THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Tell me where and when you were born and something about your background.

RC: I was born in a hospital in Chicago but my parents lived in Elmhurst, Illinois, which was a suburb to the west of Chicago, in a small home.

SZ: The date?

RC: August 15, 1930, which presented a big problem for me later -- if you want to have this kind of history -- because I had an older sister who was born on Washington's Birthday, my mother was born on Valentine's Day, and my father was born on Lincoln's Birthday, all February, and there I was in the middle of August.

SZ: Actually, probably it was nice.

RC: So, one of the big things in my life was to discover what happened on August 15, so that I would feel part of this sort of illustrious group of people, and the first thing in school that I found out was it was the Fort Dearborn massacre, which took place, of course, in Chicago, and that was not a very good sign. Then it was [the birthday of] Sir Walter Scott, and I didn't like his writing, anyhow, by that time, and then it was [also the birthday of] Napoleon, which, I thought, that was okay. And then, of course, more religious friends told me it was also the Assumption of the Virgin, so all during my teenage years that was really [Laughter]... so, that gives you some idea. I grew up in Elmhurst and went to...

SZ: Which was what, just a middle-class suburb?

RC: Yes, it was a middle class suburb, large-ish; it's quite large now. My sister is nine and a half years older than I, and she was very bright, and was the valedictorian at her high school and so forth, where she did most of her education, in Elmhurst. When she graduated, or, by the time she graduated, my parents were divorced, and she got a scholarship to the University of Chicago, so it was decided that we would move to the south side of Chicago and she would live at home. And this was at the time when there were a lot of polio crises. A lot of people forget about this. In Chicago I was to start in the second grade at a grammar school that was a public school, which, since it was so near the University of Chicago, a lot of the students were the children of professors, and so our class became an experimental class. But, I couldn't go, until a month late, because the schools were closed, because of polio. And then, I went into the second grade, and in Elmhurst you didn't learn how to write in script until the second grade, and there they learned in the first grade. So the girl in the desk behind me had to teach me how to write. So I have a lousy handwriting, and that's obviously why, because otherwise, if I'd been taught correctly, I'm sure I would have had beautiful handwriting.

SZ: Or if you had gone to a Catholic or parochial school.

RC: Right. One of those things, you know. No actually, my sister had very good handwriting but that also was the difference in education, I think, over the years.

SZ: This was in the middle of the Depression, too, wasn't it?

RC: Yes, well, this was 1938. '38, '37, I can't remember. So my mother worked, not all of the time, but she was working after the divorce, part-time, and my sister, of course, was going to school, and not enjoying taking care of her sister. We were never close until much, much, later, certainly after I came to New York and many, many years. She finished the University with a masters in '41-42 and went to Mexico, and then from Mexico went to New York and worked in New York during the war, and stayed

living in this part of the world. And I continued going to school in Chicago until my freshman year of high school when my mother's work took her to Florida in the middle of the year. So we sublet our apartment to somebody in the Army, because it was during the war, and I went to Miami Beach High; we came back in the spring, and the people wouldn't leave our apartment, so I went to another high school. And then the next year my mother decided that she couldn't do that to me -- of course, I was making terrible grades anyhow -- and so I was sent to private school, sent away to a girls' school, Frances Schimer College, which was a prep school and junior college.

SZ: Where?

RC: In Mount Carroll, Illinois; no, not Mount Carroll; I don't remember where. I get that confused with some of the other places we stayed, because my mother worked as the manager of food concessions at race tracks, so in the summer we would live near the race track, and I think that was when she was at Arlington Park; I think that's where Mount Carroll Illinois is. Isn't that funny; I can't remember. In any case, I was at a girls' school for one year, which was just hideous, and it was so bad that my mother decided not to work in Florida for the next two years so that I could finish high school in one place, and I went to Hyde Park High School.

SZ: That was better?

RC: Well, it was the local high school near where we lived.

SZ: Is that in Chicago?

RC: It's in Chicago. Hyde Park is the area of Chicago I lived in, where the University of Chicago is, and there was the Hyde Park Arts Center, which is now a fairly big, amateur place. I went there for classes, while I was in high school, and I had something exhibited there and appreciated there. It was noted in some kind of little article.

SZ: So you were interested in and talented in what, drawing? Painting?

RC: Well, in those days, of course, you did study a lot of art and music in both grammar school and high school. In fact, I think I may have had those things there when I was in grammar school; I'm almost sure it was grammar school. And then, I was one of the kids, close to five hundred kids from public schools, who got scholarships to go to drawing class at the Art Institute of Chicago in the auditorium, and I used to help the fellow who set up the things. I was okay, nothing great. In high school, I was able to go to some of the classes in the Art Institute of Chicago school. And so, I was one of the better kids in the art class in high school and always thought that I would be in the arts, from high school on.

SZ: Did your mother like to look at things?

RC: Yes, well, my mother was a typical immigrant. She came over when she was about four years old, lived in pretty big poverty when she was a child, went to school through her second year of high school in a secretarial course, and so she really had very little exposure to culture. My father also was an immigrant. He came over I think when he was a little older but not much. They settled in Omaha, and he was largely self-taught. He used to say, "I went to the eighth grade; that's all. I never went to the seventh and I never went to the rest of them." [Laughter] But he ended up being very cultured in an interesting way. A lot of what I was exposed to was because I was the child of a divorced set of parents and my father used to take me to the Art Institute on Sundays when he had me. It was a good way of babysitting. There weren't malls then [laughter] and things like the kids go to now, and it was also fairly neutral territory. My sister was very gifted. She was a very good pianist and poet, got prizes and things like that when she was in high school. She was an English Lit major at the University of Chicago, and when we lived in our apartment in Chicago it was she who got a picture for our walls. I mean, we had some of the Godey ladies prints and she decided that was too old- fashioned, and she got a reproduction of a painting of a Gauguin landscape. It's a very famous one; I can't remember where that painting is [today]. Anyway, so that was always over our couch, and there was a painting of her when she was a little girl. My father was a

printer, and in the Depression, or before, many people used to pay him with services. We had an oriental rug that came from one of those, a grand piano came from that kind of thing, as far as I know, and somebody in the building where he had his shop was a painter for brochures, or whatever, he painted my sister, a portrait of my sister, which is still up in her house in Connecticut. But this was an ever-looming presence, this little girl in a brown velvet dress and lace collar. So that would be out on the wall. Later on -- we never really could collect anything, there were some books. We didn't have a big library or anything. I remember two bookshelves that had mother-in-law tongues -- I can't remember what kind of plant that is, but we used to call it mother-in-law's tongues -- that would stand above. I learned piano too -- actually taught myself piano because I was jealous that my sister could play -- and so I learned how to read music, and that's always been a thing I've loved to do, to just read music on the piano, play the piano, not for anybody, but I did study.

SZ: Your father was a printer; he printed what?

RC: Well, originally, when he was very, very young, he worked in a printing plant and he was a union organizer, and he became very important as a unionist. And when he came to Chicago he published a paper called *The Unionist*, during which time he wasn't necessarily a printer. He opened his own shop where he did, you know, stationery, ads, all sorts of things, but he had worked as a journeyman printer in newspapery kinds of places. In the Depression, of course, there he was, a small businessman, so he organized the Small Businessmen's League of America. He was always organizing. He organized his first union, I think, when he was sixteen, and continued, you know, never making any money. I mean, he was always without money.

SZ: Did he care?

RC: Uh, no, but he was really a politician at heart, and the Sundays that we didn't go the Art Institute we would go to Indiana, where he had a broadcast on Sunday mornings, whipping up enthusiasm for organizing small businessmen or whatever. He had to go there because he had been arrested for some kind of thing that he did -- I must

ask my sister some day to set me straight on it -- in Illinois, so he couldn't broadcast out of Illinois. And I remember that was really some studio, WHIP it was. The studio was a huge room with oriental carpets all over the floors; I remember that. But in any case, he was a brilliant man who, had he had the opportunities that people would have had much later or in a different part of the world, or whatever, he would have done pretty well in politics, I'm pretty sure. He later, as he got older -- he was considerably older than my mother, so besides the difference of nine and a half years between me and my sister, when I was born he was well into his middle age -- when he got to be seventy-two, you could earn as much money as you wanted to, you know, that was the rule... he decided that he hadn't been doing very well, and I'm not sure even that he was in business, but he decided to get his union card back, and they really didn't want to have him back in the union because he caused trouble. They knew he caused trouble; and the minute he got in, he started pressuring them to get those people who had to drop their union cards during the Depression, to have all that time counted for their retirements so they could go to the -- there's a famous retirement home for printers in, I think, Colorado. Not that he wanted to, but he thought -- he was always doing it for other people. He also was one of the pioneers for senior citizens' rights, and he was instrumental in getting discounted bus fares in Chicago for senior citizens -- it was a first -- and he lobbied and spoke in Congress for Medicare, and, in fact, was one of very few of the older people, before Gray Panthers and stuff like that, to do these things. And then, of course, we loved the situation that, right after Medicare was put into business, was just about the time my mother had turned sixty-five and she had a ruptured appendix, and so she was the first one in the family [laughing] who could use it. Anyhow, he died at eighty-nine, and had hoped to live to a hundred. He was that kind of -- he was a style of person, I mean, he had the style of those people who are sort of evangelical, and who have always fascinated me. Charismatic, able to convince anybody of anything -- the patent medicine salesman type person -- who would go from one fad to the other. One year, mother said, he ate only white things, things that were white, or didn't eat anything that was white. And he had a friend who he called Mr. "Roddergay". Rodriguez was his name, who believed that if you exhaled a lot in puffs it would make you very healthy and you'd live very much longer. It was just one thing after another. It was really fun, but wild. Anyway, so that's my family. My sister was, is, a

writer, and was an editor for Viking first, and she at a very young age rewrote *Cannery Row* for [John] Steinbeck and [Gene] Fowler's *Farewell Sweet Prince* about John Barrymore, and then worked at E. P. Dutton for many, many, many years.

SZ: So she is really a New Yorker.

RC: She was. I mean, she got married in New York, and had her first two children. She always lived in the Village, which was very exciting for me, and during my first trip to New York, when I was nineteen, I think, I visited her [there]. Then they lived up in Rockland County. My brother-in-law was in advertising, and so he was always moving his jobs -- you know, you lose the account, you lose the job. And he was rather gifted. He wrote songs, music, and he had written a musical comedy when he was in college. They were always writing, trying to write a play together, and things like that. He never got published; she has had a couple of books published. Always wants another one, but, you know how it is. And she's been retired now -- she's just going to be seventy-five in February -- and Dutton changed hands several times, so she had to leave early. They wanted to put her on half time so she became a consultant there for a few years, and then that was the end. She's done a few things like teach English and stuff like that at the University of Connecticut in Danbury.

SZ: Is that where she lives, in Danbury?

RC: No, she lives in Roxbury. So, is that enough background?

SZ: Yes. You were saying that once you were in high school you knew that somehow you would do something in the arts.

RC: Well, I liked that part, and I hated mathematics and I never even took chemistry and a lot of those things. I still do. [Laughing] So when I was ready to apply for college, I had one problem, which was, it was 1946-47, '47, and there were all these vets, and it was very hard to get into any college except your state university, and I didn't really want to go there, though I applied because I didn't have good grades in the first two years --they were really lousy -- and maybe even the first three years. And

there was no question that I could go to any place famous on the east coast, or anything. I certainly never wanted to go to a girls' school again. And so my sister was living in New York and I had said, "Gee, I think I'd like to be a stage designer." Didn't want to be a painter, particularly. I'd gone to the Art Institute of Chicago's Oxbow Camp on a fellowship -- that's their summer thing -- and, oh, I studied lithography there, I mean, I did lithographs there, and I tried to paint a painting. It didn't work out too well, but I had never tried to do anything in oil before. But almost everybody there, all the men, certainly, had been vets, so they were considerably older than I was, and it was a revelation, because, of course, it was the first time I could see artists living, because by that time, whether they were still in school or not, it was a different group of people, and I liked the group of people. So I thought I should do something practical, having never been involved in the drama area of the high school [laughter] until the senior year, and then I did a couple of things for the senior play, from the design point of view. But that's all. I don't know where it got into my mind.

SZ: You mean, you didn't go to the theater?

RC: A little bit, The Goodman Theater at the Art Institute was really the only place. There was very little theater in Chicago, and I wasn't at Northwestern, which was the theater school. I wasn't out in that part of the world where there was a lot more theater.

SZ: So as a teenager, that wasn't something that really pulled you.

RC: No, I went to the ballet. I loved the ballet. My mother always hoped I'd be a ballerina and I studied ballet when I was a little girl, but one day in winter I was left outside the ballet school for hours, because the teacher never showed up. So that was the end of my ballet. [Laughing] But my sister then living in New York was very friendly with a lot of theater people, and one of her best friends was the producer of *The Glass Menagerie*. And so she knew [Tennessee] Williams, she knew Laurette Taylor, she knew all these people. So they all got together and decided how I should...

SZ: Who was the producer of *Glass Menagerie*?

RC: Well, he was the packager, I don't think the producer. His name was Bill Gould. And I think de Liagre or somebody like that was the producer. But I wasn't here. I hadn't gotten to New York yet. It was all this big mystery out here. My sister was having a great time, we always thought. And so they all worked out what my itinerary would be for going through college. I was to go to the University of Iowa for two years, because it had a good art school. And then I was to go to Chapel Hill. I couldn't go to Chapel Hill the first two years because it was only a boys school. It was the state university and it was strictly for males for the first two years. And then, after I graduated, I would go to Yale.

SZ: So they had it all planned out.

RC: It was <u>all</u> planned out.

SZ: To the Yale Drama School.

RC: Of course!... where I would learn the last, you know, the latest, great things about stage design. And so I actually did get into the University of Iowa. I think I heard a week before I was to go. And I lived in a quonset hut surrounded by a big ditch.

SZ: That had to be somewhat of a big, sort of a weird change, wasn't it?

RC: Well, I've been very, very -- flexible is not the word -- very unsophisticated, in looking at a new place or being in a new place. I've not been judgmental at all. And as far as I was concerned, a new experience was a new experience. I mean, it was really exciting. Here we were living twelve girls in a quonset hut. Dottie [Dorothy] Mayhall, who used to be the head of the Art Lending Service at the Museum [of Modern Art], was our house mother. She was a graduate student in sculpture, a sculptor. There were, I think, three of us who were majoring in studio art out of the twelve. I still have a friend who was a roommate -- and she lives in New York -- from this period. In fact, we met on the train going out there. The place was unfinished. There was a

huge moat around the whole thing. You had to go across on wood planks because they hadn't got the whole steam system in yet. Iowa City has a river that goes through it, and it was right across the river from the art building, so it was very, very convenient to be an art major. And it was very exciting. All of the fellows were older.

SZ: Because everybody was back from the war?

RC: Back from the war. Iowa was a dry state. You could only get liquor if you were over twenty-one. They were over twenty-one, so you could always go out with them. Otherwise, you had to drink beer in the taverns; but that was a very popular thing to do. And the first year was really a very good orientation year. I had to take remedial mathematics, and for years my worst nightmares were that I had not gone to class, [laughter] that I didn't go to mathematics class.

SZ: [Laughing] I think I've had those before.

RC: [Laughing] Everybody has. But it was a very good university. At that time there were really good teachers, some foreign ones too, over from the war. Good philosophy and history and art history. One was William Heckscher, who then went back to Utrecht where he had come from before the war. I wasn't too happy, but not too unhappy, there.

SZ: Now how was it? This was your first time away, I assume.

RC: No, I had gone to that girls' school, and had that awful experience, so it was much better than that. [Laughter] I learned how to smoke. I never smoked before then. And I learned how to drink. I hadn't really had much more than a pink lady [Laughing] or something like that before. But it was not very much fun living in bunks in an open room, and it was hard to study. They didn't have sorority rushing until sophomore year. Then you went in right away. It was very hard, freshman year. But I would say, three quarters of my roommates rushed, because the only alternative was to live in a very huge female dorm. I mean, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people. And I had this really interesting reason that I gave myself,

which was that I didn't have a clue to what it was like to be Jewish. I had never been brought up religiously, although my grandfather was Orthodox and we would visit him, and I resented having to be taken out of school for the holidays.

SZ: But your parents weren't practicing?

RC: My father never, and my mother, of course. My mother still spoke Yiddish, and spoke to her mother in Yiddish. My grandmother was very nearby during a lot of my youth because she was in a nursing home near our house and we would visit. But she couldn't speak by that time. And so, I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea. And not only that, it was a smaller place to live after the first year.

SZ: So you mean it was a Jewish sorority?

RC: There was one Jewish sorority, and I got in, we all got in to the ones we wanted. All the girls got in. We were an extremely bright group. Our quonset hut, interestingly, was all people who either had honors or came from New York, or Chicago, or Cleveland. You know, it was very interesting. And we all did fairly well in school, though we didn't keep up too much with each other later on. I didn't leave after my sophomore year after all, I was there three and a half years.

SZ: You defied the plan.

RC: Yes, well, I defied the plan. I decided -- I have a story which, if you haven't heard it, you're the last person.

SZ: [Laughter] Well, then, I am the last person.

RC: In my sophomore year I was taking life drawing. When you major in studio art at Iowa you had to take art history 30 hours, and vice versa, so if you majored in art history you had to take studio art for 30 hours. So I had already begun to take a course with Heckscher -- maybe it was into the third or fourth month -- and he was a fascinating, fascinating teacher. My life drawing class was after lunch, and all the

studio teachers and a lot of the art history teachers, would all go out and have, drink their lunch, practically. It was a great time, and particularly my drawing teacher, whose name -- he's a, you know, fairly long time artist in America, James Lechay -- came back, and he used to lean over everybody, and you could always smell the wine or whatever they'd been drinking. And that one day he leaned over me, and -- I wasn't too bad; I had been drawing for a long while -- he said to me, "Did you ever think of majoring in art history?". That was his criticism.

SZ: I read that in one of your speeches. So how did that make you feel?

RC: As I say, I was happy to take anybody's ideas. I didn't like criticism and I didn't consider that criticism, right off. Later on, I did consider it criticism, because he didn't say that to Enrico Fermi's daughter, who used to sit next to me. And this is part of the story, of course. Which is that she continued -- and she was not a good drawer, draftswoman at all -- and I thought I was better than she, but she didn't get told to be in art history, and she ended up being an artist, of sorts. But I didn't mind it. I guess the jump of my imagination, or whatever, was that they'd been out with Heckscher and he had said something. So somebody wanted me. And then I thought -- I made all this up, maybe, as an idea, and then it turned out it was true -- that he wanted me as a student. So that worked out just beautifully. And I did take a lot of -- I took printmaking with Mauricio Lasansky as part of my studio obligation. I never took painting, and I took sculpture. And I had taken sculpture, as I said, when I was in high school, at the Art Institute, and always liked it. I'd taken a few correspondence courses in education, one, or two, during the summer, because I wanted to get out. I wanted to get into graduate school but I knew that I couldn't go to graduate school after four years because my mother wouldn't have the money to pay for it. I'd have to go to work. So, after three and a half years she would still owe me -- I mean, we didn't think that way, but, she would still owe me one semester --and so I finished in three and a half years, and Heckscher wrote -- what I would hear second hand, because, I guess, people asked him what he had written as a recommendation to the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University]. And it was really embarrassing, his comparing me to the Virgin Mary in her symbolic role as the mirror of knowledge [laughter]. Anyway, so I got into the Institute and came to New York.

SZ: Which was of course the...

RC: Place to go. And at that time Walter Cook was still the head, and I had my interview with him, and he decided I should take just three regular lecture classes that first semester. I think they thought I was young. I was. I was still only twenty. And then I didn't realize how young I was. I hated the Institute so much I can't tell you. At that time, all the classes were at night, and you were expected to be in the library reading all day long, which wasn't so easy, and I didn't believe in it anyhow, and didn't need it, and then on Fridays you would have tea. And all those vets who were there then were just horrible. They were just awful.

SZ: So this was now 1950?

RC: '51. It was the spring semester of '51.

SZ: Just two questions for you. You said when you rushed for the sorority, you did it partially because you didn't know what it meant to be...

RC: Jewish. Yes. So did I learn? No. I mean, they were all Jewish kids and we would say a prayer before eating. And I was considered a bohemian, because, of course, I was always running around in jeans. Now, in the late '40s, people didn't do that unless you had an art class. And so I was very pleased to have art classes. I didn't have much of a social life. I never liked Jewish boys, certainly the kind that I would meet there. And so, you would get fixed up for the annual dance that you had, and I'd gone through all of -- I mean, none of that was too new because at the girls' school you used to dress up and they would bring over some of the army boys, or ROTC boys, or whatever; no, they were army boys because this was partly college. But that's all the interaction I had. So I was lonesome, and I really resented that I didn't have a boyfriend but ultimately, in my junior or senior year I had two boyfriends, and they were both not Jewish, which of course, didn't help anything [laughter]. But because it was the midwest, there wasn't this strong thing that you find in New York. I have to tell you that when I came, finally, to New York, and found

out that people celebrated Chanukah, and gave presents at Chanukah, and sent Chanukah cards, this was all absolutely new to me, totally new to me. I couldn't believe it. And, of course, my sister didn't marry a Jewish man either. People even in Omaha, when my dad was young, used to not consider him Jewish. So there's a long thing. And I thought that a very typical thing that somebody would do in college was try to find out their roots, and it turns out that, you know, now, it's what everybody does.

SZ: Today, you mean.

RC: Yes. But anyway, I went to the Institute.

SZ: So you said you'd been to New York once before, right? To visit your sister?

RC: Yes; actually twice, I think. No, maybe only once. I had gone to Cleveland to visit a girlfriend of mine, who lives here now, and met her cousin (who ended up being an off-and-on boyfriend for about fourteen years, who was an artist) and then came here, met Ned Rorem and all sorts of friends of my sister's in the Village. My brother-in-law took me to a series of bars in the Village and at the last one announced to me that I shouldn't worry about myself, that the people there were only interested in him. [Laughter] I didn't really know about homosexuals, or at least I hadn't been exposed to that end of it. I had been very close in with a lot of the artists. I was the head of the Beaux Arts Ball at Iowa. The University of Iowa's art department was really top-heavy with graduate students; it was essentially a graduate school for fine arts, for plastic arts. It was, oh, something like two hundred and fifty grad students as opposed to a hundred undergrads or something; I mean, very few undergraduates in comparison. Jane Wilson was there, and John Gruen, whose name was Gruninski, and Robert Parker was there too. A lot of people who were already showing in New York were there. Also, every year there was always the show of paintings from New York galleries. It was almost as good as you can get and not be in New York going to the exhibitions. And of course they had bought Peggy Guggenheim's [Jackson] Pollock, and I studied in the student union

underneath one of the paintings, a [Joan] Miró, that they'd gotten. So you really had an awful lot of direct exposure to real art, not just slides.

SZ: But then you came to New York.

RC: And then I came to New York and, interestingly enough, I felt more stifled in New York, but the trip to see my sister and getting to see the -- I'm sure I went to the Metropolitan. I know I went to the Modern.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: So, you remember the Modern.

RC: I remember the Modern. The Met may not have been so memorable because of the Art Institute, where I was very familiar.

SZ: But does this speak of a predilection?

