—[for it] to be any place of substance or innovation. That wasn't going to happen.

And, in fact, I don't even know why--I don't know, because I was totally out of contact with [CAFAM] people—I don't know how it all ended, or why. I heard rumors over at PAM about some Getty grant that had allegedly been misused, and Frank Wyle had to repay it, but I don't know what the truth of that is. That's gossip, on this tape. (Laughter)

JB: Well—yeah. I mean, there were many factors. It just--what Paul Kusserow said was that he kept finding huge debts—you know, matching grants that we weren't able to match, and outstanding debts—very large, outstanding debts to contractors, to any number of people. And Frank did finally pay them all off, before the museum closed. I was just realizing—I guess I hadn't been laid off entirely. I think I did work [for a salary] until April of that year, part-time, and then [after that, I] got into this whole business about what was going to happen to the library, and so on. At some point, in mid-year, **[2:10:00]** I finally just was laid off completely. And I continued to do what needed to be done to resolve the issue of the library—to get it adopted by . . . [someplace] else. That was really all I was doing for the last half of the year—packing up and so on. It was a very, very sad--very sad time.

MP: Yeah, it must have been. Thank God that you saved the Language of Objects material from Martha Lynn throwing it all out.

JB: Yeah, I . . . that was hard, because I had to actually just bring it to my house for a while.

MP: Yeah, I remember—you called me and told me that you were doing it, and I thought, “Well, that sums her [Martha Lynn] up—she did not see the value of that.” There was nothing in it that was of interest to her, and she just said, “Dump it.” . . . So, that clues you right there to the kind of person that they had hired.

JB: And they [UCLA Special Collections] are keeping it . . . . After I had started working on what became the CAFAM archive--all of the [staff] files, . . . that woman—I wish I could remember her name, who was Carol's partner—you know--you said she was helping with [the Homecoming exhibitions]--

MP: Victoria.

JB: Victoria! She's the one who came to me at some point . . . [in the spring] or something, of '97, and said, “You know, Carol has been told to just toss out all these files.” Well, it turned out “all these files” were staff files—you know, from everybody [who had ever worked at CAFAM]! Every department, going all the way back to [the start of] The Egg and The Eye [Gallery] in 1965—well, there's a relatively small amount from The Egg and The Eye--but, you know: the Festival of Masks; all the exhibitions; accounting—most of the accounting files we did toss out, because that was proprietary--but, we have a lot of the financial information anyway that ended up in other

people's files; all the development files; of course, all of Patrick's and a lot of Edith's material, from the early years. It was—I had no idea, when I said to Victoria, “I guess you're right . . . .” I had never considered that I was going to have anything to do with that.

MP: Oh my God.

JB: But I agreed that it needed to be saved, at least until it could be gone through. And we did have people coming from the Getty, and from UCLA, and from the Beverly Hills Public Library, and the L.A. Public Library. [We got eight proposals—offers—all together.] Some of them were interested only in the library materials. Some of them were interested only in the archives. And that's what happened—they did get split up. The library went to LACMA, and the archives went to UCLA.

MP: Well, but still--they still exist.

JB: They still exist, and the reason I even brought this up is because the Language of Objects objects, which we--for a while--were trying to find another home for, because they take up a lot of space, and [are in] big boxes--

MP: Why wouldn't the Fowler want them?

JB: The Fowler [director and curator] came over and looked. I actually spent a couple of days unpacking a lot of it and spreading it out on tables.

MP: But they have that big kente [collection]—they weren't even interested in the McDonald's kente?

JB: Yes, but the main reason--after hearing you talk about the kente show, I realized—[was] because they said they already had objects that were pretty representative--

MP: Oh, of similar things?

JB: Similar things. See, they were moving on in their thinking also, just as we were. And so, even though it seemed like a great idea for them to take it, it ended up that they were really only interested in about three things. One was the wonderful Virgin of Guadalupe that was made by that fellow [Lorenzo Goytia] that had the shop on Sunset Boulevard.

MP: Yeah, and . . . [His shop is] gone now.

JB: Oh, it is?

MP: Yeah.

JB: I've been telling people it's still there.

MP: I don't think so—I drove by there and I didn't see it.

JB: Oh. And the *papel picado* of Olga [Ponce] Furginson. And, what else...there were just a few things like that, that were unusual, that they did not have representative samples of. And...so it

all got packed up [again], and everything . . . was transferred from the department that we were [originally] under, [which was Arts—Special Collections] to UCLA [Library] Special **[2:15:00]** Collections, and they are—as we speak--they're working on inputting the information about those Language of Objects objects—they've decided to keep them.

MP: Oh, that's good. You know, it represents a particular time and place that—stuff that nobody really was documenting, at that time—I think more people are interested now . . . . At that time [in the nineties], I don't think they were. They didn't see kitschy stuff, or—just because it had certain emblems, or had certain signs on it--if it didn't meet the "aesthetic quality" standards, it wasn't worth anything [from a curatorial point of view]. But it is [worth something] as . . . material culture.

JB: Well, at that time . . . it was a critical time in museums, and I think that the Craft and Folk Art Museum really was at the forefront, in its small way . . . and you got the grants to prove it. And, you did write reports on all of those grants—they're in the [archives development files].

MP: Oh, that . . . [Language of Objects report] was humongous! I think you probably have it—the book that we sent to the Getty was this thick. It was enormous.

JB: Yes, I believe so.

MP: Because it had so much stuff.

JB: Visual stuff, yeah. Right. Well, Marcie, I do want to ask you to talk just a little bit about your new job, because very soon [after you left CAFAM]—I don't remember how long it was--but it seems to me it was less than a year, or only a few months—you . . . had a great new job.