RC: No. Absolutely not. I wasn't interested in modern art, which is really strange. But, after all, the intent of Iowa was to show contemporary art. I mean every year there was this exhibition with Pollocks and this and that in it. I still have all of the catalogues for all of them. They have always been very useful in my work at the Modern. But I was really interested in older art, and studied it, but it might have been just the exposure to a certain professor. I think that was partly it. Heckscher was, as I said, a very strong professor, and as I wasn't interested in making art -- I mean, I did it, but that was just ancillary; that was just so that you understood what artists went through. When I came to New York to study, I did my paper on a group of sculptures which were Northern Renaissance, and I was interested in that. And then in the following summer I got a job at the Art Institute of Chicago, and specifically in the department of decorative arts. One of the pieces that I wrote on was -- you know, 'cause there was one at the Met and one at the Art Institute -- and, but, you know, it was decorative arts. I had certainly nothing whatsoever to do with contemporary anything, except glass, maybe.

SZ: Where did you live when you went to the Institute?

RC: I lived first in a sort of hotel for girls, a place for girls -- oh, why can't I remember the name -- sort of like “Miss somebody's” on 68th. A lot of people lived there.

SZ: On 68th on the East Side?

RC: Between Madison and Park. And there was a brownstone building where we ate, and then there was the building on the corner, where I lived, and I hated it. And it was very expensive, but this was a place my sister knew of, and so that's where I got a room. And then one of the gals who was living there also, she just couldn't afford it -- she was a writer -- and she said, "I've heard of this place over on the East River; let's go over there." It's The East End Hotel, or something like that.

SZ: Oh, I know; on 79th Street.

RC: Yes. And so I lived there for the rest of the term. That was fifteen dollars.

SZ: A lot of single working women lived in that complex.

RC: Yes. And it was no better or no worse than the other. What happened though -- I think I must have been more than half the time on 68th -- because when I'd go to class, I would always stop in at Parke Bernet. And I used to sit through, all afternoon, a lot of auctions there. And interestingly enough, I had in the back of my head that some day I wanted to work there. 'Cause I really liked it. I liked the combination of, and I loved the diversity of, everything. And I sort of liked the action. Who knew? I mean, the only job experience I'd ever had was I used to be the cashier and sell cigars and cigarettes at the race tracks in the summer. So that was where, mostly, I spent my days, either at the Met, wandering around, or in the library at the Met, or going to the auctions [at Parke Bernet]. That was the only real auction house then. I didn't go and look at modern shows at all. And then I was at the Art Institute.

SZ: So, you went back?

RC: I went back to Chicago. We still had our apartment there, and I lived there and had a roommate, one each year, that I'd share it with.

SZ: Did you go back there for the job or just because you wanted to go back to Chicago?

RC: I went back there because I had to work, and it never occurred to me to work here because I couldn't live with my sister. They had just started having children, so all I could see was that it was sort of a pain. It was easier to live in the apartment and have somebody paying. And I paid the rent, too; I paid my mother rent. I mean, that was the whole idea, you know, I was finished with being a drain on her. I have to tell you, you're so naïve when you're young, and it never occurred to me whether it was a hardship for her or not to put me through college, or to put me into a sorority. I don't think, at that time, being in a sorority was that much more expensive than living in a dorm -- it probably was less in the long run --but in any case, it <u>was</u> hard on her. She was working and nobody was giving her any money. She didn't have investments or anything like that. But, in all, some of this deprivation did get through to me, because that whole Depression and their divorce made me extremely stingy -- extremely frugal, I guess is the word. But I'm very bad with money. My sister, on the other hand, didn't live those years. That formative thing was already in place, and she lived in a way that my father wanted to live, which was in a pretty broad way. And my mother could never understand that my sister would take out loans, and mortgages. She was, of course, devastated by a mortgage. So there's always been that diversity between the two of us. And, who knows what I would have been like. A little less uptight? But, so, I went to work -- worked for very little money, of course, at a museum; that's how it was. I started out as a typist. I didn't know how to touch type. I learned how to touch type in one week. [Laughing]

SZ: Starting as a typist, that was sort of the typical entre.

RC: Oh, totally, unless you had a degree. I had no degree; I had no masters. And quite a few people there -- women, normally -- I mean, this has always been the case. Women always start that way, and the men work by going one place for a year and going to another place a year, and then, by that time, they've had experience, many experiences, so that they're considered experienced people, because each time they would get a new job, they would come with certain qualifications. In any case, I worked there for four years and could see that as people came in -- and there were men coming in also at the lowest level in the department, which was decorative arts, and the textile section was there, too. There was a fellow there, in the decorative arts, who was a PhD from Yale who came in as an Assistant Curator, but there was a ceiling established there. And so I had always wanted to go to New York but I always felt very much cowed by the fact that my sister was there. And I wanted to do my own pioneering, sort of. This boyfriend of long term was living in San Francisco, so I thought I'd go out and visit him. But I quit my job in order to do that, with the idea that I might go and get a career there. And in the meantime while I was at the Art Institute, I made my first trip to Europe. Went with a girl I'd gone to college with. Spent three months in Europe. Had a wonderful time -- every type of adventure that you could imagine, I think, practically. [Laughter] We decided not to go to England. We went to Paris, where we stayed a couple of weeks, and then decided to go to Spain. We had not put that in our itinerary originally -- Franco's Spain -- and went at the beginning by train. Had just superb experiences. Neither of us spoke the language; well I had studied Spanish, which is the only thing I almost failed in all my life [laughing] in high school. But we got around and, it was, I just can't go into all of it because it would be so extraneous, but just surviving certain experiences was wonderful, and to hear the music and see the art there was spectacular. And, of course, we were there during the Fair in Seville. It just turned out, all the things turned out well. And there was an old friend of my family's who had a house designed by one of Frank Lloyd Wright's acolytes down in Malaga. Oh no; stop! That's a different trip. [Laughter] Whew, no; that's a totally different trip. That was 1960. Anyway, so we went around, and went down to Italy, and that was super. And when we got to Venice we decided we would go to Vienna instead of Switzerland, and so we had to get gray cards to go through the Russian zone. I think I was more impressed by the Kunsthistorische Museum than I had been by even the Louvre.

Maybe I was that much more sophisticated and much more knowledgeable. I think a lot of what I had studied -- because I had German professors, you know -- might have been the stuff from Vienna. And then we went to Mainz. Of course, in Vienna, things were still quite bombed-out. And we stayed in a little walkup hotel that was right next to where there was huge destruction. But nothing really prepared us for Germany, and Mainz was really so sad, and Frankfurt, and...

SZ: You didn't have any issues about going there?

RC: No; oh no. Well, I wasn't Jewish enough [laughter].

SZ: That's right. [Laughter]

RC: This girl that I traveled with came from a very well-to-do family, but she wasn't considered all that smart, so that she was going with me and I was going to show her, and so it was sort of that kind of mutual thing. Her parents didn't have a feeling about Germany. They were an older American Jewish family, I think [here for] several generations. I think it was the ones who had direct relatives who were still in Eastern Europe that had the hardest time, and, actually, my mother's family did have that, but my mother didn't have those feelings at all. Or she didn't, certainly, let me know. In fact, I still find it very difficult to deal with people who do have those feelings, because I've always been more interested in seeing and finding out and examining and all that, and not examining's that kind of issue -- I live now. As with many Jewish families, the bitter experiences were the pogroms at the beginning of the century and in the late 19th century, and they never even talked about that. They never talked about the fact that there was a problem. And I don't know if it is history? There's no way of going back on either side of my family's past, my great grandfather on one side and grandma on the other. So I have no history that's a personal history. I'm a historian, you see? There is a big difference. And being a historian, you can't lock out a culture. It's awful, you know, but why lock out a culture? Here you sit in New York, you're constantly being bombarded with Germans, and, if it's Germans that you don't want to see... the land has nothing to do with it.

SZ: No.

RC: Do you see what I'm saying?

SZ: Yes.

RC: So, in any case, no, there was no problem about it, I never heard about a problem. I have letters and so forth that I wrote, back and forth to my mother. Never mentioned a thing about it, except that the destruction was so terrible. But I think what is part of my personality is that being a curator, in a way, I'm far more interested in the history of things than the history of people. And though I relate it and I can say this happened to these people, and of course what we're looking at came out of their experience, I don't have that strong emotional tie to what has happened to people whom I don't know.

SZ: Right. That's interesting.

RC: And I think that's probably typical of curators. I see anthropologists who feel exactly the same way, [laughing] you know.

SZ: Well, but that's your business.

RC: Yes, it becomes a part of your profession, and also you have to stand back from everything, because if you look straight at something you aren't seeing it all.

SZ: Of course, if you look at a lot of the art that's come out of postwar Germany, you certainly, at least, have to have an understanding or a knowledge of what happened.

RC: Of what happened, yes. But it's -- I think maybe we can talk about it in another way, but I really think that I did not have an experience of a Germany that was a conquered nation or a conquering, attempted conquering, nation, none of that, as much as I had studied, because in the University we did study that period. Even though it was only a few years, two years or three years before, there was study

about it, but it was as history, not as lives. Of course I'm touched by all the things, all the pictures, and so on, and things that I heard, and the people who were lost, and so on, but it isn't reality to me. It doesn't take -- it doesn't mean the same thing as firsthand experience to me. And firsthand experience, then, maybe, is sharper, for me, because I don't seem to be as involved in that -- in what I only know of from writing, movies, whatever. So where were we? We got through Europe, went to the Lowlands, we went to Amsterdam. We went to Bruges where I was so happy to see [Jan] van Eyck -- I <u>really</u> like Van Eyck. So yes, of course, to see all these things for the first time. We couldn't go to Berlin at that time. I think the airlift might have been on at that time, I'm not sure. So, I went to California. I worked first in a gift store and then I got a job as the editor of the monthly newsletter of the California Historical Society, which at that time had been moved out of a storage area. They never had a home. They had shared storage space with the California Pioneers organization, and they had moved into a building called the Flood Building in San Francisco, preliminary to actually going into their own building and becoming a museum and library. Essentially, its importance was as a library. That was 1956, so because I had had experience in a museum, I made an exhibition for the fiftieth anniversary of the earthquake with Arnold Genthe's photographs in the rotunda of the city hall of San Francisco. And that was the first show that I had done there.

SZ: Was it your <u>first show</u>?

RC: Well, yes and no. I had a fellowship to the Corning Glass Museum while I was at the Art Institute of Chicago, and part of the fellowship was that you had to make an exhibition there. And I used to help install exhibitions in the decorative arts at the Art Institute, too. So I had had some experience, but not much.

SZ: But this was really a <u>history</u> exhibition.

RC: The Historical Society was going into an old building, an old home in Pacific Heights, a big brownstone building that had been built by a paint dealer in the late 1890's and had survived the earthquake, had become the German consulate during the beginning of the war and it was used as a spy outpost. You could see from the top

window the whole harbor of San Francisco. And when we started working on it, it seemed that there were all these telephone and wire things going up, into the upstairs, and it was really amazing. But after the war, it became Mortimer Adler's American Philosophical Society and I had a cousin, a second cousin, who worked with Mortimer Adler. Eventually, my office in the Historical Society had been his office. The Historical Society actually bought the building from them, I believe. So there was an exhibition area -- the Historical Society had wonderful paintings, early paintings that had never been seen, and a lot of photographs, a lot of artifacts, and of course, a fabulous collection of lithographs, which are well-known because a guy named Harry Peters did a book called *California on Stone* -- and I was working with all of that. In between I was indexing miners' diaries. It was fascinating. It was boring, but it was fascinating. And then we started having a little problem with the trustees. They wanted to tell me what to put on the walls, and they wanted to tell the librarian what to buy, and so on. Once you start something and it gets going, then everybody wants to get their finger in the pie. And so I said, well, there's no reason to stay here. I had had an interview with this a trustee who was the treasurer of Pacific Tel and Tel, and here I had installed this whole museum and made arrangements for the storage and so forth, and he said that if I wanted to get anywhere in the world I should learn stenography. [Laughter] So that made up my mind. [More laughter] So I left and I went to work part time for the chairman of my committee, who was a book dealer named Warren Howell. I worked on prints and drawings and things like that, but I stayed a very short time and then moved to New York, and went looking for jobs.

SZ: So you just left California.

RC: Yes. Just left. And my boyfriend also wanted to go to New York. [Laughter] So we came to New York and I had to find a job, and so I went again, obviously, to Parke Bernet, because that was what I sort of thought I would like. I had decided that I wanted to never work for another museum again; I remember that. I was interested in working in antiques. And I was offered a job as an assistant editor on the catalogues. But the editor was my age, and so I figured I'd never get anywhere. [Laughter] I wrote a letter to the Antique Dealers' Association because I thought I'd

work in an antique store, and it happened that the man who was the secretary of it was a neighbor of John Fleming, who was a rare-book dealer. And he saw that I had worked for Warren Howell, and John needed a secretary. And so he gave him my name to call me up, and said, "I need a secretary," and I said, "I'm not a secretary."

SZ: And I don't know stenography [laughing].

RC: And he said, "Oh, that's all right. Why don't you just come over." And so I went over. I also applied for a job at Wittenborn's, the art bookstore that was on Madison Avenue upstairs [1018 Madison Avenue, NY]. It's still there, I mean, it just went defunct a few years ago. But anyway, I didn't get a job there either because my horoscope was wrong, and they always did horoscopes.

SZ: That was their thing, not your thing.

RC: Yes. And I went to Fleming's and I walked into this incredible apartment on East 57th Street -- I mean it still is a spectacular space. He's dead now. We had a nice chat and so on and he said, "Now, I'm hardly ever here and I don't have too many - there are no walk-in customers. And I put out sometimes a catalogue maybe once every couple of years, and what I really do is sell books to people who have great collections. So there's very little correspondence, and so, I need somebody to answer the phone and be here." And he offered me just as much money as everybody else did, for doing nothing, you know, and so I said, "OK" [laughter]. It was enough to live on. I don't know how I managed. I had my apartment -- I got a one-room apartment on East 18th Street for seventy-five dollars and I made thirty-five dollars a week. So it was -- you know, you're supposed to make what, I think, one quarter, but, of course, food was nothing then, too. And so I went to work from ten to five. At three o'clock in the afternoon the houseman would serve me tea on a silver platter, which I often would take with Fleming's wife, who would come in from Larchmont, and I did nothing except listen in to telephone calls, because I was so bored -- I mean, it was a terrible habit to get into, but he also wasn't very forthcoming, so, you know, once in a while I needed to know things. It was a five-year vacation, literally, a five-year vacation. I did it for five years, had a marvelous

time in New York in the meantime, got involved in an amateur orchestra in 1960 at St. Mark's.

SZ: Playing the piano?

RC: First, playing the piano because they did Baroque music, and then they got bigger, and I had to learn the tympani, which was terribly funny because I was no good. I mean, I had never tuned anything except a guitar. And so I met a whole group of people that were interested in music and the arts. And at that time the fellow who was the manager of the orchestra was my boyfriend and he lived on 10th Street, and so we'd see [Willem] de Kooning and all of those people [laughing]. So I saw, by the by, I saw a lot of things that were happening. It was just like in San Francisco. I mean, the Beats were there, and we used to go to the bar and never think much, seeing movies, at this bar, and right next door was where [Allen Ginsburg's] *Howl* was published, the Limelight Bookstore was right next door and -- I just wasn't "with it". All of these things were happening and my boyfriend at that time, who was an artist, was an acolyte, I would say, a follower of [Karl] Zerbe and social realism, who was totally out of it, and I didn't know that [Richard] Diebenkorn and all of those people were there and beginning at that time. I was totally out of the system. I did know who de Kooning was, however, when I came here. And then I started to see and be more a part of the art scene than I had been for the one semester at the Institute. By that time my sister didn't live in New York any more, and so it was my own life, which was fairly bohemian and free-form. But I got involved in a lot of music, which was nice, and some of the people in the orchestra were photographers, and so it was a whole scene. And then, after five years I decided, "uh huh, I've got to get out" and I'm at that age where if I'm not married I had better get myself a real profession, because he [Fleming] had brought in his nephew who was a very charming young man, who was very, very smart and came from the poorer side of his family, or his wife's family, I guess it was, and so he was going to teach him the business. Although I learned a tremendous amount, just by the by -- you couldn't help it -- about books, I just never felt that that was the sort of business that a woman could be in. Essentially, I never knew a woman who was in that business. He belonged to the Grolier Club, and the Grolier Club was all male at that time, and they

would have wild parties at the shop -- in the morning I would find my rolodex all messed up. But, you know, I got to meet the Houghtons and the Mellons and all of those people there, without any idea that there was anything that would happen to me, and so I decided that I would look for an institutional job again. And I started out with [The] Brooklyn [Museum] because Tom Buechner had been at the Corning Museum, and there was just nothing there, as usual. And I'm sort of happy now that there wasn't, but, he was an interesting fellow and I knew him. Then I ran into Dorothy Mayhall on the street, and she said, "Why don't you apply to The Museum of Modern Art?" And I said, "Oh, okay, why not". So, I say, I'm an "Okay, why not" person. [Laughing] Althea Borden was the personnel director then, and she was an incredible person. I thought it was just amazing that a museum would have a personnel director, because, you know, at the Art Institute of Chicago you got your job through somebody you knew, and this was the way that most places were. But I'd not been around a museum for a long time, and the only job that was available at that time was in the warehouse for the International Program. And she said, "I really don't think that this is what you want," and I said, well, you know, "Whatever you say." And she said, "Well, I hear of a lot of jobs if this isn't the only place you're interested in." And she got me in touch eventually with somebody who was going to start a new art gallery here in New York, and it was going to be a partnership between a galleryist from out of town and one in town. So I was interviewed and oh, he thought I was <u>wonderful</u>. I never thought about a commercial art gallery, but it was sort of interesting because the other partner was going to be from Chicago, and I was from Chicago. And so, after a month or so, the new partner came into New York, and we had a meeting -- a breakfast meeting, I think it was. And in the meantime, I didn't care. I really didn't want to work, sort of. I quit in February and I went to Mexico, I think, and then I came back and started doing all of this. And so we met at breakfast and Richard Feigen did not like me. And we sort of laugh about it now but the thing is, he still doesn't like me. [Laughter] And so that fell through, and then, somewhat later, all of the reorganization of the Prints and Drawings department occurred, or actually, they decided to clean it up.

SZ: Before the reopening.

RC: Yes. And so, she called -- Althea called me and said, "I'd like you to speak with Bill [William S.] Lieberman." And I went into this office -- I'd gotten all dressed up -- and I went into this office which was about from there, straight along here, to there -- that's how big -- with two desks, tables along each wall, with Elaine Johnson sitting with her back to his back. And she's sitting there throughout the whole interview. I think he introduced me when I came in, but it was just, "Hello", like that. She was very short with people anyhow. [Laughing] Anyhow, "Hello." And the first thing he told me was not to confuse him with his best friend, Alexander Liberman, who I had never heard of in my whole life [laughter]. And the job was as a cataloguer, and so I was very well qualified. I had catalogued everything from Peruvian pots to toys to, God knows what. I was meticulous. I used to clean the Thorne Rooms at the Art Institute of Chicago -- all of these things -- I really had marvelous credentials. And I had actually made lithographs and intaglio prints, so I knew the mediums. So God said, "You're going to prepare for this job at The Museum of Modern Art." I didn't see it that way exactly, because I really wanted to be more than a cataloguer, but I figured, I'm used to starting at the bottom. They had hired also somebody for Drawings, Eila Kokkinen, and hired somebody as a registrar. So we had our own department registrar and that was Gloria Hodsoll, who had been a worker at the Venice Biennale, and Alfred [H. Barr, Jr.] had met her, and she had been married to an Englishman, so she was kind of coordinator for the American Pavilion when we were doing it. And she was strict. A real northern Italian. Like that. And so the three of us were really brand new, and the secretary was even new, I mean, I don't know how long Joan Vass had been there, but I doubt if she had been -- she had been working for Emily Stone and was brought down to do that.

SZ: So Bill hired you.

RC: Bill hired me.

SZ: Did you have to see Alfred before you were hired?

RC: No. Bill hired me.

SZ: Or René [d'Harnoncourt]?

RC: Nor René. No. I think that the edict that had come down was, "Let's get this all straightened out." And soon after, a couple of girls from Smith wanted to be volunteers over the summer, because I started May 1st.

SZ: 1963, as I recall.

RC: Yes. And one had been recommended, and for some reason or other -- I think she got sick or something happened; she couldn't do it, so the other one got it -- and what we had to do was take inventory. There had never been an inventory. The boxes of prints -- the small boxes of prints, which were the majority -- were according to nationality, and then alphabetized. Which is fine for museums that had [the category] "anonymous", but we didn't have any "anonymous".

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **JANUARY 23, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: We left off with your being hired at the Museum. I don't know that I really asked you about some of your first impressions of Bill Lieberman. Then we'll go into some of your impressions of the institution itself at the time.

RC: Well, as I said, I had no knowledge of hardly anybody at The Museum of Modern Art. I'm sure that, at most, I had heard of Alfred Barr. And as I told you, it wasn't my field. But Bill, of course, is a very charismatic person, and was much more so thirty-something years ago, and was very eager -- eager is the wrong word. He really included in whatever he said, a great deal of information. And it was, for me, very easy to learn from him because he told anecdotes, he had had great experiences, he had done many things, he knew many artists. And it really was a good relationship. The only problems were that he really had put Elaine Johnson in charge, in the administrative role, and so, in a way, dealing with him was sort of like dealing with a visiting "star", even though at the beginning, of course, we had this real mess of a place that was too small for the collection, and everything was in very bad shape, and they were drilling holes for the flag poles, for the banner poles, right while we had prints around there and, and of course, they used water.

SZ: This was for the [1964] expansion.

RC: For the expansion. So those were my impressions of the first few months that I was there, because it was soon after that we moved. But, he [Lieberman] paced around a lot and used to stand behind, and, you know, we were chock-a-block. We had long

tables that we used as desks, which were planks of wood which were held up by file cabinets, and Eila Kokkinen, who was my equal for the Drawing collection, which was still held by the Registrar in a separate place, sat at the same one as I did. The secretary sat at another place that was contiguous with ours across from Eila, and the place across from me was for people to bring things in or for a volunteer to sit. And behind us was another big table where all of the big prints plus everything that had been brought in for viewing were, and then attached to that was Gloria Hodsoll, who was brought from Italy. She had been working on the Venice Biennale and she was brought to be a registrar. Then Bill, as I described before, Bill and Elaine had a separate office, where they sat -- literally, I don't see how one of them could get up without disturbing the other [laughing]. So it was pretty bad. And as you know, that space had originally been designed for the Print Room before the war in the 1939 construction, and then was used for all the wartime activities. And so it wasn't perfect. And then, as I said, Bill would pace behind Eila and me [laughing] all the time. But my impression of him was a good one. We -- I'm trying to think whether we had a show right off the bat -- what was up, down, in the basement. The print shows used to be outside of the auditorium. But really, the first thing was to get the [Paul J.] Sachs Gallery installed. So I think that must have been in process, and I really had not too much to do with that at all, because the point was that the collection had to be moved into the new space, and I had a volunteer who had just graduated from Smith, who worked on that. The only real volunteer that I remember sitting opposite me in that first short time was Mrs. [Carroll L.] Cartwright, who was a good volunteer. She was a great drawings collector, as you know, but she was one of the Junior Council people that, I think, Bill had taken on. And that was also an important thing. Bill was the staff advisor to the Junior Council, so that created a much closer tie between the Department and the Junior Council than I think other departments had. I think that because of Bill we had a much more family social situation. There was nobody who ever had a chance to have the privacy to do research or the kinds of things that people all felt were being done in the Painting and Sculpture Department.

SZ: You mean because you had such close quarters or because of Bill?

RC: Both. Because of the close quarters but also, I think, because of his attitude towards work. The background that we felt he had was one of a collector who knew everybody, who saw everything. I think that was sort of a role that he had taken on very early, way before our time. And also one who just was really not interested in the nitty gritty. So we were all there to do that, but also support all the other things, and get to know all of these people; it was inevitable.

SZ: How did you get to know the collection?

RC: The whole collection, which was housed in wooden cabinets, was in that room, and it was very shortly after I started that I discovered that everything was in chaos. Every loan that had come back was just put on a shelf; it was never refiled. And in order to know what we were doing in moving the whole collection, I decided that we should take inventory and we should get rid of the system we had, which was A-B-C by nationality, so, you had to know if somebody was German. You really had to know a lot of things about it, and, of course, we had little labels on the mats, but it compounded the problem because, in many cases you just look at the print and you know who it's by. This is a system that of course is left over from Old Master collections, where they have a lot of anonymous artists. In modern art, we actually had two, [laughter] Chinese, I think they were. I think it was, mainly, that nobody could read the names. So, that summer, the two women who had graduated from Smith came and asked if they could be volunteers, and Elaine Johnson -- I guess they had written first and one of them had been accepted, and then it turned out, for some reason or another she couldn't come, so the other one did. And they had both studied with Leonard Baskin, so they knew a little about printmaking. So with that volunteer, I was able to do the inventory and change everything alphabetically, so as we moved into the other space we could do it. And of course, we were still using those cabinets, as well as new cabinets. I don't remember the logistics actually, but thank heavens that Esther -- Pullman it is now -- was the volunteer, and it helped because this was just at the beginning of the big burgeoning of printmaking, and we would have been in terrible shape if we had not started to have a better system. A lot of cataloguing was done. Elaine Johnson had created a new format for cataloguing which was also very good in that later, when we went on computers, it

facilitated putting things in a certain language for computer. But Elaine was a great paper-maker. She knew that she should make order, because that was what she was hired for, and it became all-encompassing. It used to drive us up the wall, as you can imagine. And I guess the worst experience was -- we got along with her but she was very private. I think she was a very shy person and she produced very little herself because of that, and who knew? She died of a brain tumor and maybe it was that all that time, it was something that she was living with. But she was so organized that she had three dresses or four dresses all made the same way -- I don't know that anybody has ever talked about this -- sleeveless dresses in wool for winter, in linen or whatever for summer, and each one had a matching sweater jacket that she could wear over it. So she only had to decide what color she wanted to wear. And really I don't think she had more than four of these outfits. But she had a style, was very, very, very thin. I did not know her in Chicago. She had been at the Art Institute. But the worst thing that I think ever happened was everybody was working very hard, either talking to somebody or on the phone looking up information and so on, and her phone was ringing and she would never answer it. And finally Gloria Hodsoll had a terrible blowup with her, and I think that's why Gloria left. But anyway, that's office politics. Maybe, because Bill was so social -- maybe after Bernice [Rose] came, because she used to work in Painting and Sculpture -- we always had a chip on our shoulders because we were hardly ever invited to anything within the Museum. All of this changed, of course, in the 1970s.

SO: But at that time.

RC: It wasn't normal. I mean, some things we did get invited to, and I could never figure out why. I would have a picture of me at an opening talking to Alfred Barr and it might have been something to do with Prints, or it might have been when -- was he still there when we had all of the trouble?

SZ: No, he wasn't officially there but he was around enough of the time.

RC: Yes, maybe that was it, because then everybody started getting invited once they responded.

SZ: Oh, that's the origin of it.

RC: No, I'm sure it stopped again, and then you know, it was started again. But anyway, it was a very busy time. And besides having the installation of the Sachs Gallery with drawings and prints, which was left on quite a long time, maybe a year -- which it shouldn't have been -- but that was the show from which something was stolen. And you don't know that story. There was a Pascin sketchbook kept in a table-case all by itself and somebody stole it. It had to be in the first year because it was from the first installation. And it was absolutely right out of Agatha Christie, and it wasn't funny. But ultimately the FBI -- I don't know whether you know that it was more or less traditional to, because the police didn't have any art people --

SZ: Now they do.

RC: Now they do. That started with something else, which I can tell you later. So whenever the Museum had theft problems, the FBI was brought in, and ultimately the thief asked for ransom. We had a young black man who was, I think, Bill's secretary. In the new building, from the Garden you could see people sitting in their offices because our offices were in the new Philip Johnson building. And we were on the Fourth Floor then, too. But you could see the person sitting at a desk if they were close enough to the window. The secretarial office had two desks, one for the sort of general person and one for Bill's secretary. He was the general person, and the decision was that he would be the person who would carry out some of the wishes of the thief. So he was put in the window so that he could be seen. And ultimately the drop with the money was to be in a telephone booth on Abingdon Square. It didn't end up there; it ended up in an office building someplace, but they got him... they got the thief and they got the thing, and they didn't have to pay any money. But Joan Vass, who was still the main secretary at that time, wrote up a wonderful history of it which was, and I think is still, under lock and key, because it has to do with Bill, and I think that was how it's organized. It was still in my office when I was leaving.

SZ: Were you aware of this at the time?

RC: We all were, oh yes. Oh, it was just terrible, because even though the drawings weren't kept in the new place, we definitely all knew what was happening. I don't think I was the one who discovered it. It might have been a guard. But we did not have a preparator in the Department and the youngest part of the staff, which was me and Eila, used to have to clean the pictures and check them. We were very naïve then, and thought that nobody could pry up the case. It wasn't locked or screwed down or anything. So that was the first theft. But the Print Collection had a real big theft much later on.

SZ: Which was when?

RC: In the late 1960s, maybe early 1970s.

SZ: Well, we can certainly find the date.

RC: I was organizing the prints of Edvard Munch, which took place in '73, when I heard that they had caught the thief. But I think it went on for years. It was something that we caught because we had had an inventory. Anyway, I don't know how. The perpetrator, or who we believe is the perpetrator, since he was never sent to jail, is still alive, and I think it's better not to tell that story, other than to say that we recouped everything that we had lost.

SZ: It was a number of things?

RC: Oh yes, well over twenty. But they were stolen over a period of time, and that was one of the very first cases that the police art squad had worked on.

SZ; This was the New York City Police?

RC: New York City Police art squad. They had word that other museums were losing prints too, so it was pretty widespread. And so we certainly got to know them. It's a great story.

SZ: But these were not things that were taken from exhibition space.

RC: Yes, in some museums they were; some were taken off the wall. In our museum it was because we had the possibility for people to view prints in our study room, so they were taken in that way, from us. And it was also -- it stemmed from naïveté about thinking that people were trustworthy, and was unfortunate because the people who in the staff were responsible just couldn't believe that this was happening -- that this was happening with a specific person, and the police told us that person could not have been the person.

SZ: And that's how that went.

RC: But they got him. [Laughter]

SZ: But they didn't get him. But you got your stuff back.

RC: But we got our things back. It really created internally a great deal of problems, because this was mostly a bad time for the Museum, and people were very unsettled, and staff would accuse staff, and it was really awful.

SZ: Well back to '63-'64, before we talk about the reopening. Just a little bit: Alfred Barr, René and Monroe [Wheeler]; I guess that was sort of the obvious triumvirate of power at the time?

RC: Well, Monroe, I always felt, was slightly peripheral, in that I don't know what the situation -- I really didn't know him; I didn't know them. From my point of view, which was at the bottom of the heap, the boss was René, and Alfred was a very high, to look up at, person, but one didn't really deal with him very much. And I don't remember talking to him hardly at all in those years, except that once there was this funny situation with the Folger Library. I had known the man who was the head of the Folger Library from my previous job, and they had repeated, in the newsletter, this spurious thing about Picasso not taking his art seriously -- this famous old saw.

SZ: It goes around a lot.

RC: A lot. And that had been picked up from Huntington Hartford having used it once, and so forth. I thought it was really in very bad taste that something as high-minded as the Folger Shakespeare Library newsletter should use it, so I had written to set them straight, and sent a copy of all of it to Alfred Barr, because I thought it would amuse him. And it did. But that was the only attachment I ever had with him, other than on a couple of social occasions, I would see him. But I never even had to chase after him. And as for Monroe, I think at that time, with the whole Museum reopening and so forth, he was probably so overwhelmed one never had much to do with him. Our department didn't have any publications at that time. As you know, nothing ever came out on time in those days, and as far as I know, there was no big publication that came out for the reopening. So there wasn't that to deal with. And he was in the middle of making, I think, the Bonnard show [*Bonnard and His Environment*, MoMA Exh.#749, October 7-November 29, 1964].

SZ: Yes, that was soon thereafter.

RC: He must have had a lot of activities himself. So we only knew Frances, and Frances Keech everybody pretty well knew. I'm not sure what the relationship between Bill and Monroe was in those days; I think that it all blew hot and cold. I think Monroe was fairly much of a taskmaster, which would not have created much good for either Alfred or Bill. I was looking in Monroe's diary and he wrote in there once how he was lecturing Alfred about how to make people more receptive to the most avant garde of our stuff [laughter], to use the political tactics necessary. The opening, of course, was something quite fabulous for somebody who'd just started, more or less. And it must have been the hottest night in May there ever was, and we were like sardines in the Garden, with champagne in plastic glasses. And Mrs. Lyndon Johnson was on the upper terrace speaking, and I didn't know, anyone in that whole crowd, really. My background was with all of the book people, although I was going with an artist at the time. When the first *Americans* show [*Americans 1963*, MoMA Exh.#722, May 22-August 18, 1963] came on, which was I think that year, also, later on, he was working for Robert Indiana, so that was the first contemporary famous artist I ever

met [laughter]; well, he was one of the so many Americans that was in that show, and Marisol was in it, too. There was a party for the artists, I don't know who gave it, in Kips Bay. And Kips Bay had just been built, so it was the chicest place to live because it was I. M. Pei's building. And I remember feeling very out of it, since I didn't know anybody, but Marisol also felt out of it, so [laughing] we talked to each other.

SZ: But you felt comfortable with that, in that environment with those people?

RC: Yes. Well, I'd always known a lot of artists, but none of them ever successful [laughing]. Even in some of the areas where I was involved in music things, there were always artists around. But it was OK, and very recently I got a photograph from Bob Indiana of the three of us standing in the gallery in that show. But, it was funny; there wasn't a real contact between the rest of the Museum and the department. When you're at that level, I think, and with so much to do, and at a juncture, at a point where everything is changing so tremendously, you don't have a sense of history of the institution, and so all you're doing is like starting out, a whole new thing. And we used to go across the street -- Stouffer's used to have a place in the basement of the 666 building where we used to get coffee and breakfast things, because there was no place in the museum, and quite frequently we used to have tea in the cafeteria or upstairs. I don't know where we all got the time to do it. But because there was no staff lounge, there also wasn't so much regulation about the time that you took for lunch. Mostly we called out for hamburgers from Hamburger Heaven. It's funny; some places stay and some places are gone. But that was the way that you worked. I mean, there was no union, and people worked weekends and late, and I think that whole idea, the “bride of MoMA” concept, really came from the fact that people just loved being at the Museum working. And, of course, a lot of people who didn't stay hated it. But it was not even a <u>question</u> about whether you would stay if somebody asked you to stay. I think that that whole atmosphere, which, because it was a smaller staff, is really lost. It became lost once there was a real perception of that expansion, because it really was part of that. It started with that in '64. So we started making shows, and of course the fun thing was that people would actually come in when we were still in the old office, and Tatyana Grosman of

ULAE [Universal Limited Art Editions] always brought the things in. At that time already we had a grant, so that everything that they made at ULAE we got, number one. I remember her bringing in the *Shades* of [Robert] Rauschenberg -- she always used to talk about books, but in reality there wasn't anything that looked like a book that she was making, because the [Larry] Rivers *Stones* was the first thing, but this was considered by her a book as well, but she was sort of embarrassed. She was very funny. We had the feeling that she was very domineering and always got her way, but she was very good at being the little quiet Russian lady, like a bird almost, who wouldn't push. But she really did. There was no question. She would say, "I don't know what this is that he makes. This Bob, he is so clever!" And she'd bring this thing in which nobody had ever seen in a print room, something that was three-dimensional and had a metal frame and it was printed on plexi, and then it wasn't printed on plexi, and, you know, it was very complicated. But that visit was indelible. I remember her walking in with this, whereas I don't remember her bringing anything else in, but she must have.

SZ: Well, I think that article in the *New Yorker* about her years ago said that she personally brought in each one herself.

RC: Yes, yes, she did. But I'm just saying, at that moment, because that was done in '64. So, of course, I got to eventually see her all the time because I was the one who had to deal with the prints, and ultimately she would get people to write about the things her artists did by inviting them to come and meet the artists or visit the place. Bill used to go out there quite frequently. He advised her a lot about which artists might be invited to make prints. He was in -- I'm sure it probably doesn't come up too much in his bio -- the International Graphic Art Society, IGAS, which was a sort of print club that published prints, starting, I think, sometime in the mid '50s. So he was always busy with prints, whether that was what he really wanted to be busy with or not, and going off to judge international competitions. So, as being an advisor to that group and suggesting artists to make prints, advising Pratt Graphic Arts Center, ultimately he advised Tamarind as well, and always with the idea that we would be getting prints out of it. I think that it really was for that, and he would bring in all sorts of prints.

SZ: From the artists, or from the shops?

RC: From the shops, and also, when he would go abroad, he would acquire a lot. We also used to produce the American contingent of these shows for Japan, for example, and Yugoslavia, and so he'd be calling up artists and we would go running around getting the prints and sending them out to these places. So we were very busy on a lot of things that didn't have much to do directly with the Museum. But it was good, because as you did all these things, you got to know the artists and you also got to know what they were doing, more so than what you could do otherwise, because there were no funds. Out of the blue we got the John [B.] Turner Fund. John B. Turner, from what I could tell, was sort of a nonentity who came around the Museum, and when he died he left money for American prints both to us and to the Metropolitan Museum. The first real job that I remember as something that I was to be responsible for, was when the [Louis] Stern Collection was given to the Museum by the trustees of his estate, because he didn't leave any parts of his collection to any of the museums that he was connected with. Barr, before I got to the Museum, had petitioned the estate to give us the books, because what book collection we had, had been purchased for the library and then in, I think, 1956, was transferred to the Print Room. And so all Stern's books -- we had a working space over in the Equitable Building, which is now the building PaineWebber is in, for putting shows together that the International Program and the national program would use -- you know, tables went on for ever and ever. So all the books were sent there first, because there was some question about divvying them up, because his general library was included with it, and Bernard Karpel was to take that section. It was sort of interesting working with Bernard in that context, but, it was chaos. It was an awful lot of things; I think ultimately it was well over a thousand things that we had to work on. And it's funny [laughing] because it really was registering it. The Registrar didn't register them; it wasn't their kind of thing. And because we had Gloria Hodsoll, who was supposed to be the registrar of our department, I guess that left everything in our hands. So it always ended up that way, and it's been that way ever since. So I, of course, learned.

SZ: It's that way with the Architecture [department] too, right?

RC: I believe so. In any case, we worked on the books, and of course, that became my field, all of a sudden, because I had been in books.

SZ: And that's another thing. You said you worked with Bernard Karpel in the beginning on that.

RC: The idea was that all those with prints in them were coming into the Print collection because the illustrated books had already been turned over to the Print collection. The terms of the gift had been that the books had to be in a place where Stern's name would be showing. So when the Print Department was finally architecturally put together in the new wing, there was an alcove with three cases: one case did not have glass doors and that was for our old collection, and then two cases had glass doors. And there was a reading area there with a light and cabinets above it. At the beginning, that's the way it was. It was, I think, a year, at least, or more, much more, before it eventually became my office, because also, we learned nobody could sit there and be watched [laughing]. But when we first moved into the new section, my office, my working space, was right next to the windows with a huge cabinet, which the Print Department still has, two big black metal cabinets. I used to do cataloguing of prints, like crazy, and Elaine Johnson used to OK my cataloguing. Then Bill worked on the very large *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors as Printmakers* [MoMA Exh.#747, September 15-October 25, 1964; C/E 64-12; ICE-F-99-64, April 1966-June 1968]. It's listed second in 1964. That was in the temporary galleries in what we used to call the East Wing, where the Bookstore is now and *Projects*. But the *American Painters as New Lithographers* [MoMA Exh.#739, May 27-September 13, 1964] must have been in the opening show, because that was in the galleries on the way to the cafeteria, which was the other side, where *Projects* was first. The *American Painters as New Lithographers* had been promised to Tatyana Grosman as the show about her Universal Limited Art Editions. The only prints that hadn't been finished during this period, because this is rather early -- they only started in '57, so it was seven years of their work -- was that Sam Francis had come there and never OK'd the prints that he was making. But he <u>had</u> gone to Switzerland and

made some very large prints which were quite nice. Bill decided that, as those were very new and exciting prints, those should be in the show. And I think, for a while, Grosman really hated him, terribly, because he had never said anything about it to her, except everything but those, maybe two, prints, were from her. And of course this crazy thing was there of Rauschenberg's. Bill had the idea of putting a timer, a flasher, on the light bulb in it, and I don't know if you saw it in the book show but, if you left the light bulb on all of the time, it would have warped all the plates. I thought that was very clever of him [laughing], and we've shown it that way ever since. That was a very, very nice show, but it gave him a little bit of an idea about the difficulty of pleasing everybody, I think. Then *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors* included some of the things that were being just done that year, so the Barnett Newman portfolio that Tatyana did was in that. But producing *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, which was very important in the whole scheme of printmaking in America, was fascinating. I guess I did a lot of the assisting work on it. I know that I was sent to Connecticut to pick up Josef Albers's prints, and so I got to meet him and got my big lecture, my first big lecture. Ultimately he wanted me to do his catalogue raisonné, and I never got to it.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SZ: You never got to it.

RC: No, I never got to it; but that wasn't the last time we [laughing] talked about prints. He had just done a series of *Homage to the Square* at Tamarind and Bill wanted to put those in. So he had to explain to me about the aura and everything about the colors changing, about how he used paints out of the tube, and this and that. The other pickup that I had to go out and do was to the Ganzes, and so I met Sally and Victor [Ganz] for the first time, and they had Picasso linocuts. We borrowed some of those. I think the Museum at that time was just thinking about buying one, and they were very expensive. So I think maybe our new one was in there. But each artist had more than one print. And memories from that show. Of course, the opening was sensational. The black fellow who had been part of the heist drama came with a model, and there are pictures of her wearing this huge ostrich hat, really spectacular.

But everybody came to that opening. It was really wonderful. The artists altogether were many. I didn't meet most of them but everybody I had ever heard of -- it was a microcosm, because it went across so many lines. The Saidenbergs were there and the Perls were there, and all the old, what have become the old guard of the art world, people who were representing Picasso's prints, and so on. I only remember one anecdote from that night. I think it was Altman, a semi-representational artist who made prints, who was talking to Joe Hirshhorn and telling him that Hirshhorn really ought to have one of his prints. And Hirshhorn whipped out his checkbook and made out a check for a hundred dollars and gave it to him and said, "Send me one." [Laughter] That I witnessed. So, that was really funny, because, you know, the artist wasn't -- there were a lot of artists who were in that show that filled out the picture but who didn't subsequently amount to too much. But it was a wonderful show. Then I guess the next show was *London/New York/Hollywood: A New Look at Prints* [MoMA Exh.#805, September 13-November 6, 1966; C/E 67-13, 1967-1969], which was also a show that was down near the -- we had sort of taken up our temporary space down near the cafeteria. We had a lot of shows there. I mean, ultimately, that was the way it went. And this was a show that, again, Bill really did, but when it was sent on tour, Elaine Johnson did a catalogue for it, as she did for *Contemporary Prints* [*Contemporary Painters and Sculptors as Printmakers*, MoMA Exh.#747, September 15-Octber 25, 1964; C/E 64-12, 1965; ICE-F-99-64, April 1966-June 1968] when it went to South America. Bill really didn't, I think, enjoy writing, and I don't know what it was, because certainly when it came to doing all sorts of shows, he did a lot that had catalogues, but never would write very much. And, in fact, that's how I got to do my first book. Because for years, a friend of his, Stanley Barron from Thames and Hudson had been asking him to do a book on prints, probably since the time of *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors* because it was worth a book, and by every year it was clear that this was a seminal show. And just like almost everything [laughing] he would call me, and he said, "Riva, would you -- I'd like you to write this book."

SZ: He said that to you?

RC: Yes, in front of the other guy, so poor Stanley didn't have a choice. That had happened twice. I had done another book under similar circumstances that was a coffee table book, which I don't call my first book, because it was a coffee-table book.

SZ: What was that?

RC: I think it was called *Contemporary Prints* [New York: Viking Press, 1973] in English, but it was published in French, German and English [published as *Modern Prints since 1942*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973].

SZ: But what you're considering your first book?

RC: Really was *Prints of the Twentieth Century [Prints of the Twentieth Century: A History.* New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976], because that was a history.

SZ: Was that an enjoyable experience for you?

RC: Yes. The other one was OK because it was written about one print at a time. But I really had to learn the history of modern prints. After all, I had not come prepared with that. I had made prints, I knew what the different media were, I knew my art history, so to speak, but I never really folded the print history into the art history, and it didn't really exist that way. Paul Sachs's book was the only book that even dealt with prints in a historical way, and I was just recently writing a little preface to a catalogue on Surrealist prints and realized that he had no surrealist prints in that book, at all. He had drawings. And then, even later, when Hyatt Mayor made his wonderful book called *Prints and People*, Surrealism, the word, is not even in the book. So modern art in prints really had a lot of empty space to be filled in. And it never occurred to me that people took time off to write books, so, you know, I wrote at five o'clock in the morning [laughing]. And it was, after all, not for the Museum. It was co-published by the Museum, which was how we used only things from the Museum collection. That was the agreement that Bill had made. But, I benefited, I must say, in both instances, from having a sister who was an editor. My sister was

an editor at E. P. Dutton, and so the one thing she taught me was, never be responsible for getting the photographs. [Laughter] It was the smartest advice I ever got. But, I liked it, and then, a little further down the line. I guess I shouldn't get to it.

SZ: What? Your first show?

RC: No, putting the book together. In '71, when that *Modern* [*Art in*] *Prints* show started touring, I traveled across on a train from the west to east coast of Australia, which takes close to three days, and that was how I was reading [laughter] -- that, and in the plane, was how I was reading my art history for that book. But I should go back to the other shows, because really, *Canada '67* [MoMA Exh.#827, May 2-June 4, 1967; C/E 67-9, 1967-68] is the first show that I must have done. I get all confused because that doesn't seem like the first show that I did.

SZ: What seems like the first show you did?