MP: Well, I was already working there, because they [CAFAM] had shortened our work week, and I sort of saw the handwriting on the wall—I thought that job wasn't going to last too much longer, but, I had a lot of loyalty, and I wasn't going to leave when they were in the middle of everything. But David Kamansky, who was the director of Pacific Asia Museum, he was having some problems with his registrar, and he asked me if I could spend some time working with her to train her—because they had hired someone who was pretty inexperienced, as a registrar. So I was going over there once a week, on my day off from CAFAM. I was only working ostensibly a four-day work week at CAFAM, so I would work at Pac Asia on Fridays, and sometimes Saturdays, if they were really busy, and that was on a contract basis.

So, when the CAFAM job disappeared, literally overnight, I called David, and he'd already told me, "If you can work full-time, I'll find the money," because he really wanted me there. And so--by the first of April—I think I took a month off, and then, first of April, I went over to the Pacific Asia Museum, as their--

JB: April of '97.

MP: Mm-hm, I was [hired] as their Collections Manager. That was my title. And then, subsequently, after—well, when did I become deputy director? In 2005. So...a few years later. I mean, I was still in charge of the collection, but I had a grander title.

JB: Well, it is a grand title, or was a grand title.

MP: So I finished my career as a deputy director, and I never aspired to be a director, I can tell you, because—that's why--as much as I've criticized both of the directors that I've had--I also had a lot of sympathy for them, and I wouldn't want to be in their shoes.

JB: Well, I suppose, as deputy director, maybe you had more dealings with the board there?

MP: Yes—well, they didn't have a collections management policy when I got there, and so, I was still working on a collections management policy--

JB: And you got some major grants for them--

MP: I did—I got some really good grants for them. The Getty—I have to say that I don't feel particularly validated by either of the museums that I worked for. I do feel validated by the Getty [Trust]. They have given me, collectively, grants--in the two institutions--of, I don't know, maybe 500,000 dollars? And they were really important projects for the museum--but they also made me feel credible--

JB: Like you made a difference.

MP: That I made a difference, because in my own institutions, I was not really supported in those projects. The big one—the biggest one I got for Pacific Asia Museum--the development director didn't want to waste her grant writer's time on that grant, because “we couldn't possibly get it,” and he only worked one day a week, so I had to write it all myself.

JB: And you got it.

MP: And I got it—yeah, I did.

JB: Well, you had already had quite a bit **[2:20:00]** of experience at writing grant proposals.

MP: Well, other people always usually wrote the grants, but I would do a lot of the work on the narratives for the project, because I was good at describing things. So, I suppose I can go into grant writing if I wanted to, but, in fact, I don't.

JB: Well, I'm just so glad that—I know you had some problems at Pacific Asia, but, by and large, you had some opportunities.

MP: Oh, yes, I did.

JB: You deserved—you well deserved [those opportunities], and you had all the experience, I think, that you could have asked for, to work at a place like the Pacific Asia, which, of course, focused on Asian materials.

MP: Right—although the only traveling I did, I always like to say, Hokusai got me to Italy.

JB: Hokusai got you to Italy?

MP: Hokusai got me to Italy, yeah. We lent ten Hokusai works to a museum in Milan for a huge Hokusai retrospective exhibition . . . .

JB: And you got to take them?

MP: I got to take them.

JB: How wonderful!

MP: I love Hokusai, anyway.

JB: Yes, me too. Did you get to go back, and take them back, or--?

MP: No, somebody else . . . yeah, it's not nice to hog the trip both ways (laughter). But, because I had been there, then I went back on my own, because I thought, “oh, I only got to stay there for four days.” And I loved it—I'd never been to Italy.

JB: You got to stay for four days.

MP: The first time that I went--with Hokusai.

JB: Well—so . . . you were at Pacific Asia for ten or eleven years, I think?

MP: Almost eleven, yeah—because I started in April '97, and I retired, officially, September of 2008. So, that would have been just a little *over* eleven years.

JB: Well, certainly, the staff of the Craft and Folk Art Museum appreciated what you did there. I can vouch for that. And, it sounds to me like you had a pretty satisfying time at the Pacific Asia [Museum].

MP: Well, I did projects that I considered worthwhile, or else I wouldn't have stayed. Because, their old director, [David Kamansky], the one who had hired me, retired in 2005, and the new director was one of those business-minded people, so, they're not very tolerant of innovation or creativity. It's like, whatever sells.

JB: I remember that David Kamansky wanted to give you a “farewell CAFAM” party, but at the time--

MP: Oh, he did—[but] I could not allow him to do that.

JB: --you wouldn't let him do that, but I understand that you did have a retirement party from the Pacific Asia Museum--or they gave you a present, anyway. Did they give you a party, too?

MP: Actually, we had a farewell luncheon on my last day, a potluck luncheon, and the people in my department—and some other people from other parts of the museum—privately, maybe, took up a collection, and gave me the machine (laughter)--I like to cook.

JB: A food processor?

MP: . . . It's that super-mixer, the one that comes with the pasta attachments, and all those other things. It's a Kitchen-Aid. So I have the super-duper machine, and it is wonderful, and I do cook a lot in my retirement.

JB: Yes, you're in this beautiful house, and doing all the cooking, I understand, and taking care of your grandson--

MP: Part-time, yes. And no, I don't miss it. [Laughter]

JB: All right.

MP: You're like, “Oh, I know you miss it!” No.

JB: All right. Good. Well, you've been reminiscing with us, now—this is our fourth session. I have not interviewed anyone else for more than three sessions, but I feel like each of these [sessions with you] has been full of really important stories, and I'm so glad that you were willing to talk to us, and remember—it was a while [ago—twelve years ago—that we worked together at CAFAM].

MP: It's good to do life reviews sometimes (laughter), if you can call it that . . . .

[End of Session 4: 2:25:02]