RC: The Picasso prints [*Prints by Picasso: A Selection from 60 Years*, MoMA Exh.#841, October 11, 1967-January 1, 1968]. But anyway, I went to Canada. I was sent up to Ontario and Montreal and I picked out the prints. So this was really the first grown up job I had, doing that. I had installed the *London/New York/Hollywood* show in Boston at the [Institute of] Contemporary [Art] there. And then, of course, we were installing in the Sachs Gallery all the time, so I was always making some kind of little installation, but nothing before *Canada*. And *Canada* was in the basement. But anyway, I met the Zackes in Toronto, and they had quite a collection. Now most of it is at the AGO [Art Gallery of Ontario]. And when you go abroad you're always put into contact with the International Council members. I don't remember too much about it except that I had met Les Levine in the early '60s. And so when I went up, he was very helpful in putting things together, and, of course, he really was the most avant garde artist in Canada at that time, with a couple of others where we got other things. But, he was the most experimental, and when he came to New York a year or so later, he was doing things that -- the Junior Council put something of his up in the Garden, but by and large, he was not well-liked by the Painting and Sculpture people. So I made that exhibition, and we acquired all the works. It sort of set for

me a pattern that was very similar to Bill's, which was: you make a show, you get the contents some way or other. He engineered the acquisitions. But for a print collection which is essentially about representing as broad a spectrum of what is being done in that medium, as it pertains to the aesthetic philosophy of the institution, we really, because of limited budget and whatever, did not pursue works by artists who were only printmakers. It was a great excuse for not taking a lot of work that I think we never would have shown. Not to say that we didn't have a lot, but, the people who studied with [Stanley William] Hayter, for example -- you didn't even have to ask; you always knew what the things looked like; same with [Mauricio L.] Lasansky. Except those people all just concentrated on prints. Hayter did paint. But still, we had Lasansky, and I don't remember ever seeing any paintings by Lasansky. So it was a quasi -- it was a good crutch for us. There was plenty of material that we could get that was important. So, most all the artists that were in the *Canada '67*, in fact, I think all, were painters as well. I remember on the trip -- I don't remember when the Montreal Expo was... [Note: The Montreal Expo was in 1967.]

SZ: It was the same year.

RC: I had a hard hat trip through the site when I was working on this show. There was a gallery scene there that was even more interesting than it became later. Now, it's just like New York, but it was really a lot of artists working very hard then. Jack Bush was, even at that time, the big one, and [Jean-Paul] Riopelle in the French area. He was already in Paris, but he was considered their major artist. And then *Prints By Picasso: A Selection from 60 Years* in 1967 was a show upstairs. That was my first run-through for *Picasso: Master Printmaker* [*Picasso: Master Printmaker*, MoMA Exh.#942, October 15-November 29, 1970; ICE-F-158-71, November 1972-October 1973]. That was selections from the collection, just like *Artist as the Subject [The Artist as His Subject*, MoMA Exh.#831, June 6-September 17, 1967; C/E 67-18, 1967-68] was selections from the collection. Those were all Sachs Gallery shows. The first [Jasper] Johns show in 1968 [*Jasper Johns: Lithographer*, ICE-F-120-68, June 1968-October 1970] was actually a part of the circulating thing that we would do with various international shows. Documenta [IV] was the first one. It also was at Ljubljana because he had gotten a prize at Ljubljana or something like that. Or it

was his representation there and that's why, in Yugoslavia, there are actually Jasper Johns prints in the museum in Belgrade, because they had all seen this show; it was combined with a [Antonio] Tápiès show for the print biennial. [Note: *Antonio Tápiès' Lithographs* was a non-Museum exhibition, organized by the Galerie Maeght and the Museum of Modern Art, Belgrade.] But I didn't have anything to do with that. Maybe Virginia Allen [did].

In 1965, I was given the first curatorial fellowship, so to speak, at Tamarind: each artist had to set aside so many prints for a complete archive of Tamarind, and they were finding a way of getting these archives into various museums. The Art Institute of Chicago was going to get one set, and I think they did, but Bill, because he was on the advisory board, was going to get one as well. In '65 they'd already been in business almost five years. As the department expert on prints, I was to go there for two weeks and find out all about Tamarind. June Wayne was quite a formidable character, then, too. I was put up in an apartment -- typical Los Angeles, with a swimming pool in the middle of the court. There were a lot of interesting people there. George Sugarman was one of the visiting artists at the time. They had to stay for a period of time and had very little privacy. He took me under his wing. The minute I arrived, he said, "Ah, a breath of New York, finally." So we would pal around, with the other people, too. There was a gal from San Francisco, an artist -- I don't think she made paintings -- who made more prints than any other artist there. I think Ken Tyler was still there as master printer, so I met him then. I remember going out to Watts and looking at the towers with George Sugarman and Mel Edwards, who was a sculptor working in Los Angeles. He's never been a close friend, but somebody I remember fondly from back then, as I do George. It was fascinating what they did at Tamarind. They had a curatorial person or archivist there who was keeping everything put together, who had succeeded Virginia Allen. Virginia Allen had that role for, I guess, a couple of years and had gone off to London to work for Editions Alecto, which is where Brooke Alexander's wife also came from. So we had put everything together to bring to New York. It seemed that there was a donor. Well, that took years. But ultimately, there was a show before the ten years were over. Nobody knew how long it was going to last, but the grant that was funding them was from the Ford Foundation and it was a ten-year grant. By the time

it was time to do the show, Virginia Allen had left Alecto. Bill had met her in London and encouraged her -- she, I think, was not very happy with the commercial world -- to come and work in the Department, so she was the one who ultimately did the *Tamarind: Homage to Lithography* [*Tamarind: Homage to Lithography*, MoMA Exh.#890, April 29-June 30, 1969; ICE-F-134-69, February 1970-December 1975] show and had to write the catalogue. She stayed with June Wayne for several years, so she knew the problems that that entailed. We were very jealous of her because Bill had her sitting in his office -- there wasn't any more room for her elsewhere -- and he was friendly, on a social basis, with her, and that was very difficult for all of us. She didn't stay all that long, but I think she wasn't too happy in New York.

In 1968, one of the best things happened to me. Bill, because he had been a judge in Yugoslavia at Ljubljana so many years, had promised them that we would do a Yugoslavian in print show, and sent me to do this after the Canadian one. I was the national exhibition person. So I traveled in Yugoslavia under the auspices of a private organization. They had a certain amount of privatization for the arts, because Tito had really decided that modern art should be promoted in Yugoslavia. I learned a tremendous amount about Yugoslavia and the arts there, because it was a political decision that it would be modern art. It wouldn't be social realism, even though it was a communist country. And I met social realist artists who were very, very bitter, because this international biennial in Ljubljana excluded them, so they didn't have the market, too. Not only that, they were sort of like veterans, remaindered. They all had participated in the social revolution of Yugoslavia, so it was like being left behind. It really was very sad. I drank a lot of slivovitz and visited and made very good friends with a few Yugoslavs during the period: the gal who was the assistant to the man who ran the Ljubljana print biennial, and a woman who was working at the Belgrade museum, whom I still correspond with. She still lives in Belgrade and was among a lot of the people in the cultural world who tried very hard to raise our consciousness in the last few years against what was going on there. So that trip started in Paris in May of 1968. There was some question about whether I could go. Bill was in Paris, and most of the riots were over by the time I got there. I remember I brought back a whole lot of posters, and I certainly couldn't have taken those to Yugoslavia, so it may have been on my way back. Bill decided to introduce me to a

lot of the gallery people. We would run around, and I met Mira Jacob and man at La Hune and I don't know how many other people, had lunch at the Mediterranée with the Saidenbergs and Frank Perls (I had never met Frank Perls up to that time, which was fun), and walked all over Paris with Bill. That was really a very great experience. In a way, I think that particular trip was one that did a lot to keep me at the Museum. I had only been there four and a half, five years, and up to that time I really didn't have much challenge -- I mean, these little podunk things of going to Canada and Yugoslavia. And the business of not doing Tamarind -- not that it bothered me, but I really had no concept of where I really stood, at that point, having somebody in there who was at the same, more or less, level.

SZ: But this trip, just because of the exposure?

RC: Yes, and I felt more confident that I could do more areas of the work. Also, in 1968, Miró had done a series of prints, and so Bill introduced me to Jacques Dupin, who took me over to the printer, so I got to see Maeght setup and printing, and met Zao Wouki there and his doggie. Not Miró, as it turned out. I never did meet him. Of the famous old artists, I did not meet Miró and I did not meet Picasso. Which was alright by me, because I didn't think meeting artists was necessarily the best thing one needed to do.

SZ: But you got several very good friends...

RC: The ones I could speak English to were my friends; let's put it that way. [Laughter] Bill's idea had been that I would do a show of these fifty prints that he [Miró] had done in 1968, so I did *[Joan Miró: 50 Recent Prints*, ICE-F-155-71, September 1971-October 1972]. I didn't go anyplace with that show at all; it wasn't a big enough show to go anyplace with. But in that same year, I did the big Picasso show *[Prints by Picasso: A Selection from 60 Years*] and of course the *347* [*Gravures* series] had been done in 1968, and Bill had worked out some arrangement with the Galerie [Louise] Leiris that we could show them all -- so it was really the first time that they had been seen -- and gave me the show to do, a big loan print show [*Picasso: Master Printmaker*]. We made a sort of reading room out of the big windowed side of

the Sachs Gallery -- that's the third floor -- and put most of the *347* prints in books, and a lot of them framed around. The later prints were up there. But the main part of the show was in the d'Harnoncourt Gallery, and so we had to put a taste of those prints downstairs. I had to choose them since most of them were to go in these books. And there were a lot of rather lascivious prints in the books, so there was a lot of comment, even though they were in the books. It was easier than putting them on the wall. It was at the end of the tour of that show that I finally saw it up in Melbourne, and Picasso had just died, so it was a big hit in Melbourne because of that.

I think probably even before that, Ken Tyler had been trying to get more prints in MoMA from his new Gemini place. The year after I went to Tamarind, he had opened Gemini. He had come to Bill and had given certain things to the collection. He could give more, he said, "If you do a show." And so, of course, I had to do that show [*Technics and Creativity: Selections from Gemini G.E.L.*, MoMA Exh.#963, May 5-July 6, 1971]. So I went out to L.A. and worked there with their people. It was a lot of the same people that were involved with Tamarind. It was very interesting. I saw very little of the two people who, in my mind, were the backers of Gemini. Later on, it turned out they were partners. The show, which had a lot of moving parts to it -- it had a movie and it had [Claes] Oldenburg's bag. It was a very interesting show. I think they wanted it to be a much bigger show, but the works were so big in it. And of course Ken designed the box that the catalogue came in, and there was a multiple by Johns in the catalogue with pads of paint and a target, and you're supposed to paint your own Jasper Johns target; that's in that book. Dick [Richard E.] Oldenburg was the head of Publications during that time, and of course, his brother [Claes] had been making things out of Gemini, and there was a movie of his working there. This was at the time of Experiments in Art and Technology [E.A.T.], so that's why the movie was about his piece, which was the *Ice Bag* for the Los Angeles County [Museum of Art] E.A.T. show. There was a love-hate relationship there between Dick and Ken, and Claes and Ken. Nevertheless, it did turn out to be OK, but the show did not get a lot of very good press, because it was too commercial. [John] Canaday, I think, bombed it, and Ken and his partners could not believe that The Museum of Modern Art could do this to them; they let themselves be exposed. It

was Hilton Kramer who said that my text in the catalogue was worthy of *Fortune* magazine [laughter]. Anyway, it was an interesting experience. It was the first show that was reviewed that had exposure to it of the kind that a painting show would have, that I did. And it was traumatic. But it was more traumatic for Ken because right after that, he and his partners split and he came out East. I think the show precipitated that. It was that show I went around with. I think it was shown down at Richmond, Virginia, [and at the] Los Angeles County [Museum of Art]. Wasn't the Rockefeller show [*Twentieth-Century Art from the Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller Collection*, MoMA Exh.#892, May 28-September 1, 1969] in here?

SZ: I think it was in 1969.

RC: 1969. I want to go back to that because until 1969, I had never given a lecture.

SZ: You were really getting your feet wet here.

RC: In those years, of course, everybody did. Because without having to do a dissertation, orals, or anything like that, I never had the need to. And although I had given talks in the galleries, that wasn't really giving a lecture. But to stand up with slides and all of that -- I had <u>never</u> done that. I think Bill talked Dorothy Miller into including some of Nelson's prints and books in the big show, and so I was put in charge of doing that. It was all of the things he didn't want to do. He wanted to write in that catalogue. After all, he had formed so much of that collection for Rockefeller. So he really wanted to distance himself from his print things. He always had the feeling that this was what he was given by Alfred because Alfred had a problem with him, but that wasn't the real him. He wasn't a print specialist, he was a specialist in modern art. So they decided that I should give a lecture. I think there was a series of maybe three lectures. I don't know who gave the others. So I gave a lecture on the prints and books in the Rockefeller Collection, and I think there were fifteen people in the whole auditorium for this. It was really crazy. I had written out what I was going to say, except for when I went through the slides. I had written a longish introduction. And afterwards, Bill came to me and said, "Never speak from a written text." He said the slide part was better, and that, of course, came from giving gallery

talks. So by and large, I have kept to that recommendation. So you see how much he formed me, really a great deal, and I've always acknowledged that and it's true. I admire the enthusiasm that he always carried for art. I think a lot of it was that both of us did not have that really heavy academic grounding that grinds you up, as far as I'm concerned, or has ground up a lot of people [laughing] and it shows in their work and in their attitude about what they're doing with art.

Graphik der Welt also stemmed out of Bill having been in all of these various print biennials, and it was organized by Dietrich Mahlow who was trying to make Nuremburg into the center of all graphics, and he had started a museum, I mean, a whole big building in which each artist would have a room. And for some big anniversary of [Albrecht] Dürer he organized *Graphik der Welt*. So we sent a regular exhibition over there, which was very nice. I think I went over there just to see where it was going to be. I didn't install it. Then the International Program decided to get much more involved in Australia, so *Modern Art in Prints* [*Modern Art in Prints: 1947-1972*, ICE-F-157-70, April 1973-March 1975] was put together I think before we even had planned to put *Picasso* [*Picasso: Master Printmaker*] in Australia. It started in India.

SZ: It traveled for a long time.

RC: Yes. The catalogue is dated 1972 and it's listed under 1971.

SZ: And here it's 1973.

RC: Well, that makes sense. And that was 1973 but it didn't say where it was going later.

SZ: It toured twenty-three cities but it doesn't have them chronologically. I have that someplace.

RC: Wherever it was, I'm almost sure I went with it to India first, because it opened in Delhi, and Lakshmi Sihari was still in Calcutta. Have you ever heard of him? He was a student at the Institute who somewhere or other was well connected, and the

Birla Academy had sent him to America because they had a large, old collection, not modern, and they wanted to create the first collection of modern art in India. They were one of the richest Calcutta families. There were five important families of India and they were one of them. He did his dissertation on [Wassily] Kandinsky and he went around to all of the artists -- this was what was being done at the end of the 1960s -- Mahlow went to all of the artists too, and they kept asking them for paintings for these parts of the world which had nothing, and Germany, of course, was in that category, even in the 1960s. So he did that, and he got Albers to give things too, and went back and was the director of that academy. But he was the biggest pain in the neck there ever was. And it was not only because he was really eager to get stuff, but I think that very haughty attitude of intellectual Indians just didn't play out very well in New York. So what happened was, we opened this show when we were doing things in conjunction with the State Department. The International Program always worked in conjunction with the State Department in countries where there wasn't a big support structure for modern art, but there was a modern museum in Delhi, and the show was put there, and then I traveled to all of the cities where it was going to go. I had never been there, and there was an air strike and I had to take the train to Calcutta and nobody had told me that I had to bring a sleeping bag or anything like that. Well, it was a fascinating trip. There was a holy lady in our compartment. They had women's compartments where four people slept, two below and two above, and every time we stopped, people were at the station who gave her baskets of fruit. So our whole compartment -- we couldn't walk around in it at all -- was just piled high with baskets of fruit. But oh, so cold, because it's desert up there when you're going across in January. I developed a cold on one side of my head and it was the strangest thing. It started in Calcutta. I got there very early in the morning. Luckily, there was a lady in the compartment who was an ophthalmologist. She and her husband took me to my hotel because the person who was supposed to meet me wasn't there. It was a great old hotel of the English period and because nobody was there I decided I would take a walk by myself and come back -- I guess there was a message somebody would pick me up at noon. Right off the bat there were all these crippled children. You don't take walks in Calcutta, but I did. One child there was begging next to a child who didn't looks so happy -- real little. That

child was dead when I walked back. But it was fascinating to meet all of the people in Calcutta, which is traditionally the most cultured city of India.

END TAPE 2, SIDE

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **JANUARY 23, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

RC: We would find writers in Calcutta and lots of artists, and there was a teaching academy, many art schools. Of course, it was a mammoth city as well. There was a big tradition, but, of course, it was very difficult because of the poverty. Still, a group of writers and artists gave a dinner for me. The men all came with their gold-edged clothes. I went also to an artists colony funded by somebody who had a little money but not enough to feed everybody so he gave them a place to work and study and they made dyed silk pictures that they sold to sustain themselves. By then, the strike was over and I flew to Madras to find the place where these things could be shown. Calcutta being such a big place, of course we wanted the showing at the Birla Academy. Lakshmi was there; I think he had just moved to The Museum of Modern Art in Delhi, where he was the Director, and now he's the big art czar of India. He's in charge of all the art museums there, if he's still alive. He had several heart attacks. In any case, in Calcutta we decided that it couldn't be at the art academy because it had a glass skylight and it looked like it would rain in since the show was going to be shown at the beginning of the monsoon. Down in Madras it was even funnier. It was a wooden building. It's amazing how you could see through the wood to the outside. But it was going to be there in dry season, and the guy from the State Department came and worked out how they would cover the walls with stuff, and so on, so it could be hung there. Madras was wonderful. I finally did some sightseeing on my own and went to Mahal Bali Purum and saw the wonderful rocks there, then flew to Bombay. That was not a problem. Bombay was the most modern and least threatening of the cities. There I met gal who's an artist who I think used to be a go-for for Bob Rauschenberg when she was studying art in America. Very, very, very

rich lady. I've seen her since there. I also met a couple who had an art gallery. They showed Picasso and people like that, but it was the only Picasso ever seen in India before my show. My show had a Picasso print in it and a Matisse print, and so forth, so it got a tremendous amount of play even though it was just a little print show. That was the first time that I started traveling. Then the next place that I went for *Modern Prints* must have been Australia. [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was the ambassador to India during the time my show was there, and eventually the show did get put in that art academy because they wanted to have it extended and shown while somebody, maybe the president, was coming through. And it was already beginning the monsoon and we were just horrified. I think it was the first time I really screamed and hollered at the Museum, "We can't do that!" and we ended up doing it anyhow [laughing]. So I followed that show then to Australia. It opened in Perth *and Picasso: Master Printmaker* was in Melbourne. Met a lot of Australian artists at that time, brought Australian prints back to America. Did I bring any Indian prints back to America? Maybe a couple, but I don't remember; probably not.

Then I did the first show with Jasper, that year, of only his lithographs. That was nice. We made this newspaper: I wanted to do some kind of brochure, but at that time there was no real tradition of brochures. I had done one little folder thing for the Miró and I don't remember any others. Even the *Picasso*: *Master Printmaker* -- nothing. So we decided because it was that time of Fillmore East and *Screw* and all of those tabloid newspapers and magazines, that we'd do a tabloid newspaper, with a rainbow roll on the cover, just like *Screw* had. Johns had asked a young artist named David Boyce to design it. And about this time also Tanya Grosman was starting to think about making a big catalogue of his work and they had been making reproductions of some of his things, so he was seeing some of his work in different form, some of these prints. So he worked on the layout with David for the whole setup, then I was supposed to write the text. But the photographs were being posted in at our Museum, and Carl Laanes was the resident designer then. And it turned out that he had less than a day to strip up the whole thing. Whatever it was -- the design had come in late, or the photographs had come in late -- he did it, and when it came back, across page two on the inside of the back folder was one photograph; it went all the way across. It was done like a very quick thing because that's just one

flat when you print, so it turned out that the photograph for that flat was the American flag and Carl had pasted it upside-down. Johns got a big kick out of it, because that is the sign for disaster, help, help, when you do that on a boat [laughter], so he liked that serendipity. And I also had hung one of the proofs of one of his prints upside-down because it wasn't signed. He and a friend of his took me out to lunch the day that it was finished -- I think the opening was that night, maybe. I had not really done much talking to him because it was always very difficult anyhow.

SZ: Because he's so quiet?

RC: Yes. He never made himself extremely accessible. I have the feeling that I may have written the text without interviewing him. I can't remember now, I haven't read it for a long time. But certainly the first social thing that we had ever done was that he took me to lunch at the Hilton Hotel and then we came over and he walked in the gallery and he said, "Oh, that's upside-down." [Laughter] These are always memorable things for a curator. So we fixed it. It was a wonderful opening. I have some nice photographs from it with Claes Oldenburg and people that I had already worked with, because after all, Johns was in the Gemini show [*Technics and Creativity*], too. But, again, I don't think I interviewed him for that catalogue. It seems strange. I guess by tomorrow I'll find my notes, because I have all that stuff.

The Munch show [*The Prints of Edvard Munch*, MoMA Exh.#1024a, February 13-April 29, 1973]. I was allowed to go to Oslo. The show was in 1973. What was interesting about doing that show was that Bill had done a Munch show [*The Graphic Work of Edvard Munch*, MoMA Exh.#614, February 6-March 3, 1957; C/E 1957-58; ICE-D-11-56]. Of course he had done Picasso shows too, but it was very early to do a Munch show when he did it. The first one he did, there was a little catalogue for it. It was one of the few things in print, on Munch's prints. We had acquired a collection of Munch prints that was put together by Kornfeld and Frank Perls. That was when Bill got Evelyn and Bill [William B.] Jaffe [that's Evie Hall now] to pay for a group of them that had to do with man and woman, a big deal in Munch's work. But the big problem was that there were duplicates, and there were things in the group we didn't have any money to pay for. So I think that doing the show was also supposed to be

a means of finding money, because it took us years and years and years to pay for them. But I got acquainted with the Epsteins down in Washington who had a big collection, and Phil Straus, who's on my committee and eventually started collecting them -- I think mainly because we were selling duplicates and Epstein bought some of them, and so Epstein sold Straus some of his. But besides that, being a really major acquisition for the Museum, it really did put our Munch collection into very good shape. It's not, unfortunately, as good as the Straus collection or the Epstein collection -- the Straus is going to the Fogg and the Epsteins to the National Gallery -- because they collected much longer. The more shows you have, the more things come on the market, the more you can buy, which we couldn't. But to make this exhibition, I went to the Munch Museum in Oslo. It was really the first time that they were in a position [to open their archives], because when Munch died in the late 1940s he left everything to the city, and by the time they built the museum and did their shows, they were writing as much as they could but they hadn't gotten into the papers that deeply. Now there is so much more scholarship. But, it was the first time that some of the characters in his life that had really influenced his work came to light. So I brought over for the show photographs of Tulla Larsen, who was his girlfriend and the misery of his life, and the family Bible, and things that related very closely to the sort of tragic years of his youth, and also a block to show how he would make the woodcuts in a jigsaw fashion. He cut apart the blocks, which was something that he developed. The show was very well thought of. There was just a little tiny brochure for that. Print shows really were not given the time of day, in those days. And there wasn't the scholarship to say, yes, now we should be making a book. And literally, we should have made a book then. It's possible that maybe I just felt I wasn't capable of doing it. The *Gemini* [show] had a book because Gemini paid for it. That's the only reason.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **FEBRUARY 21, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: Last time, I said I wanted to go back and do some of the institutional history, and specifically some of the things that were happening in the department. It was a very rocky time for a lot of reasons. I wanted to talk about the “Two Bills” [William S. Lieberman and William S. Rubin] and the union problems, then the search for the director. That all kind of coincided.

RC: Because I came from the Bill Lieberman camp, so to speak, I had very little to do with Bill Rubin. But Bernice [Rose] and Virginia Allen were both put into the Painting and Sculpture Department when Bill went up. When I say "up" it means he went from the fourth floor to the sixth. So he had his crew. Elaine Johnson was more or less put in charge of all of the drawings and she had to make do, having trouble about which parts of the staff would stay with Drawings, because she hadn't specifically been with the drawings. She had spent most of the time before Bill [Lieberman] went up there doing research on Latin America. She would make trips there, and she was supposed to write a book and add to the collection. She wasn't spending much time with the collection except for the Latin American stuff. The International Council had funded all of this, and, I think, the JDR III [Rockefeller] Fund also. Her secretary at the time was Joan Rosenbaum. Joan was going to go to the Drawings section which Bill was still overseeing. We would have meetings once a week, or something like that, and I would go up into Bill's office, too, for these meetings. There was something that I thought was fairly interesting. Martha Beck was the registrar in the department. We always had a registrar. This was after Gloria Hodsoll left. Joan Rosenbaum wanted to take some time off and go traveling

in Europe, so Martha Beck was put in her position as a sort of assistant in Drawings, with the understanding that when Joan came back it was up for grabs. This was another one of those things that happened when there was no union. As it happened, Martha got the job, and Joan went off and became the Director of The Jewish Museum. And Martha eventually opened The Drawing Center. It didn't happen that fast, obviously. Elaine really did what she was supposed to do. I think she felt very badly that she was stuck with the drawings and that she really didn't have a specific job. In the meantime, Bill was busy doing all sorts of things up there in Painting and Sculpture. I think Virginia Allen worked on the Barnett Newman show [*Barnett Newman*, MoMA Exh.#980, October 21, 1971-January 10, 1972] with, I guess, [Thomas B.] Hess. There was a lot of friction between her and Bill Rubin, who sort of "owned" the Abstract Expressionists. And Bunny [Bernice Rose] too, I think, had certain problems. I can't remember all of the shows that were of that time, because I didn't work on any of them. The day-to-day operation that was going on up there I saw very little of, because I was busy taking care of the Print Department. Ultimately, when Bill was given all the drawings, which meant a big negotiation about works on paper with Bill Rubin because Drawings had only been black and white stuff, and ink and pencil and maybe some pastel but not watercolor, not collages, anything like that, and he said that that's what he wanted. He had wanted to do this for years, before he ever had that job, so this was sort of the lagniappe for him. It was finally worked out. He kept insisting that certain things were never delivered, and so on. Elaine left the Museum to continue with her Latin American stuff, and then she died a few years later of a brain tumor, which was sad. The ”Two-Bills” thing obviously was a result of a very complicated bit of stuff that started with Alfred Barr and really relied on Walter Bareiss being in the position that he was. He probably has told you a lot of this. The euphemism of who was the Director and who was the Chief Curator was a real doozy, and Bill Lieberman had never apparently liked Bill Rubin. Bill Rubin had come and done a Matta show a few years before [*Matta*, MoMA Exh.#620, September 11-October 20, 1957] and, for some reason or other, you could tell that they were just not meant for each other. Maybe less to tell now because they've both "grown up", so to speak. But that volatile kind of action, feeling always that somebody was always sitting on him, Rubin had that feeling, and he'd yell and scream and holler. And Bill Lieberman was, on the other hand, a rather

devious person. He would rather do something behind someone's back and get his way than yell at them. I never heard him yell. When the time came that Walter Bareiss was no longer one of the directors of the Museum, then Bill was not protected and so this is how all of this stuff started so that he got his drawing collection. Still, it was his idea, naming the department Prints and Illustrated Books, so it sounded more important, a really cute idea. When this change was made, it was decided that nobody would be called director of a department any more, so that created yet another crisis. So Bill just started signing himself [laughing] Director of the Drawings Department. Then ultimately I became the director of my department. I think that Arthur Drexler was sort of involved in all of that, too. I can't remember how.

SZ: Probably, if we went back to the whole sequence of events in terms of looking for a director -- Alfred first retired, and René, then Monroe was gone a year later.

RC: I knew Bates Lowry hardly at all. He did a Rauschenberg exhibition [*Rauschenberg: Soundings*, MoMA Exh.#872, October 29, 1968-January 26, 1969] in the Sachs Gallery with *Soundings*, a large interactive piece that if you clapped your hands the light would go on. It was really fascinating. I worked on that show with him because they added prints to it. It was just the one piece. It must have been in some exhibition, and he thought that was a great idea to put up. I remember being at Bates Lowry's apartment. That was a big deal, too, because he was the first director that the Museum actually bought an apartment for. But I never saw any of the characteristics that supposedly did him in, because I wasn't important enough and I didn't socialize with any of those people at that point. That was '68-'69. And all of a sudden he was gone. I think I was away on some trip. Then this troika situation with Dick [Richard] Koch and Wilder Green and Walter Bareiss came together as a sort of interim thing. At that time, Walter was a little more tolerant, I think, of Bill [William S.] Paley, but as you know, he quit being a trustee right after that because he thought Paley was just interfering way too much. Walter wasn't there all of the time, but you have to understand that Walter was a very, very dear friend of the department. He collected drawings and prints. He was socially friendly with Bill and that generation

of the Museum people. He had been the head of the Junior Council, and was very involved in all sorts of things in the Museum. He knew the Museum inside out.

SZ: So he was a very logical choice.

RC: Yes. The only other person who would have had that same or a similar kind of thing would have been Ralph Colin. And of course, Ralph Colin quit. He was furious. I knew him because of all of the Dubuffets, because he had given all of the prints and we did a Dubuffet show *[The Phenomena of Jean Dubuffet*, C/E 60-6, 1961-65] from the collection.

SZ: What about Wilder and Dick in this troika?

RC: Dick was the deputy director, first and foremost, the guy who everybody dumps on. Everybody disliked him and everybody dumped on him, and that was always the failsafe, that position, like James Snyder. It was always that position, although, as a lawyer, it was very important to have him there. He married Joanne during this period. There was nothing really wrong with him. The few times that I had dealings with him I really never had any problems with him. You asked him for the law, or, is this the way to do it? He had to be a meany a lot, and of course, he really got his come-uppance later on, with the building, because the whole idea of the 1980s building and the Museum Tower and all of that was his. It was impossible to keep him without making him Director or something. I don't think he ever wanted to be Director. There was no place for him. I think it was difficult. Anyhow, it was <u>not</u> very nice. And Wilder was head of Exhibitions, and was, when I first met him, sort of the architect of the Museum, and his office was next to Arthur's [Drexler]. He had a beautiful office with a blond wood wall, and he was always so elegant. He got things done. Nobody thought that intellectually he was heavy-duty. He did a lot of architectural work outside. He did Louise Smith's apartment and he did the Marlborough Gallery. The Marlborough Gallery, which was in the Fuller Building at first, had a stone floor. It was very elegant. The floor was a kind of rough black stone. So when Louise was having her apartment done, they decided to do it with stone because that was so spectacular. Then, of course, it was too heavy for the

building [laughing], and they couldn't do it. Anyway, Bill Lieberman was pretty friendly with Wilder. There was the Louise association, and Wilder was very good to Louise, extremely thoughtful and took lots of care. I saw Louise's apartment before he did it, so I can tell you he did a splendid job. So they were good friends, and when the time came for all of this changeover -- and I can't tell you when Wilder had to leave, also, shortly after [John B.] Hightower came -- Bill got him his job at the AFA [American Federation for the Arts]. He never let anybody forget it, but he did definitely do that for Wilder. Now Wilder is very retired and finally got to do some houses, I think, for himself. He was a really sweet person. I think he and Arthur did not get along. I never knew either of them well enough to know that, but I have a feeling that they didn't get along.

SZ: Do you think Arthur was a subplot in this whole thing?

RC: Arthur and Liz Shaw were often subplots. Even while I was Deputy Director, Arthur used to live around the corner here, in the same building as Douglas Newton [55 West 58th Street]. He had a nice apartment. I never went there except after he was very sick and he tried very hard to get me to make sure Stuart Wrede would be his successor. Stuart was a very, very good man, but he just had no politics to him at all. Of course, that's why Arthur liked him. Arthur <u>hated</u> Emilio Ambasz, for example. So we've gotten Wilder and those three.

SZ: So they really kind of took care of things for a year. And your impression of how they operated?

RC: It was invisible, and I think that the shock of Bates Lowry just reverberated for a long time. Then you have all of the art things that were happening: the [Art Workers] Coalition and all of the baddies, the business of the poster and babies. The Coalition wanted to create a poster and the Museum agreed. Now this, I think, is already Hightower's time, or during a very weak period. They found a photograph of the My Lai massacre, of the people on the road, and graphic put over the photograph, "And babies? And babies." It was all going to go forward, and then Paley heard about it, and that killed it. It was at a time when the Museum was trying very hard to reconcile

itself with all of the activities of art and the horrible things with Viet Nam and so forth, and there was no right way. So this was the closest that they got. Besides the things with the entrails in the lobby -- the artists brought in all the beef entrails and dumped them in the lobby, all that blood. And the naked kids out in the [Garden]. There were lots of things happening all of the time, and there were often things that were very scary, because you didn't know what the next thing would be. There were a lot of accommodations made, as far as they could. They allowed the artists to have a meeting in the Garden, then they were upset because they couldn't get into the Museum afterwards. That history, Rona [Roob] has pretty well down. But the reality of it is quite a different thing. Takis removed his piece from the *Machine* show *[The Machine As Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*, MoMA Exh.#877, November 27, 1968-February 9, 1969] and made a big diatribe in the Garden. There were all kinds of marvelous things happening then.

SZ: What did you feel, then or now, about the place of politics like that?

RC: The Museum tried very hard to keep itself apart from politics. Not that it was beholden to any city or state organization, because we couldn't give our Garden to the City [of New York]. We were in terrible financial shape during part of this time, too. It was before the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], it was before all sorts of things, so there was no oversight of institutions. And one of the biggest problems was Bill Paley, to have somebody who is the head of all media, so to speak, being the Chairman or President of the Museum and trying to keep the lid on. So what the atmosphere did was, of course, it spilled over into the situation of the staff. There were always lots of staff who wanted to get involved. The "And babies" poster: there was really a trauma because so many people were involved in it and it was just like we were shut up. I don't think I was, at that point, but I knew about it. I must have heard about it because I would go to the staff meetings that Paley had over at Black Rock [the CBS Building on West 52nd Street]. Really it starts with René being killed. In my mind, everything was different before then. Everything was the old Museum. Even with the new building. It was the way it was meant to have been from the very beginning, and it got larger and it was sort of not "with it," not a part of real life. And you have Woodstock and all of those things happening, and I was just that much

older, too, that I didn't have friends amongst the artists that were doing all this. My memory always is that it was just disjunctive. There wasn't anything that could go forward properly. To the people who really had the responsibility, it was a tremendous mess.

SZ: What about Hightower coming?

RC: Hightower comes and he's the first of the government types. By this time there is a NYSCA [New York State Council on the Arts]. The fallout from all of this was government involvement in the arts, and he was in charge of NYSCA, and he was a Nelson Rockefeller appointment.

SZ: But he was hardly apolitical in the way you describe Paley wanting things to be.

RC: No, because by that time everybody had realized that the world had changed, and that's why he ended up there. They were also in reaction to art historian Bates Lowry. Look at what happens: you get this nice guy and he turns out to be a souse. So here's this person who gets along with the political end, and we're going to need that, because the world would need that from then on. But in the meantime, you have all this *sturm und drang* going on around and people being very unhappy, and salary cuts, I think, at that time, too. So people formed a staff association. I remember I had been at Bill's [Lieberman] office and I was passing by Hightower's office -- which, since he couldn't have Bill's office which was the Director's office, he had Dick Koch's office -- and Dick Koch was there and another lawyer and some heads of departments, which I wasn't. Hightower was a Chatty Cathy, a friendly type person, so he did get to know a few of the staff by the by, and he came out of the office and said something about, "Oh, we have to be careful of you, Riva, you're a unionist." And it was because my father had been a union organizer. But I did what everybody else did. I wasn't a leader or anything like that. People like Alicia Legg and Betsy Jones were far more the “brides of MoMA.”

SZ: Who dreamed that up?

RC: It was in place when I came to the Museum in '63. They were the brides of MoMA. Here they were, office people who had succeeded, but I'm sure they were paid nothing, so they were some of the central characters in the beginning of the union.

SZ: What about the way the union drove wedges in the staff because of the division of management?

RC: At the beginning, I remember the discussion. By the time the union was actually formed, I was already above and beyond. So I would meet with other heads of departments, and I remember Arthur being very very upset that whatever their by-laws were going to be would make it almost impossible to promote people or bring in people that you'd want. But on the other hand, the heads of departments never were close to the staff. Up to that time, the staff was every once in a while modestly invited to openings. There was a tremendous amount of sour grapes, forever, from the time I started, and it really came late, after all the union stuff, that they were included in a lot more things. But then they expected to be included, and they had to be on committees. There had to be a representative on a committee. All of this was gained with great difficulty and much enmity on the part of the people who felt it was their bailiwick to have the superior situation. There were always a few radicals in the union, or even in the beginning of all of this stuff, and they were the ones who really pushed hard, and they're the ones who still want a closed shop. But I think that it was inevitable that, with the very weak direction that the Museum had at the time that this was happening, a union had to be formed. You had to contrast it with what happened at the Met [The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY]. They tried, and people were fired.

SZ: Actually, some people disappeared after this.

RC: They did, but under the guise of layoffs for financial reasons. Yes, they got laid off, a lot of people, not a <u>lot</u>, but a few people.

SZ: But they already had the union.

RC: Yes. Then the Teamsters tried to organize the group and they didn't like that, but they did like Cesar Chavez, and that's how it got to be District 65.

SZ: And what about Hightower?

RC: Oh, I don't think he could have ever succeeded. Some people said he didn't have a clue. He didn't have the stamina, he didn't have the attack, he didn't have the qualifications. They were trying for the first time to have somebody who was just an administrator. So that was a whole new kettle of fish for the Museum. He was just a weak sister, as they say, and he was there at the absolute wrong time. He certainly never helped, to be where he was when he was. So it was easy to get rid of him. And while Paley was around, he had no problem getting rid of people. He was very sure of himself, what he was going to do. So he [Hightower] ended up at the South Street Seaport.

SZ: Now he's at the Mariners Museum [in Newport News, Virginia].

RC: It's interesting, where all of these Museums ex-directors go to. In the meantime, it was the end of '71 and nothing happened for a while, and Dick Oldenburg, who was the head of Publications -- we had a series of really rotten heads of Publications, including him. He was no better or worse than the others, but they were just not a good group altogether.

SZ: In terms of what, though, because you obviously had very specific interests in the publications area.

RC: Yes, well, at that time, not so much, but he did the Gemini book [*Technics and Creativity*] with me. But he didn't like to make decisions. It was very hard to get things done. Mike Gladstone was before him, right?

SZ: Yes, and then there was somebody before that, Grey.

RC: He knew the book trade, Gray Williams did. That's enough.

SZ: So were you surprised when he [Oldenburg] was appointed Acting Director?

RC: Yes [laughing]. But it didn't make any difference because they needed somebody and he was tall.

SZ: Is that a prerequisite?

RC: [Laughing] It was. It seemed to be.

SZ: Was Lowry tall?

RC: Yes.

SZ: And Hightower?

RC: No. Hightower was about the height of our new Lowry, Glenn Lowry, same build, sort of.

SZ: I hope that doesn't augur poorly.

RC: But Alfred Barr also did not seem tall.

SZ: Well, so, maybe it's cyclical. [Laughter]

RC: And of course, René was very tall. But I think people got along with him. He was a hail fellow well met and he knew how to keep the spirits up, I think, and that was very important. So, in the '70s, we end up with new departments and I'm put in charge and eventually I get a title.

SZ: You had mentioned that you wanted to address women at MoMA. Your being named director of the department.

RC: Certainly, that was nice. The women curators at the Museum never got too far, other than Dorothy Miller. Not that anybody was looking up to do that, but eventually Alicia and Betsy were made curators. Mary Lea [Bandy] had been an editor and then she became sort of the head of the union. Then the mess of the Film Department devolved upon her. Ted Perry was too much; he was impossible. I think Dick and everybody thought that he was, that he came across as somebody who looked efficient, but he wasn't. I remember the first thing they asked him to do was some kind of survey. I came across it once, not so long ago. It never answered anything. We were doing surveys all the time, as you can imagine. When you don't know where you're going, that's what you do. And of course, they knew they had to do some expansion too, so that was the same as what we've just been going through. But the women in the Museum. Part of the problem, too, is the women who were trustees in the Museum and the women who worked in the Museum and the relationship between them. When you considered that the Celeste Bartoses and so on were much younger and really were very clubby about the institution, and were good friends, but in most cases, always with the fellows that were the curators. We've never had, I never felt, really, a heavy prejudice against women, but there tend to be a lot of print curators who are women, so it's not surprising that I didn't face a lot of friction.

SZ: How did you feel about your rise to that position?

RC: It was natural. It never occurred to me to fight for it. This is the way of my life; I always fall into things backwards. I was very fortunate. I was at the right place at the right time and all of those things. I used to put out very long memos to Bill and later to Dick about unfair situations but mainly about art, they had very little to do with me. Once in a while, I'm sure, I've gotten really pissed off at something and made my position known, but I don't remember any big -- and maybe I'm deluding myself, which is quite possible [laughter], maybe those uncomfortable things you don't remember -- but I had no real fights to get anywhere. More memorable were the kind of buddy talks that the boys all had and then I'd have to scream at them, "That's sexist" or something like that.

SZ: Because of where you were, in the middle of all of that.

RC: Dick always used to talk about gang bangs. He never knew what he was talking about. But, it was boy talk, and I figured, that's probably going to happen, no matter what. So, in my little way, I always just pointed it out. I never said, "I'm offended" or rushed off in a snit. I couldn't do things like that. There were things that didn't work out always the way I wanted, and they tend just to be forgotten because almost everything you do is a project in a Museum, and you don't remember all of the things that didn't go your way and that were not resolved. That's the whole thing, they always had to get resolved.

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2

RC: Well, I wish that I could remember some stuff like that, because it sounds like I'm a goody-two-shoes. I remember people being very rude and sort of mean-spirited, but even then I always wondered to myself why, if some of those people weren't very nice. There were a couple of occasions where I was told I couldn't do something or other, but then I don't remember the specifics any more, and that's good, I think. [Laughter]

SZ: What about your political sense? You did say that that was not an unhelpful thing to have at the Museum.

RC: Yes. I think when I was younger I was much more righteous, which is just normal, so I really felt that it was important to be a part of the [Professional and Administrative] Staff Association, before it was the union. I was not comfortable all of the time if I had to be on a negotiating committee, because I really don't think that, politically, the younger people, or the people without any power, get a good deal. And I knew that it was the same for me. I was a woman. I came up through the ranks. I would see, once in a while, various kinds of sheets for exhibition proposals with salaries on them, and be in shock, sticker shock [laughter]. You feel rotten about those things. The inequities, which everybody learns about eventually, you feel really bad about, and the Museum did and does promote the fact that if you come through the ranks

you don't do as well as if you come from outside into a higher position. I got back at them, finally. When Dick asked me if I would be Deputy Director, he was put in a corner. So he said, "I'll make it worth your while" and "You can get this amount of good salary and still work as a curator," and so I said, "I'll do it for two years and then we'll review it." And, of course, he would never review it.

SZ: You meant, review it in terms of your compensation?

RC: No no, in terms of my continuing to do it. I did not want to do it for a long time. The principle of it did not appeal to me, which was, riding shotgun over Philip Yenawine and Clive Phillpot. They were no worse than a lot of other people at the Museum, and actually had very great qualifications. So for many of those six years, all I was trying to do was get them to shape up. But no, when I was finally coming to the end of my career and I wanted to do the book show, I said to Dick that I was not going to be Deputy Director any more, and what was a good day [to stop], and he never would

SZ: [Laughing] tell you.

RC: There were memos after memos about it and finally I said, "As of November, I'm not." Somewhat after that, we discussed the fact that I wasn't any more the Deputy Director. In those terms we had to talk about salary, and so I said, "Well, Dick, if I'm making more than any of the other chief curators, then I'll take a cut." That was the end of it, because other chief curators were making more than the deputy director. [Laughter] That was my only smart-ass thing that I could do. You never have a true sense of what's going on <u>until</u>, even if you're very well aware of what was going on. And people had much harder jobs than I did, too, but nevertheless. But there were lots of inequities, which anybody who comes up through the ranks feels. I think that when you start at the top, you don't have that sense at all, and in fact, you just visit inequities on other people [laughter], is all. When I was young and when I wasn't the head of a department -- things change so radically when you become the head of the department... you're above all of the social snubs and all of that. It was very hard before that, because also, I was much friendlier with other members of the staff

before getting to be the head of a department. Had I come in as the head of a department, then my peers would have been my friends. But I didn't. So there was always a very strange give and take between the heads of the departments. Then, when I was Deputy Director, another different relationship situation. But before all that, people would go home crying. Not to be babies, or anything like that, but there were true injustices, left and right, and particularly the things you had to fight for, for example, fight to get a publicity release. I'm telling you, you had to write your own publicity release. People even now have to do things like that, but much more so before.

SZ: Under Liz [Shaw], or under Luisa [Kreisberg]?

RC: Under Liz particularly. What happens is that, of course, Luisa worked for Dick, but it's the people that they assign these things to that would always bug us tremendously, the quality of the writing. That's all you needed, when you're doing an exhibition. You've done the catalogue, you've done this, you've done that. They're knocking down the door. This carpentry thing doesn't work, and this paint is the wrong color, and this and that and the other, and then you are handed a publicity release that's one page long, and it's a major show, but it's a print show. Those kinds of things really, eventually, always got my goat. Another thing I keep forgetting to talk about is the Museum publication, *MoMA* [*Magazine*]. I was always the advisor, from the time it was a "baby."

SZ: This is the *Members' Quarterly*.

RC: Yes. Which was called zillions of other things, and had many other manifestations. That was one of what I consider my failures, my true failures. When Jack Limpert was around, we really hoped to make a real magazine out of it, and had been talking with the people [at the American Museum of Natural History] who did *Natural History* [Magazine]. At that time, just financially we couldn't do it. And I think Dick didn't want to get into something that looked like it might be a big undertaking. But I think it's too bad, because it was a moment when it would have made the institution into something much more. Even as recently as the last year when Jeanne Collins was

still at the Museum, we had worked up a new format, with advertising in it and everything. Not that it had to be as thick as *Smithsonian* or any of those things, but that it would have a new personality. I think Jeanne really was very eager to do something like that. But I had been trying for years and couldn't, couldn't, couldn't, ever, get anybody to think seriously about having an advertising element in it, which would have paid for it. Now it has its own editors, and this and that and the other thing, and it still doesn't have anything [laughing]. It's just another body that they have to feed. But, Liz Shaw was involved at the beginning, and she used to write a sort of gossip column in it. I don't know when the Museum's *Bulletin* stopped, I think in the early or mid '60s. They used it for exhibition catalogues as well. It may have still been in existence around 1967. [Note: From 1933 through 1963 the Museum published *The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art* (1933 through 1943) and *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* (1944 through 1963).] Then after it, they figured that they needed some kind of newsletter, and the calendar, and every three years they had to redesign the calendar. But all of these things were very good for me as far as I was concerned, because I worked with all levels of staff and got to know a lot of people. So I wasn't so isolated as a print curator normally is. I liked working on *MoMA*, especially the one year we were only doing works from the collection and had to get everybody to write an article. That was hard. So, that was one project that didn't come to the end that I wanted.

SZ: That was a disappointment for you, right?

RC: Not so much for me as the fact that it was another area in which the Museum never grew up.

SZ: I'm thinking of something else, a reluctance to use certain kinds of assistance, in the gallery, audio tours. And the whole issue of advertising, of what you produce and sell in the stores. There was curator reluctance to do a lot of that, right?

RC: The curators did not want to have audio phones, except Rubin loved it because he liked to hear his voice. He liked it for the big shows. We have them now, there are lots of them. But I think that the whole philosophy of the Museum was that guided looking of the Acoustiguide sort was not such a great thing and that it interrupted the space between the viewer and the picture. And then we couldn't have [printed] guides in the gallery. And then we couldn't have this and that. There were lots and lots of prejudices that went back to Barr's ideas, but I would imagine that nobody ever thought that, given the public that the Museum has now, it could have dealt with these problems better. Dealt with these ideas of guided looking, or whatever, which the Education people do. I think it was because there wasn't leadership. I think that it was impossible for Dick to see that part of the picture. Rubin got whatever he wanted. If this year he wanted Acoustiguide he got that, and if he didn't want it it didn't have it. He certainly didn't want guides lying around in the galleries. Then eventually, Kirk [Varnedoe] was going to have guides in the galleries. But we were very far behind every one else, and part of that, I think, was that Rubin was not a museologist, so to speak, and he never thought experimentally about how to do anything. If he didn't like a certain thing, and I may have gotten him totally wrong, but I think he never would have said, “Find me another way” or “What do you think of this?” It was so much easier to say no, or to have it whatever way that existed. I think that that had to do a lot with our plans for interactive computers. All these years, a decade or more, we've been working on computers in the galleries and so on. And part of it also is the hiatus between education and the exhibition experience and projects. And now I think that it's all going to change because certainly Glenn Lowry has an entirely different point of view and now he has a staff in place that's going to change all of these things. It's just very late.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **MARCH 6, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SZ: I thought today we'd talk about some of your major shows; then we could move on to some of your major publications.

RC: They go hand in hand, nearly.

SZ: We left off in '73-'74.

RC: The one that I think we could just touch on slightly is *Latin American Prints from The Museum of Modern Art* [*Latin American Prints from The Museum of Modern Art, New York*, ICE-F-164-74, January 1974-July 1976], which was a show asked for by the International Program but also by the Center for Inter-American Relations [NY] which is called something else, the Americas Society, now. At that time we had a very close relationship because it was a fairly new institution on Park Avenue and the director of it was very eager to have -- as you know, David Rockefeller was one of the principals of that organization, and it was essentially a forum, and has been, for discussion of economics in the western hemisphere. Since we had a very big Latin American collection that was started in the 1940's and which Bill Lieberman continued, and Elaine Johnson continued, it was decided that I should do this show. It was a pretty nice show. It worked out perfectly fine here. There was a small catalogue in English and Spanish and then it traveled to South America. I think at that time the *Tamarind* show [*Tamarind: Homage to Lithography*, ICE-F-134-69,

February 1970-December 1975] was also traveling down in South America. So it was interesting to have those two very large print shows down there.

SZ: Did you travel?

RC: I had traveled before the show to pick up some things for it, and I don't remember the context. It may have been that the Picasso show was in South America. I do remember going to Buenos Aires -- we had very good relations with the curators there -- and to Montevideo, where the director of the museum in Uruguay was famous for having become an orthodox Jew, and becoming kosher. As he also did the international circuit of biennials, it was pretty well known... and everybody thought it was so strange because he had decided to do this when he was an adult... and nobody could ever feed him. [Laughing] These are really important things. He, and then [Jorge] Glusberg down in Buenos Aires, who was the most avant-garde of all of the people who were dealing with art in Latin America or anywhere else, were interesting. I did get to meet a certain number of artists on that particular trip. I think that may have been the same trip that I went to Machu Picchu. I know that I couldn't go to Chile because Allende had been assassinated while I was in Peru. I remember sitting at the airport in Lima hoping to get out, I guess to go to Buenos Aires, and the only planes that could come through were from Mexico and they were taking Allende's family to Mexico. So it was quite a time. The exhibition here, I was surprised that it didn't really create any *sturm und drang* among the Latin American artists, most of them who were living in the City were in it anyhow, but they were always a very volatile group.

SZ: You mean, having been excluded?

RC: Certain ones, of course, weren't in, but there always has been a chip on the shoulder of artists who have come from Latin America or who are there, because there was a time when the Museum obviously paid great attention to the Mexicans, for the most part, but even Brazilians, [Candido] Portinari, and so on, and I think like any group of foreigners abroad, they had a community. They all spoke to each other. And then the Center provided even a better sense of community, although some of them, who

were more leftist, wouldn't go anywhere near there and that also provided a little problem if the show was there. But they came. I can't remember which artist said that he would never show there, but since it was a piece from The Museum of Modern Art it was okay. But that was very characteristic. And as you know, here, this was just '74, so we really weren't over all the problems of the late '60's and early '70's. But that show went on, then the next was the commemoration of the anniversary of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Print Room [*American Prints: 1913-63*, MoMA Exh.#1082, December 3, 1974-March 3, 1975, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Print Room; ICE-F-173-75, January 1976-February 1977]. *American Prints: 1913-63* also traveled to marvelous places in Europe. I didn't install it anywhere but I saw it in Vienna at the Albertina and it was so amazing. You think of what everybody went through. Here they had a catalogue with the wonderful graphic designer's idea of the American flag right on the cover. Of course, in Vienna, that wasn't such a problem; in other countries, maybe. It was in Brussels at the Royal Library, I think, and in England at maybe the British Museum, but I never saw it there. That had a catalogue -- not in New York -- but the various venues in Europe did make catalogues out of the checklist with some introductory remarks. At that time there were never catalogues, it seems to me, for print shows. Gemini [*Technics and Creativity*] is the only one before this time that was done in-house that had a catalogue. Things like *Modern Art in Prints [Modern Prints: 1947-1972*, ICE-F-157-70, April 1973-March 1975] were all for foreign consumption. Latin American was done by the Society. In a way, it was frustrating. I then did a Jim Dine show [*Jim Dine's Etchings*, MoMA Exh.#1215, June 6-September 1978; C/E R-57, February-December 1979; unnumbered ICE-F, June-July 1979. *Munch* and *Jim Dine* both deserved catalogues, and of course, there was never money for a print catalogue. In the early '70s there wasn't much money, period. I was just looking at some things in one of finance sections of *The* [*New York*] *Times* today talking about various things that happened in the early '70s and why there was money and why there wasn't. It was a hard time, but even so, you will look and see there are no catalogues for print [exhibitions] other than the Gemini one and the illustrated books show [*Modern Artists as Illustrators*, ICE-F-197-81, May 1981-April 1984] that Monroe did. And all of the catalogues that do exist that were published by the Museum before that time are parts of the *Bulletin*: the sculptor's

series of *Picasso*, the [Jacques] Villon catalogue [for *Jacques Villon: His Graphic Art*, MoMA Exh.#540, September 8-November 15, 1953]. That was the medium for smaller shows.

SZ: How did that change?

RC: It changed in several ways. Until the reconstruction in the '80s, there was no single print gallery, there was no single print department and the print department was really like a library, a library kind of thing to study from, and I think the whole art publishing business was much more ambitious. Just at this time is when I started being asked to write books and I was asked by a Swiss publisher to do one, called *Contemporary Prints* in English when Viking did it [New York: Viking Press, 1973; also called *Modern Prints Since 1942.* London: Burrie and Jenkins, 1973]. They would publish in all these different languages and sell them to American publishers. I did that practically at the same time as *Modern Art in Prints*, '73-'74, [*Modern Art in Prints*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973] and then I wrote *Prints of the Twentieth Century* [*Prints of the Twentieth Century: A History with Illustrations from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art.* New York: The Museum of Modern Art, distributed by Oxford University Press, 1976], which was '75, I think, and that was an outside publisher, too. So those were the only opportunities. I did the Dine show brochure, just like the *Munch* show. That was Dine's etchings.

SZ: It's curious because there was no money or not enough interest to apply the money to that, and yet prints, the whole medium was really at that point burgeoning, right?

RC: Oh yes, tremendously. But you won't see too many catalogues. The Jasper Johns lithograph show [*Jasper Johns: A Print Retrospective*, MoMA Exh.#1483, May 19-August 19, 1986; C/E 1987; ICE-F-211-86, May-October, 1988] that I did was at approximately the same time as Philadelphia did the show of Jasper Johns' works, and they had a catalogue. And that was one of the rare catalogues on prints. A year or two earlier, Minneapolis did one on Rauschenberg. And that is the only catalogue on his prints that still exists, even up to now. So it's a totally different thing, and I think that what happens is that the artistic production always is steps ahead of what

the recognition is. I was just looking for the Dine brochure -- I keep losing things in my marvelous system of putting books away -- just to get the title of something because I don't have all the catalogues raisonné anymore, but people would send them to me and I obviously would have to put them in the department because the department also didn't have money to buy all those books, which, little by little started coming out. What comes after all of this?

SZ: We could do *Printed Art [Printed Art Since 1965*, MoMA Exh.#1287, February 13-April 1, 1980] which was in '80.

RC: But I think there's something before.

SZ: There was the big Cézanne show [*Cézanne: The Late Work*, MoMA Exh.#1188, October 7, 1977-January 3, 1978].

RC: Bill [Lieberman] had a very smart idea which, luckily, I benefitted from a lot, which was that when new publications came out, sometimes we would do exhibitions of them, and that's what we did with Miró in 1968-69, another one for which we had just a brochure. When Henry Moore did *The Elephant Skull* I went to visit Henry Moore and we talked about it and I saw his collection of bones in the studio. It was a fascinating thing but it was so funny, he was such a gentlemanly country artist. We got along fine but I think in a way he was a little less... he wasn't so interested... in that he had done this book, although those were the best prints I think he ever did. It was published by a publisher in Switzerland... Bill had done an exhibition of Miró's *A Toute Epreuve* in the late '50s of his... Gerald Cramer, who is now dead. He worked a lot with several artists and Moore's was printed by Crommelynck's in Paris, so it was really well done. So that was one of that type. I did an installation on the first floor of a series of Frank Stella's prints [*Frank Stella: Polar Co-ordinates for Ronnie Peterson*, MoMA Exh.#1338, November 18, 1982-January 11, 1983]. We were always doing these little things when artists started making series. It wasn't just books. The Dorothea Rockburne [show] was a series that she had done [*Dorothea Rockburne: Locus*, MoMA Exh.#1307, May 5-July 5, 1981]. Sometimes they were incorporated into the *Projects* program, too. The fact that there aren't a heck of a lot

of shows here that have names to them doesn't mean too much because there was a tremendous amount of work going on.

Matisse, it seems to me, I've made how many millions of Matisse shows, not only in the Print and Drawing galleries, that was still while it was the Paul J. Sachs [Gallery] for both, but then *Matisse from the Collection* [*Matisse in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*, MoMA Exh.#1235, October 25, 1978-January 30, 1979] was the first installation that John Elderfield did. I worked with him on putting the prints in, he let me hang the prints. We often would be in the gallery together and I remember Margo [sic] Barr coming through when John wasn't there and asking me whether I thought that John Elderfield had an eye. [Laughter] I had to admit that... this was his first installation, I think... I had to admit that I couldn't tell.

SZ: And she clearly had her own opinion.

RC: Oh, she always had her own opinion, as you know. I thought it was funny because she and I were never very friendly, there was no reason to have much to do with her, and in fact, I think I might have even avoided her because she was such a volatile person - between her and Helen Franc, you know. But Helen Franc I got a kick out of because there was always some little kernel of fun in what Helen would have to talk about. But John had to prove himself, obviously. That was one incident that I remember, where at least the prints got downstairs. I think it was mainly that show that may have initiated again something that had been more or less done before. It was something I think Rubin wasn't too keen on, which was putting prints in. But like the Dubuffet installation [*Dubuffet: Persons and Places*, MoMA Exh.#1016, November 9, 1972-January 23, 1973; ICE-F-162-73, July 1973-May 1974], which was Bill Lieberman doing a Dubuffet show, and of course it had to have tons of prints in it because we had the best collection, and so I got to do the prints section on that, but very rarely was that taken up until now. I think now there is really a feeling that prints should be in the shows if the artist was a big printmaker, if there was room.

SZ: What happened during the Picasso show [*Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*, MoMA Exh. #1290, May 16-September 30, 1980] because there were some prints in that show?

RC: We made an exhibition in the Print gallery of Picasso prints, and Sasha did it, Alexandra Schwartz. I think I may have made the initial grouping, because I did go to the [Picasso] archive. It was a very odd period because after Picasso died and there was this whole inventory made, it took quite a few years, and Claude Picasso had the only marked catalogue. There had been a catalogue made by a man named [Georges] Bloch who had as complete a collection of Picassos as one could have had then, and in this catalogue were all sorts of marks indicating that there were things that one couldn't believe actually existed because of the proofs and so forth. Armed with that information -- I had taken notes; they wouldn't let me take copies of the catalogue or even xeroxes of pages because they hadn't really worked out everything, though I think they did know what was going in the Picasso Museum but they didn't know what was going to the heirs. So he was very close to the chest about it, but then I did get to see the things and so we did pick out some of the proofs of the *Minotauromachy* and things that were very rare, and I got to know Brigitte Baer who had been one of the people who had sorted out all of the prints and now has finished the catalogue raisonné of his prints. Bill [Rubin] is always on the phone with her because she has so much information.. This is a person who was a journalist, who did not have an art background. I don't know whether you've had much information about the process of working on the Picasso estate, but it's an interesting point that the man who was in charge of it who was an auctioneer-dealer, and the lawyers, it was understood that they would not have anybody from the art business working on it, so that there wouldn't be any soiling of the reputation of how it was done. It was very clever.

SZ: So a journalist was a good choice.

RC: She was somebody who everybody knew and who everybody knew was very thorough. And there was a younger boy who had just started working for this man, who also had no background in the trade, though he became a dealer later. They all

managed to get something out of it. The boy, I think, was actually paid with a print. It was an interesting time, putting that part of the show together, because Bill [Rubin] did not have any interest in putting prints in the main part, unlike the *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism* [MoMA Exh.#1529, September 24, 1989-January 16, 1990] show, in which he did put prints. We had had some differences of opinion, because when I wrote some parts of *Picasso in the Collection*, I had one of the few serious discussions with Bill Rubin about the fact that there are a couple of copies of *The Frugal Repast* printed in blue. Of course, it's a blue period subject, and I made some extrapolation from this, and he just thought that this was a kind of thing that a printer would do. And I said, yes, maybe the printer did suggest it, and it wasn't taken up because there weren't..., but there were a couple that still had this blue in it. I think that the artist, who hadn't made any prints before, was curious to see what his composition would look like. Because it is a subject that's very similar to paintings, like any artist he starts out printmaking because he's heard that this is a way to get known, and naturally he'd want to be known by something that's very similar to his paintings. Jasper Johns is the same. They all do start out with subjects that are easy to draw or whatever. The interesting history for *The Frugal Repast* is that the copy of the print before steel facing, in other words, the early print that the Museum finally got two years ago, is the one that was given to his friend to show around to sell, to sell other copies. But he didn't show the blue one. The blue one was not made for that purpose. Anyhow, that's a big aside. So the print part of that -- I think I didn't do because I had just done a big Picasso print show with the *347* series. That had been the one that was traveling just when he died -- was a good thing for her [Sasha] because afterward she went into the business at Pace and she's been selling Picasso and Matisse prints ever since.

SZ: So you were going through he artists.

RC: [Shusaku] *Arakawa* [*Arakawa: Recent Prints*, MoMA Exh.#1071, September 6-November 3, 1974] was another one that was a series of prints. These were down in what we used to call the Northeast gallery, and so was the Rockburne. Although there were many possibilities of one-person exhibitions in the form of small, new publications exhibitions, exhibitions of large selections from the collection, and loan

exhibitions, it wasn't too easy to present a historical or group exhibition except in the print galleries. My first major exhibition of this type was *Impresario: Ambroise Vollard* [MoMA Exh.#1175, June 6-September 6, 1977]. The catalogue was a revised version of Una Johnson's catalogue raisonné of Vollard's publications, so again, there was no real catalogue for a print exhibition. Research in Paris was difficult, mainly because Vollard's death in 1939 was just before World War II, and his estate was a mess. I spoke to many people who knew him, including the son of his mistress, but ran into many brick walls. The show was essentially Vollard's publications along with a few drawings and one major painting (the Pushkin refused to lend Picasso's Cubist portrait of Vollard). Exxon was the sponsor so we had excellent publicity. No subsequent print exhibition ever had such a generous sponsor. *Printed Art* is the next one, 1980. By the time of *Printed Art*, it was not impossible to do catalogues on prints. It was a lucky point to have that catalogue done, because it's still... it ended up just as most surveys at the Museum do, if the book has some text and so forth... a kind of landmark for the period. Again, that was a show that had the curator ending up doing things that are literally dangerous, more than you realize when you're in the process of doing it. To do a show of just two decades work and try to be up to date, the premise finally had to be based on the idea that artists really incorporated printmaking into their work, that it wasn't even a matter of incorporation, it was the way they made works of art. Luckily it could start with the early '60s, in '62 when Rauschenberg and [Andy] Warhol printed their canvases, which was a unique thing to do at that time, and so the show did start out with a Warhol canvas. That kind of thinking was helpful to the print people. There were all kinds of examinations of what printing was and whether it had to be the traditional media. There were xeroxes. At that time we had already gone through a lot of conceptual art and process art, and there was a tremendous amount of material that as art objects dealt with the process of printing: the degradation of certain print media in serial form, or the artist building up a series of forms into a composition. So in a way, it came at the right time, because it was just after all of this, and yet it was also just at the beginning of German neo-expressionism. We actually showed [George] Baselitz, [A. R.] Penck, many of those people, Penck certainly for the first time in America in that show. [Joseph] Beuys at that time also was not considered very much; there was a Beuys in the show, and a lot of things

that have passed into history without a blip. I enjoyed doing the show, but the fallout, again, where you're dealing with living artists is always tremendous.

SZ: How do you handle that?

RC: I have to tell you that it [the experience] has been totally sublimated [laughter]. It's true. You look through the correspondence and you see a couple of unhappy people. It was a fine exhibition, opening, and all of that, but you see little coteries of [laughter]. Also, it was an international show and I think that American artists always have problems with Europeans, and of course, it was the beginning of much heavier, newer work by Europeans, that took over the market, for a little while. It was really a surprise. I don't remember if that exhibition ever traveled; I don't remember ever installing it elsewhere so it must not have. [Note: *Printed Art Since 1965* did not travel.]

SZ: You just brought up something. The effect of what you did in choosing certain artists, including and showing them, on the market. Do you just ignore it?

RC: I think one just had to ignore it. Nobody said, after this show, "You really think I ought to buy that?" Nobody directed that kind of conversation to me that I recall. But it was at that time that the main dealers started dealing in prints. It was easy for them to do. It's hard to remember that, for the most part, Associated American Artists and Brooke Alexander, finally, were the two poles of contemporary print-selling. Pace then developed their own place, several people went into the business, and throughout the '80s did better and better. But I think that it had a lot to do with the '80s and the fact that there was so much money around.

SZ: And of course then the galleries would take who they'd show depending on who you were showing.

RC: Yes and no. There was a lot of scurrying for various artists, but I don't think because they made prints. There was very tight control by Gemini and Tyler and ULAE on the distribution of their prints, so it wasn't a matter that a dealer accept more people like

Brooke who did publish himself but also showed very widely. There wasn't that kind of thing. Even Pace ended up being their own publisher. They have their own print shop. And Crommelynck works for them or has worked for them over the years. Petersburg Press was here also at that time. But it was burgeoning, that's all. I think that this wasn't like being at the top of the wave, it was just a little before and it helped with recognition. A lot of the corporate collections, the people who were directing them, must have been very influenced by it, because the late '70s and early '80s was when those just grew like Topsy. And that's what actually helped the market. The individual sales didn't do a thing for it. It was all of those corporations.

SZ: You mean purchasing in such great numbers?

RC: Yes. There were so many corporations and they were doing it. This was also about the same time that tax shelters started and a lot of artists were encouraged to make prints for the tax shelters, which ended up to be a disaster because it ended up not being a tax shelter at all. A lot of prints were made that if there had been a publisher who was truly interested in the work of the artist, would have had the artists destroy. And many of them just got buried because people just put them in their vaults, figuring that some day they'd be able to do something with them. In the last few years they've started to come out. Some of them are amazing. It was a very disgusting part of what goes together with money. It's not unusual.

SZ: O'Hara

RC: I was thinking of multiple artist exhibitions. That was very early on. That, if I recall, was the first installation in the Sachs Gallery that I did. [*Frank O'Hara, In Memory of My Feelings*, MoMA Exh.#846, December 4, 1967-September 10, 1968]. The Museum had made this volume in memory of Frank [*Frank O'Hara: In Memory of My Feelings*]. I didn't know him. No reason I should, because he was in the International Program when I wasn't working with it, and he was doing mainly painting shows. Bill Berkson, who was his very good friend at the time of his death, a young poet, got together with the Museum to manage the putting together of this volume, which was an interesting process. All of the artists were given a kind of

plastic which was used for making photolithographic plates, and they were to draw on that plastic. Some of the artists drew much more than they needed. They were each assigned a poem. The book is still around. We had never really shown books at the Museum. Monroe Wheeler was still involved, at the beginning. It was sometimes printed in sepia, in black -- I think the Rauschenberg is in sepia. Some wonderful drawings ended up being made for it. Somebody in the Museum had to be in charge of doing an exhibition of this; Bill Berkson and everybody agreed that it should be done. It must have been '69. I remember buying a dress for the opening in the Village, so I still lived near Greenwich Avenue. Of course, all of the great artists of the time were included in this book, so they were at the opening. Bill Berkson had every artist sign an agreement that the drawings would be kept in the print department, because the book was printed and they wouldn't be considered real drawings because they were made for reproduction. That caused little problems every once in a while, because some artists actually wanted them included in some of their shows. Individually each one was allowed to do that. The opening was splendid. It was after the '64 *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, the first one that brought all these artists together. I was very excited because this was really when I met almost all of them. I remember Claes [Oldenburg] there, and Jasper [Johns]. They all had come to this opening, and that does precede everything that I ever did with them. Later, it happened that some artists made more drawings than were used. Most of them kept the ones that weren't used, but de Kooning made eighteen drawings and only three or four were used in the book. A few years ago the Limited Editions Club asked if they could do a volume with Frank O'Hara's poems and all eighteen. Elaine de Kooning was still alive and supposedly de Kooning agreed to this book. After Elaine died and when the book came out, the lawyers for de Kooning said he couldn't possibly have agreed. There was even a signed agreement; well they're not sure that was his signature. It was really a mess. But in the meantime we had negotiated to do it and they did a very good job and they did it the right way, which wasn't flipping the pictures and so on. And Bruce [Porter] really worked very hard on it and it came out much more beautiful actually than the Museum's book because it was done on good paper and so on. But it's always been like an albatross with the people in the Limited Editions Club because they really have had a hard time selling it because they only could stamp a signature on it and

of course by the time it was finished de Kooning could never have signed his name. Obviously, we had to make sure that de Kooning agreed to this before we agreed. So there were pieces of paper that made it very clear that he had. So it was really a sorry situation. They did another book with Robert Motherwell and it preceded this one and it turned out that all the prints in that book were made from the drawings that he had kept from *In Memory of My Feelings*. So it was really sort of like having a set. It was very good, however, for the Museum. It was a very good deal for the Museum and Bill Edwards negotiated it. We were very happy about the outcome, as a commercial thing. I'm glad I never got into the commerce of prints, I have to tell you. *Modern Artists As Illustrators* in '81 [ICE-F-197-81, May 1981-April 1984] was the first time that I really could put books into a show that was only about illustrated books. We had this big collection which we have talked about before and we had a lot of duplicates, and they wanted something for South America again. For once we made an exhibition out of only duplicates, and there were the great cubist books of Picasso, and Matisses and so on. We could only show a couple of pages and we had special cases made so that they really looked like books. They were on little easels inside of plastic that was bent especially. It was a very nice show. I never saw it installed; it went away without me, in Latin America. It was never done at the Museum. It had a catalogue in English and Spanish, too.

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 2

RC: The show went away without my ever having seen it, but when it returned, in order to keep up to date with the book collection, because there hadn't been much money -- the only real funds we ever had for Prints was the Turner Fund, which had to be American living artists. That didn't take care of books at all. The Henry Moore show [*Anton Heyboer, Etchings by Sol LeWitt, Henry Moore's Elephant Skull*, MoMA Exh.#981, October 26, 1971-February 14, 1972], and, later, the ones of [Marc] Chagall's *Psalms* [*Marc Chagall: Prints, Monotypes, Illustrated Books*, MoMA Exh.#1279, November 22, 1979-January 28, 1980], and [Francesco] Clemente's *Argonaut* [*Clemente: Department of the Argonaut*, MoMA Exh.#1433, November 6, 1986-February 10, 1987], then later Baselitz [*Malelade by Baselitz*, MoMA Exh.#1578, April 9-July 23, 1991], almost all of these shows we did of books had to

do with getting them for free. So we started to sell the duplicates. I really didn't want to have a big deal made out of it -- remember this is the hot '80s -- we made a package of a whole collection of them and they were sold to a Japanese museum. That was very useful. Then they came again and there were some secondary books that we hadn't put in the package and they bought those as well. So we were very lucky in that. They were lucky too, but the books weren't in the best condition. We kept the things in the Stern Collection in much, much better condition. The other advantage was that the Stern Collection books, which were the ones that created the duplicates, for the most part were never bound, which meant that they were much easier to exhibit, in most cases. The books we had before very often had the plates cut out of them if they had been bound, and then put in mats, because they were never considered more important than the prints. So the Stern Collection really represented a much more sophisticated attitude toward the illustrated book. It was the conjunction of the printed page and the picture that was important in most of those books. Then, I must have done something else.

Certainly the Lautrec show [*Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec*, MoMA Exh.#1408, October 30, 1985-January, 26, 1986] was the next very big exhibition. For many years I had known a dealer named Wolfgang Wittrock in Dusseldorf. He had once worked with Kornfeld, the auction house, in Switzerland, and with another man who is now the head of the museum in Tubingen, Goetz Adriani, and the two of them worked together on Toulouse-Lautrec. Wittrock had a great background in Lautrec because every year Kornfeld had more and more wonderful Lautrecs. As the market got hotter, people would put them up to auction, things that hadn't been seen. Also, a lot of the Lautrec collectors' families -- there were many of them in Germany at the beginning of the century -- those people now, who had managed to keep their collections some way or other, the next generation was selling. The greatest private Toulouse-Lautrec collection is still in Germany in the hands of the side of the family that had collected it and managed to keep it secretly away from anybody. Wittrock also knew this family. He came to me once and said, "Would the Museum like to do a big Lautrec show? I am working on the catalogue raisonné and I would hope that the show could be at the same time as the catalogue raisonné is issued. Nobody has been working on it and what information there is in the old catalogue raisonné

that exists is so incomplete and so wrong. I wonder if you'd like to do it." I said, "We'll look into how it could be done, because you are a dealer, after all," though he mainly dealt in German expressionists. So we worked out that he would do the catalogue section of the catalogue because he had all the information, and he would locate the best copies of the prints, and the Museum would hold it, and we would add to it with drawings and paintings and ephemera, and get other people to write in the catalogue. I wrote the introduction and we ended up with somebody -- I think Harriet [Bee] has never totally forgiven me -- a German writer. It should have been Pickvance, but for some reason or other that didn't work out. I don't know whether it was that the Germans mistrusted him or what, but in any case, we had a hard time getting the text for that catalogue on time. But the exhibition ultimately -- Wittrock and I hung it. I think that I had done the layout for the architecture of it. We had benches and kiosks and a wall that was blown-up photographs, of posters, which was fun to do because I think it helped the ambiance of the show. It is still in the books as one of the most-attended shows that the Museum [has] had, which for essentially a print show was pretty good.

SZ: And critically, also.

RC: Yes, and it was done well because the quality of the things were so good. It's funny because Bill [Rubin] at first would not let me take our painting downstairs which is, of course, related to a print. Then the worst was that we really wanted to borrow a painting from Switzerland, but the painting was not ever lendable. It would have been even better if we had gotten all of the things that we wanted. But we had the Whitney painting *[May Belfort*]. There were some really exciting paintings in it, and also all the Loie Fuller proofs. I think that it was a very positive situation with a dealer, because his relationship with Adriani had fallen to pieces and he was very upset by it. I didn't know Adriani at all, so it was a matter of doing what was available. Then afterwards Adriani had his big exhibition, too, in Tubingen. But in the meantime, the catalogue raisonné was printed, but not at the time of our show. This summer the Metropolitan is finally doing their show and of course they have *The Englishman*, and they have a drawing for *The Englishman*, which we didn't borrow, and they have very good prints, too. But they needed to refer to our show. I don't

know what they're actually going to end up doing. But that's soon. So we'll have Picasso and they'll have Toulouse-Lautrec, and never the twain shall meet. Anyway, it's always nice to have a show that is a triumph of that sort, even though you think it's not appealing to people who are really interested in art. But it was a very educative kind of situation in that we had proofs and you could see the progression that Lautrec made between things. We had also the help and friendship of people who were associated with our department who were big Toulouse-Lautrec collectors. So we were in a very good situation to have it even though our collection was not marvelous. But we had a very good collection Abby Aldrich Rockefeller had made and some of the prints that weren't in our collection now all belong to David [Rockefeller]. We certainly got stuff from all over. *Prints From Blocks* [*Prints from Blocks: Gauguin to Now*, MoMA Exh.# 1345, March 3-May 15, 1983] is interesting because that was done just at the time that the neo-Expressionist artists were coming up. It really covered woodcut from the first German expressionists up to the current things of the '80s, with a humongous 32-foot-long print by [Martin] Disler, the Swiss artist. It really was meant to reflect what was going on at the moment, not to talk people into doing woodcuts, and it more or less did have that effect. Lots of people did turn to woodcut by that time. It was in a funny way similar to what the Metropolitan had done called *The Painterly Print*, about monotypes which was just a little earlier. Again, we were able to make a little catalogue, which is one of my favorite catalogues because it's mainly pictures. This kind of show also helped to fill in the collection with some early works by contemporary artists working in woodcut. I really liked that. Because of the medium there was a coherence to the show, even though you went from German expressionists which were very punchy, like [Emil] Nolde and [Erich] Heckel and [Ernst Ludwig] Kirchner, where we had really good examples, through the more insular type of people from East Germany. From [Antonio] Frasconi working here, to other Latin Americans working in a kind of folk art... woodcut really comes out of folk art. It's maybe artistically distilled, but it's still such a direct medium and lots of people make prints from linoleum blocks and so forth who never think of themselves as artists. I think a lot of that nostalgia came through in a show like that. Some artists never really got into the woodcut in the same way, and there were very strange things that I don't even remember whether we had in the show, that a person like Dine would work with, Dremel routing tools

and so forth and other kinds of materials to rout out wood, quite different than with the gouge, which is very hard. But the Germans were very much in this and were cutting up huge, huge pieces of linoleum and wood, the [Jorg] Immendorfs and the Baselitzes and so forth. About that time, a little later, Audrey Isselbacher did the Iseli and Baselitz show [*Monumental Prints by George Baselitz and Rolf Iseli*, MoMA Exh.#1365, October 12, 1983-January 3, 1984]. I had more-or-less tried to do the Baselitz part, but it was nice to have combined it with Iseli, who still hasn't gotten anywhere but is a sort of [Cy] Twombly. I guess because he's Swiss and sort of isolated. He worked in New York with de Kooning in the early '60s.

One day David Whitney said, “How come you never have done a Johns retrospective?” This is the way I always got my ideas for shows; everybody would say, “How come you didn't do...?” I have to admit, I rarely ever thought of anything on my own. But I must have disregarded a lot of these suggestions as well, so I guess I did use some critical sense. I really took that as a suggestion that Jasper would be very cooperative. I knew very well that anybody in the world would want to do a Johns show, and it had to be done in a certain way that would depend on his help. [*Jasper Johns: A Print Retrospective*, MoMA Exh.#1483, May 19-August 19, 1986; C/E, 1987; ICE-F-221-86, May-October 1988.] In '83 he did the series of large monotypes and I was at the print workshop when he was doing the last of them. I think it was probably after David made that suggestion. It was important that it was still early on that this set of things be kept together; there were eighteen. We didn't show all eighteen, but I thought this was such a splendid thing to show him doing this kind of work when he was doing the hatchings, which were very beautiful but very difficult for people to understand as his work. The other thing was that I did want to have some kind of work material, like I had had in the lithograph show, and he had the idea of cancellation proofs. It never occurred to me that he did interesting things with cancellations, because most people just put an X on the stone, then they take a print, then they clean off the stone, or punch through a plate, or whatever. He had always expressed the interest in keeping all the things without canceling them -- the stones, the plates -- so he could go back and work on them again, or make a variant of some sort using that as the base. So I was surprised that there was anything, but after the book of [Samuel] Beckett's *Foirade*, *Fizzles*, came out, he was really

working with material that he couldn't use again -- plates for a specific size, and so forth. He had also developed a lot of other techniques for making prints that didn't require keeping the old plates. So there was a wonderful one which is still on loan at the Museum, another cross-hatch, of the endpapers from that book. The endpaper was made of three colors and white, I think, so there were four separate plates. He put them together in such a way -- one of the plates being very dense because it was sort of an over-print of white, printed all in black -- so it looks like a flag. So he put them together and then he put a circle around the whole set. He did a lot of other interesting things that way. We were able to show some of them, things he did with his hand prints. My tendency was always to make a smaller show than a bigger show. I think it was laziness, essentially, but I always felt that big shows were very tiring, especially when nine-tenths of the people who came to see the shows at the Modern didn't know much about the subject of prints. He never complained about the size of it. He's very laid back about things like that. He wouldn't ever think of complaining, at least not to me, and probably not to David, either. But it could very well have been a larger show. It took the whole floor. We did have a couple of paintings, the *Voice* painting from Switzerland and the *Decoy* painting from the Ganzes, which was very important because the print preceded the image of the painting, which was a first. His most recent series of prints at the time of the show was after the *Voice* painting that was in Basel. I think we already knew by that time that Christian Geelhaar [of the Kunstmusuem Basel] was not going to live, so Jasper may have made all the series of prints after the painting because of this. It made sense, because he had just done the monotype series, which is about a revolving image of several panels, and *Voice* is a revolving composition. You can replace the last one in front of the first, and so on. That turned out to be a wonderful subject that he learned from the hatching for a series of prints, because he could show the various permutations of moving the panels, which you wouldn't do with the painting. I mean, you could, but you just wouldn't unless you did it on a regular basis. He was very, very close to Christian Geelhaar and would go to Switzerland to visit him. Following the *Voice* things, he started incorporating the Isenheim Altarpiece in his paintings and that was because Wittrock had given him a portfolio of details from the Isenheim Altarpiece, but he went to Colmar with Geelhaar the first time. Many people have made the association between the figure in the Isenheim Altarpiece with

the plague, and AIDS. It was a great tragedy, Christian, he was such a brilliant guy. So the Johns was pretty successful, and after that I did *Seven Master Printmakers: Innovations in the Eighties* [MoMA Exh.#1582, May 16-August 13, 1991].

In '90 I wanted to have the ten years following *Printed Art* but I didn't want to do it as a group show in the same way. One of the things I really wanted to show was the obesity of the '80s -- the inflation and hype -- and I thought the best way to show it was to take those seven artists who were the most successful and popular, and do it. At that time, a collector in Sweden named Torsten Lilja had been collecting the works of these artists and a few others -- Oldenburg, who hadn't made a lot of prints during the period -- and said, what about doing an exhibition of his collection? Of course, we didn't do exhibitions of people's collections, and he was told that, so eventually Dick [Oldenburg] and I worked it out together. It was helpful that he could speak Swedish, though I don't think he cared for Mr. Lilja. I'm not sure that it was not mutual. He was a retired banker and he was using his retirement to make art collections. He has incredible collections of paintings, none of which he would show in Sweden because they resent rich people so much. He has since put his print collection on deposit at a museum in France. His idea was that it wasn't a collection that was going to be on the market, which he had to sign in blood, practically, and that the Museum would be given two important works by Johns. It turned out to be one Johns and one Rauschenberg because he couldn't get one of the works that we wanted. The Johns was one of those monotypes. We never were able to acquire one. They were always in the neighborhood of $75-100,000 each. We'd never bought anything at that price. He also paid for the catalogue. The other stipulation was that the exhibition would travel.

SZ: To Sweden?

RC: No; elsewhere. So altogether we really didn't have any costs for the show and we managed to get his name on the catalogue, but not too big. It was an interesting show to do because it did examine some very ambitious works by a lot of the artists, and things that we didn't necessarily own or would have collected -- some of the big Lichtensteins. Big paper works of [James] Rosenquist was again a series of works

from Ken Tyler that we put up in the basement. We were still acquiring big things when we could make this kind of show. It had to effect the market for those works, because people could see them. But Museums are meant to expose what we think is important, and I did think so. Six of the seven artists at the opening of *Seven Masters*, produced, of course, a wonderful photograph. We were at that time starting to raise a million-dollar endowment for print funds, which is what I wanted to leave behind me. Already I was in 1990 thinking about the fact I would be retiring. We had a lot of the catalogues signed by all the artists and we were able to sell those for our endowment. We had the books all laid out in the library reading room. A lot of the artists --we had sent them to them -- had already signed them. Bob Rauschenberg had been in Florida so he decided he would sign it between cocktails and dinner. But we got a wonderful picture of all of the guys together, which was fun. Lilja asked that we do a video of the show, which was the first time we had the Education Department do it. I don't know if that's in the Archives. [Note: The video is part of the Archives collection and is catalogued as #91-10 of the Video Recordings of Museum-Related Activities Record Group.] I know he got one. So that was the last hurrah, so to speak, of the living artists. By that time, all of them were good friends of mine. I think a lot of people were probably very critical. It's the kind of thing, like the Gemini show, that people thought was too commercial. But it did expose what I wanted to do and it did show that good art could still be in that manner. David Hockney is the only one who didn't come for the opening, and as he was getting progressively more deaf, he didn't go to a lot of things.

So that just leaves *Artists Books* [*A Century of Artists Books*, MoMA Exh.#1697, October 19, 1994-January 24, 1995]. Now we could talk about *Art of the Forties* [*Art of the Forties*, MoMA Exh.#1574, February 20-April 30, 1991] because it was the next show. I did both of those shows in the same year. *Art of the Forties* was to fill a hole. Because I was Deputy Director in charge of the exhibition program, I had to find something. It had to be done in eight months or less. Bill Lieberman's show *Art of the Twenties* [MoMA Exh.#1277, November 14, 1979-January 22, 1980], another show that was a filler, had been very successful. The ‘20s had always been fun. I thought, it's got to be something from the collection; there's no way of doing anything otherwise. No one curator had the time and wanted to do a show in such a short

amount of time, so we more or less agreed that it had to be a collaborative situation. I suggested that it was not a bad time to look back at the '40s. It probably should have been the '50s, but the '50s was pretty difficult, and I think the '40s actually took care of a lot of the last really great design situations, at all, period, in our century. So I knew that there was good stuff there. The '40s could include all sorts of classical stuff. The grand old masters were still alive and doing paintings. And certainly photography, and the new wave of material that was developing during the '40s in America. [Alberto] Giacometti had changed his style, we were finishing with the Surrealists. So everybody agreed and made a list of what they thought should be in the show. We started xeroxing the lists. It was more fun because I had a huge office by default. My office in the old "11" building, when the Museum was reconstructed in the '80s, was where the Garden Hall was put on. My office was suppose to be where it was, only two windows over. Since they were blocking in those two windows, I said, "You can't give me an office without windows." So I ended up with an office with two windows plus two blanked out windows and so I ended up with an office bigger than the Director's. It was certainly useful for *Art of the Forties* because we had all these photographs and xeroxes all over the place. I must say that everybody was so happy they didn't have to do the show, they just were pussycats. It was no problem whatsoever. It might have been a better show had each one of them done their own section and then my putting it together, but by and large they did. I more or less added to their selections rather than deleted works. There were, of course, works that Kirk [Varnedoe] couldn't <u>think</u> of putting in that we ended up having to put in because they were quintessentially '40s works, and some artists he hadn't even really thought of as making works in the '40s. I think our computer catalogue wasn't quite up to snuff by then, and you couldn't just ask for everything from the '40s. Prints were, because we had started earlier. It was lots of fun to organize. I must say I never had so much fun. Also because I was a teenager in the '40s and I started college in the '40s, so it was truly my decade. I think it helped that I more or less lived through it, not always totally plugged into it; and then, I had an older sister who was ten years older than I am, so she lived the war part much more vividly. She was with OWI here in New York. Her memories did help me too to fix on things. It was just great going through chronologies. I had <u>stacks</u> of event things because I thought, you can't do an *Art of the Forties* with a catalogue and just talk

about art. Particularly, it was such a volatile period and you had to recognize everything, from Nazis to nuts like [Eugene] McCarthy. And Larry [Laurence Kardish] did the film part. We must have had some stills in the show too. Ultimately, I got my way. It was interesting because everybody had to have somebody in their department who was going to give me information, and some departments were better than others.

SZ: We'll leave out the specifics?

RC: Oh no. It's just traditional. Since nobody's going to read this for twenty years at least, the most cooperative people in actually showing me things and so on were the Architecture and Design people. But they could never give me information. We would do Tupperware, for example, and their catalogue was so in a mess at that time -- they had never been very good at cataloguing. We always knew that, because there's overlap in the poster area with the Print Department, and for years the Print Department had the Salon de Cent posters and most of the artists weren't of interest to the department. We were going to transfer them, so we asked if they had any and they didn't know. This was old hat. They were always finally cataloguing or finally figuring out what things were, or where they were, because so much of their material was in the warehouse. We went to the warehouse looking for things. It was sort of a heavy burden on them because it was a little of this, a little of that. The more famous things they did manage to pull out very fast because people always asked for photographs of them or something like that. They managed to get some of the models refurbished so that we could have Kaufmann [Note: A reference to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Mill Run, Pennsylvania, commissioned by Edgar J. Kaufmann, Sr.] and various things in the show. But it was a lot because they had paper material, three-dimensional material, and how do you clean up Tupperware? It's all discolored. In retrospect, I don't know where I had the energy to do all of these things, and write catalogues. By this time, <u>everything</u> had to have a catalogue. The only bad thing about it was the changing-over in the Publications Department, from Bill Edwards to Osa Brown. The decision was to market this as a collection catalogue. They were supposed to put a band on it and they never did. Guy Davenport, a poet and writer, essentially, who wrote some very interesting works, I

thought would be perfect because he was really interested in [Pavel] Tchelitchew and all of that. We had to pay him, and I still get royalty reports that we've never made up the money on that book. They really could have marketed it better. So, what are you going to do?

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **MARCH 6, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 6, SIDE 1

RC: So that was a disappointment because I really think it's a nice book. But it was at a transition point. Isn't that funny. If Edwards had still been there, who was a marketer, it would have been treated differently. His successor was somebody who really wanted to get out beautiful books and who was under terrible constraints by Dick [Oldenburg] because money was flowing out of there too fast. We started the Design Store and all of that. Of course, there was no money for this book, because, there was no money. It's unfortunate, it is the one sad story. In the meantime, the Lilja Collection went off traveling all over, so that was no problem because they kept selling rights to the catalogue other people and getting money where they hadn't any expense at the outset. I don't know whether this is the time to discuss how curators feel about publications and the obligations to.... Everybody is very happy to write a catalogue.

SZ: Maybe this is the time to do that.

RC: It's a lot of work, but on the other hand, you end up with a book. Particularly people who have academic backgrounds in teaching and so forth know what the value of having a book is. Books, of course, are your ideas about a show, which is transitory, and all you have is the book left. I am always happy to have them to refer back to. They give you a certain amount of public presence. There is no comparison between commercial publishing and what goes on in the Museum. It is always a horrendous experience in the Museum because we publish on such a short term, or now on such a long term. There is an in-between. The people who yell the loudest

obviously make the biggest problems, get their text in the latest. A very important thing, about timing: if you're doing an exhibition, particularly about contemporary work, you don't really want to finish a catalogue a year before, because you're still putting the show together. It used to be that you would get your text in six months in advance. In commercial publishing, you have to get your text in a year in advance of the publication date. But the publication date is always movable, because it can be a spring book or a fall book. And not tied to something. So working on a catalogue and a show, and all of the logistics, and depending on how much assistance you have for the logistics, is already nerve-wracking. But the catalogue part is always worse than you ever expect. Maybe because it's a situation where the editors also have this feeling of push for a deadline, and they're not working on only one book. You may get in on time, but the last person didn't, then they don't get to your stuff for two months. This has happened to me many times, because I always got in on time. I always resented the fact that I had to get it in so early, if that was the case. When you're making an exhibition, it's not just the book that you have a schedule for. You have many, many things that have to be prepared on a regular basis, and when you get to the six-month period, it's a lot of material. You're still pinning down the last [loans] for example. You're still screaming and hollering about insurance, many many things that people think only the administration takes care of, the curators are taking care of. I have to say, when the books arrive, I am for the most part very pleased. I have worked with wonderful designers. I've had marvelous experiences, which are creative ones and that's fabulous. I have gone back to the same person -- even for the last book -- to people who have done work before, when I was allowed to, if they feel they have the money for it. The editing procedure is the one that I find most horrible, and it's not because I've been edited to death. I have always had very good relationships. But getting it from this point to that point has always been very tiresome. Besides, you always live through it with the people on your staff. I'm sure other people have had these experiences. I've heard other curators also complaining, but it is the nature of the beast, I'm sure, and it just seems a pity that there isn't some way of cutting a one-on-one situation. Every book is done separately. I don't know of any situation, other than ephemeral things that come up, where an editor has worked on more than one book that has a decent-size text. So why can't that all be freelance? I don't know; it's unfortunate, and it doesn't cost any

more. That is neither here nor there about my experience, but I think that probably was the thing I disliked about the Museum the most, and yet I had very good relations with most of the editors that I dealt with. It was just the process.

END TAPE 6, SIDE 1

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RIVA CASTLEMAN (RC)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NYC**

DATE: **MARCH 15, 1996**

BEGIN TAPE 7, SIDE 1

RC: From the time that Bill Lieberman decided that the department should be called Prints and Illustrated Books, and that more or less commemorated the fact that we had the Louis Stern Collection and had a contractual obligation with the estate to show it, I wanted to do some kind of book show. But book shows were always considered dry and not something that was worthy, perhaps, of a full floor of temporary exhibition space. We had in all of the Matisse[s], Picasso[s], Dubuffet[s], and so on, all of the single-artists shows, displayed a lot of the books from the collection, pointedly trying to figure that that's maybe as much of the obligation that we could fulfill. But when I was Deputy Director, there was a possibility of being more adamant about such a show, and particularly as I was getting older. We had had a project to catalogue the entire book collection, which had been going on since the late '80s. My thought was that the two could coincide, the publication of the book catalogue, which was a data catalogue essentially, and a catalogue for an exhibition, which would then illustrate it. This was all decided and it was going to take place in the spring of 1994 on the main floor. I had always used as a textbook the Monroe Wheeler catalogue from the '30s [*Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators.* New York: The Museum of Modern Art. 1936; MoMA Exh.#47, April 27-Sept. 2, 1936], so it seemed proper. Most of this thinking had got more-or-less accelerated by his death. I thought, "Yes, that's a good way to end it all. He's gone and we should do something that shows what a contribution he made." Other than the fact that it would be a show that had great difficulties getting funding, and all of the other problems that went with it. Since most of the material would come from our collection, it was not going to be a tremendously expensive show. It was put in then because I was

head of the Exhibition Committee as Deputy Director. They decided that in the spring of '94, which was an anniversary of the Museum, we should have something that was an anniversary show. There had always been talk of David Rockefeller's collection being shown sometime. Summer, of course, was the ideal time, because private collectors don't like to have their pictures away in the rest of the year. So I said, of course, as this was partially my idea, to go to him and cinch it by saying it would be an anniversary show. It ultimately went into the spot [*Masterpieces from the David and Peggy Rockefeller Collection: From Manet to Picasso*, MoMA Exh.#1681, June 8-September 6, 1994]. I gave up my spot and went into the fall; the book show [*A Century of Artists Books*] went into the basement. Then they never promoted it [Rockefeller's exhibit] as an anniversary show at all. If they had, it probably would have done a little tiny bit better, but it did very well anyhow. I was very nice not to be resentful that I had given up my spot. Under the circumstances, I figured it was more important for the Museum to have a lot of people. As it turned out, there was very little publicity for my show because it was a hard sell. Jeanne Collins, the head of PI [Department of Public Information; now the Department of Communications], had left about a year before the show, and Jessica Schwartz had her hands full with everything, including the search for a new Director and all of that, and was never really able to get on top of it for publicity purposes. They tried little story sells and so on. As it turned out, the attendance to that show was much less than a third of the whole attendance during the whole period. Which was disappointing to me, because I really thought it was the best show I had ever done at the Museum. I got so much cooperation from other collectors and the Bibliothèque Nationale. They were willing to send <u>anything</u> to New York, because even at a third it was more attendance than almost everybody gets, except at the Bibliothèque Nationale, which does put on very popular shows. We had very marvelous things that we unfortunately had never been able to get, besides proofs, but also copies of books. Jerry Neuner, who had done the wonderful layout for the *Forties* show, worked with me on the cases. All of the librarians from the Morgan and Houghton, all of the people who brought things in, were just so impressed by the system that we had worked out. Some smaller institutions like [the] Akron[Art Museum], which had Walter Bareiss's collection, had some things brought from there, and they needed to have the cases alarmed. That was really funny when we were testing; they'd never

heard such alarms in the Museum. We got a manuscript of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* from the Getty and a block for one of the prints from the Met. Everybody was terrific. I can't really at this point remember anybody turning us down. I didn't ask for the original manuscript of *Noa Noa* from the Louvre, which is hard enough to even get to see. I also enjoyed it because, unlike so may other productions of the Museum these days, it was something that I could do by myself, and write by myself. And the subject was something I had worked on for so long that it was nice to have that opportunity. I gather that as a membership bonus for joining, they got rid of almost all the hard cover catalogues, so my book is everywhere. That's not bad. One of the things that we didn't do was another problem, because it also coincided with the departure of the head of education; we didn't have any educational stuff. But there wasn't any money for the show, anyhow. So that's what happened. The money we did get was to create the catalogue of the Museum's collection of books. We consistently got lots of money for hiring people to do that over the years, I think seven years. Then David and Reba Williams gave the money to create it as a CD-ROM, so the Museum issued its first CD-ROM, even though it didn't have pictures, which we then sent freely to 250 libraries. Then they all had to call up and say, "Our CD-ROM doesn't work with that." It turned out that it was not the most avant-garde or far reaching state-of-the-art, and it did work on some of the first CD-ROMs, and you only had to switch things around to make it work. It was simply dry material but, boy, it was very hard to create. We had originally thought of publishing it as a book for prints as we had with the *American Prints* catalogue from 1960 to 1980, which was the [Henry] Luce Foundation catalogue, when they were giving grants for American studies. It was cheaper to make a CD, and it gave our Publications and Graphics departments a little exercise in having to do that. For years and years we'd been on the verge of making video and CD-ROMs and never got it done. I assume that they're getting closer now if they haven't done one, or two or three, already. I was very pleased that people could look at some original artists' books and the catalogue in the show where we had a reading room. I just loved Jerry's ideas for some of the layouts, how we managed to practically have no light, and show videotapes of a few complete books, which also worked out very well. Had a lot of fun doing that. Carol Smith, who was the last of the book cataloguers in this whole group, and actually had worked on almost the whole project, had done a lot of work

on organizing the videotapes and did some reading. She was the reader in English on *Klange* of Kandinsky, and the artist George Baselitz's son was the reader in German. He had been an intern in our department. They all got a kick out of it. People seemed to like it, because it was a diversion from looking down. You could look straight ahead; it gave your neck a little help. I think that takes care of that show. The nice thing was, for the show, I really wanted to have a print with remarque, that is, the little sketches that the artist sometimes added to a plate so that they could make a separate suite in a book, and I wanted particularly to have one specific one for which we had the drawing of the plate, by Picasso. The heir of Monroe Wheeler had it. I never knew Monroe Wheeler had it. I saw it in the heir's house, and he said, "Here, I'll give it to you for the show."

SZ: Let's talk about the staff.

RC: I had lots of staff. I never, ever -- I think I might as well admit it, I don't believe in all the time I was at the Museum that I ever had a secretary who was as good a secretary as I was. It's frustrating, because, I had a lot of secretaries who I liked a lot. I had some real, absolute certifiably crazies, too. The big problem was the fact that when I had a secretary who had an art history background, <u>they</u> always were horribly frustrated. That was understandable. My last secretary was of this ilk as well. I had some very intelligent people. Always willing people. I was not a very good judge of hiring secretaries, let's put it that way. Towards the last six, seven, eight years, when I was very very busy and could pay less attention to the secretary, it still didn't work. It was a different kind of secretarial job than most departments, because we had this print group that we had put together twenty years ago or so and the secretary had to do the bookkeeping for the group since our development department never did much of anything other than send out standard thank you letters when some of the dues came in and they were tax-deductible. We had to provide program and mailings and newsletters, so they had all of that. It wasn't like they were helping me with manuscripts or any of that. Once the computer came along, it was yet another kind of job. I must say, I was always in a way very compassionate or sensitive to the secretarial problem, but that's my great failing is that I could never put my finger on what it was that would make a good secretary, but

then, I also used to rail at the Personnel department, too. They had a lot of problems because of the wages being so bad. Other than that, to go back to the year one, there were wonderful people who worked in the department over the years. We had interns through the NEA and also in other ways when people wanted to come. We liked having people in the summer, even high school kids sometimes. That was always good for putting things in alphabetical order. They liked being in the Museum environment, because in most of our offices there was always an open office situation for the cataloguers and some of the young curatorial people. They were part of a group, and we always used to have birthday parties. We always had a very big table because you always needed one in a print department. So it was a good situation to have gatherings and celebrations and Christmas parties and so forth, which occurred in some fashion or other in other departments but not always central to them. I think I said when I first came, of course, everybody used to have tea up in the penthouse. There was a much more languorous way of working. I think it was because we were smaller and we all had more to do, and so that was just fit in. We didn't have all the passing along and getting passed to situations that you have once an institution gets larger. As there was no place to get coffee in the morning, we all used to go in the basement at Stouffer's, which was in the “666" building. There was a little socializing there as well, but that didn't last very long. Then we got a cart. I mean, these are really important things, that we got a cart that used to stand in front of the elevators and go from the fifth floor to the fourth floor -- so then we didn't go to Stouffer's anymore. Eventually they closed up -- and people would bring things back to the office. That created certain logistic problems when you were working with works of art too in your offices, which we were. I'm trying to think of the curatorial people who were there after Eila Kokkinen, Gloria Hodsoll and Bernice Rose. Then we started to get more specialized people in another tier under me. That included, at the beginning, Donna Stein. I think she had her masters from the Institute. It was the beginning of having people who had degrees. In some cases you could still hire people at a cataloguing level who didn't have degrees. Alexandra Schwartz came in that sort of capacity. I think I mentioned Martha Beck, who started out as the department registrar and then went over to Drawings, but she never worked directly with prints exclusively, before she went to found The Drawing Center. She had worked for, I think, French and Company before she worked at the Museum. Donna,

I don't think, had worked. She started at the bottom and stayed quite a while. When Sasha left, I think she was already an Assistant Curator and she went to Pace Gallery. All the interns ended up being dealers. Hiram Butler, who was an intern from Williams College, is a dealer in Houston. René Scharf, whose father is one of the great European collectors, is now a dealer. He was an airplane pilot before he came. His father wanted him to be serious about art, and he ended up being serious about art. He's a very good-looking fellow and he used to have the tallest blonde girlfriends. Cee Brown had come from Seattle and he was an intern then he went into education, then Creative Time. I don't know how we ended up, but we always tried to have male interns because there were never any males in the department. We didn't find male secretaries. It's interesting because the art history people went from interns to curators, if they actually went in, if they were men. That route was not available to women, believe me, it wasn't. Donna was there when Howardena [Pindell] came. Howardena had been working for the International Program and she came into the department, and of course, she was an artist at the same time. She had her masters from, I think, Yale.

SZ: Was she an intern or was she an employee?

RC: She was an employee. Bill [Lieberman] had worked on some show with her in the International Program and brought her over into the department. Now I'm confused. I think maybe she came to the department before Donna. Did I tell you about our theft? This was part of the problem, because Donna was always in charge of the Print Room and she left somewhat after all of this was solved. Her family lived in California and she had a lot of projects. She was very inventive and she was working a lot on Worlds Fairs and she really wanted to do a big show on Worlds Fairs, and ended up doing a lot of freelance shows and working in California, and getting married and having a child and so on. Audrey [Isselbacher] was there when Howardena was still there. Audrey had just a bachelor's. Her father was a print dealer, Al Isselbacher. She worked in his shop so she knew a lot about prints. She used to go to the auctions in Europe with him. She was very knowledgeable, very, very, very quick about everything, just innately intelligent, and went on to get her masters while she was working and did the usual shows in the collection galleries

and did a couple of shows downstairs. She was probably the best assistant curator that I had. Right now Andrea Feldman is in the department and her father is a publisher of art and quasi-dealer. Her father had been involved in art book publishing in the '60s. She too doesn't have the academic background, but is also just quick as you know and very sensitive. This is the whole thing. People at every level in the museum but particularly those who are at the lower curatorial levels have to be so sensitive to people's inquiries. They're answering all the time. People ask questions. We have had the Print Study Room. You had to be intelligent. You had to know quickly how to find things and how to put people off if they entail a little longer research. I think what I liked best about my staff was by and large the curatorial -- the people I used to say were in the back -- from the '80s on we had a situation where the department was sort of divided by the conservation lab, so they were all near the storage room and the study room, and just the secretaries and I and the associate curator and then curator Deborah Wye were in the front, and all the records were back with them. Did a lot of walking back and forth. But there was a camaraderie always that they established in that particular situation. In earlier ones it was a little different when we were having the problem of the thefts, there was a lot of dissonance. I think it was anxiety.

So we didn't have enough trustees, interestingly enough. It was really terribly hard. You should always have a trustee as a vice-chairman. Eventually Jeanne Thayer became the vice-chairman when she was put on the Board as the Representative of the International Council. Then she left. The only other person from the Board... [Laughing] I always get the new people from the Board, who aren't so agreeable to some of the curators, I guess... so Evie Hall was the first of those kinds of trustees that I put on. Just a dear person, as it happens, and very generous. You could imagine her when she saw conceptual art. But sometimes she would like the most difficult things. It was amazing. She has a very good eye. I was pleased to have her, but then Mrs. [Akio] Morita had to go on because she had to have a committee to sit on. Immediately her husband got sick so she never came to a meeting. Then when Vartan Gregorian was named a trustee he wanted to be on our committee, and he never came to any meetings, either. He's only been a trustee for a year. I always thought it was so funny. We were taking people who wouldn't do us any good, but by that time the whole committee was filled with people like Nelson Blitz, who had a huge Munch collection. Who knew he was not going to collect art after he started to have children. And all of that art is sitting there waiting to pay for their college

educations, he keeps saying. Well, he got very hurt in the late ‘80s. He's in the air-conditioning business. We're still friends, and he's still on the committee, and he's still in the Associates, and very generous always to entertain people. The Associates, when Glenn Lowry was coming, got to meet him at Blitz's apartment. [Herbert] Schimmel, who collected Toulouse-Lautrec, doesn't have any more but is on the committee and gave $100,000 to our endowment. Phil Straus, who is one of the Neuberger Berman partners we had: another one, Harry Kahn, was on the committee. He succeeded his wife, who has Alzheimer's. But Harry Kahn then became a board member at [The] Brooklyn [Museum] and he felt they needed more help than we did. Those two Neuberger Berman people -- Phil Straus has been extremely generous. He is the one who decided that we could have discretionary money for contemporary prints -- he didn't want to see any of that. He also collected Edvard Munch. Lionel Epstein, who is a big Munch collector with his ex-wife from Washington was on the committee. He came outside of the Print Group and early on very much helped us out. Bill had bought a very large collection of Edvard Munch prints during the time of Bates Lowry and he had worked out some arrangement -- I think we were raising money for something else -- that some of the money that the Jaffes -- that is, Evie Hall's former husband -- would pay for it. It turned out that there was a lot of problem about getting that money in as a payment. The Museum had taken a loan to pay for the Munchs, and we got the money in such dribbles and drabs that we practically paid twice. And this was the burden that I had when I became the head of the department, trying to get rid of that loan. I got to know the way people promise very early on because of that, because we really had lots and lots of trouble. One of the things that happened with the acquisition of this collection, it made a lot of duplicates, like the Stern collection had. So we were able to sell the duplicates. Bill also had gone through the collection and decided that certain ones should not stay in the collection. They weren't duplicates. They were offered to Lionel Epstein and his wife while they were still married. We knew that the amount that they would pay would be the most that we could get, because it would fit either in their collection or it wouldn't. Through this transaction, Epstein got a friend of his -- I guess it was his broker -- Phil Straus, to start collecting Munch. So that collection ended up not only as enhancing the Epstein collection, which has been promised to the National Gallery, but Phil Straus’s who, in less than a decade, collected the best.

He had a lot of money. He collected the best, from a connoisseur's standpoint, the best Munch collection, and he gave it to the Fogg. So we had both of them on our committee and got neither collection. Our collection isn't bad, but those are certainly far superior to our collections. Little by little we would get other people on the committee from the Associates. Linda Janovic, who has for a long time been sort of the program manager of the Print Associates. She collects prints, people like Beuys. She's very sensitive to the younger artists and normally gives things by the younger artists. Then we wanted somebody younger so we put Howard Johnson on the committee and he's been very helpful as a younger person. At the beginning we had people like Ed Howard from the Junior Council and Barbara Pine, as representatives of the Junior Council, then Ed Howard was on the committee for a long while. He had been a print collector and he had given a lot of prints of Latin Americans to the Philadelphia Museum where his parents are from. Barbara and Ed Howard founded the Associates with me. They were the people who could get people in and got their friends. Both of them always contributed to the collection. Barbara now is on Drawings and Architecture and Design because she collects architectural drawings. Over the years, at the beginning the Associates could give works of art instead of pay dues, so we got a lot of very interesting things from the early Associates. I'm sure I'm leaving most of the members of the committee out. In general they were helpful. [Donald] Marron and Aggie [Agnes Gund], after the Whitney had said you have to pay so much money to be on a committee, decided that that was helpful. It turned a couple people very sour on the Museum but nevertheless, it was, for our committee, $5,000 (a very small amount). So we managed to get that, except that many of our members were on other committees and so they would give the money elsewhere, because at that time you didn't have to give to all of them. Now it's to all. We have a new member on the committee that Debbie [Deborah Wye] brought in, Gilbert Kaplan, who collects Surrealist prints. She got to know him because she did the Miró print extension exhibit [*Joan Miró Prints from New York Lenders*, MoMA Exh.#1667, October 13, 1993-January 11, 1994] for Carolyn Lanchner's big Miró show [*Joan Miró*, MoMA Exh. #1666, October 13, 1993-January 11, 1994].

SZ: This leaves the whole issue of your being Deputy Director and what that came out of.

RC: The Cambridge studies. Probably my time framework within which all of this happened is a little off- kilter. But with the new building, and all of the problems that it presented -- this being an expansion in which there was supposed to be no expansion of staff, which was very naive -- attention then started being paid more to how the functioning was going. In an expansion, first, you have the idea for the expansion, the director and lots of people are working on that; then you have the fundraising and lots of people are working on that and the director is busy going to places to raise money. And then the building, and you sort of don't have much that is visible of what's going on, because you're so involved in all of the nitty gritty of the building, so afterwards there's always a reassessment, I'm sure, at every institution and every company, and so the idea was to have another study made. It wasn't the first. There were studies before. There were studies after, but this one was a very critical study, because there had to be program for the new building. There had to be some better handle on the administration of the program. Some people were, and still are, working way too much on certain things, delegation of duties. There were changes in very critical areas, such as registrar. There was a need for much more outreach in the education area, and this was part of what was going on in the whole world, in the United States, certainly. The study itself: I never saw the whole thing. There were always précis of it or outlines of it. Certainly the recommendations were private to the board. What was decided, and you can see that this would happen when there was a bigger organization but also without maybe enough people to see what was happening. I think Dick [Oldenburg], too, was overwhelmed by everything going through his office. We kept running out of deputy directors. Anyway, they started in on how to reorganize. One of the things they decided was that there should be some deputy director who had curatorial background, and because they were mingy about it, they didn't want anybody from -- I mean, how do you add to the staff when you promised that you weren't going to add to the staff? There was a hiatus in the development department too, if I remember correctly, so there was this new setup put into effect. Dick and I had talked about it. We talked about what to call it. “Curatorial Affairs” was such a ho-ho ha-ha. But it turned out there was one out in San Francisco too, and it was sort of a possible thing to call it. The definition of how it would work vis-à-vis the curatorial departments never became a definition. At best, there would be a person who

would, on a regular basis, talk about exhibitions, get the curators to present exhibitions in a better form, get the whole budgeting process for exhibitions and scheduling of exhibitions. There always was and always will be unanimity on the trustees' part that the Museum never puts together its program in a way that's going to be at the best for the Museum, that is, financially. And part of my duty was to see that when we agreed to certain exhibitions they would be not only philosophically interesting and carrying on a program, but would also have money-earning potential. The first thing that you learn -- the trustees never learn it -- is that your program is who your curators are. And if your curators don't know anything about a certain thing, they're not going to make an exhibition about it. So then we started having exhibitions coming in from elsewhere, which had not always been the case, to fill in where some of the curators weren't going to present anything. You had curators who'd announce, like Arthur Drexler -- this was before I was Deputy Director -- that he was never going to do a contemporary architecture show again, because there weren't any contemporary architects worth showing. That's before he did the Beaux Arts show. It was rare that somebody would express themselves that blatantly, but the thing was, that if you knew your curators, you knew what they were going to do. Or, and this is because we were lacking a curatorial director, a director who was aware of what was going on in the whole art world, a director who would say, "Are you paying any attention to this. I think it would be a great show here." In a way, that was supposed to be what I was to do. The problem was that anything that I would ask to have done, at the beginning, when I was still feeling my way around, I couldn't certainly tell any of the heads of the departments what to do, unless it was a crisis. The *Forties* was a crisis. The same people who wanted what they wanted got what they wanted, and they got it when they wanted it. Always. Whether I was conducting a meeting or not conducting a meeting. And Dick was, of course, at the meetings. And if things came across my desk, thoughts about shows from other museums and so on, I would be lucky if they were even considered by any of the curators. They really didn't want to have anybody interfering in their work, and frankly, they were never told that they should. Anything that I or anybody else who was deputy director really wanted that was not in their interest, they would go to Dick and Dick would say, "Do what you want."

SZ: So in other words, this structure was sort of laid down but without the power behind it.

RC: In my case, there was no power. I had the feeling that in order to get the best out of all of the curatorial people, I had to not undermine them, and not lie to them, and my real duties, believe it or not, were to get rid of Clive Phillpot, to get rid of Philip Yenawine. It wasn't put down like that. It was put down, "Can't you control them? There are all these staff members who can't deal with them. They won't deal with these people."

SZ: They were noncooperative?

RC: Clive was never told what his role was, other than he was the chief librarian. He did exactly what librarians in England and every place else do. But he was not gregarious like Bernard Karpel. He didn't seem to think it was necessary to share his knowledge with the others. Everybody thought he was opportunistic within the big library field. He always had a high office, if not the highest office, in the international organizations of librarians. It wasn't that he wouldn't listen to anybody. It was that nobody wanted to talk to somebody who wasn't out there. And he was in his office. So that was a possible change that I was able to effect. Then there needed to be a committee. I used to nudge him every once in a while, "Here, have a committee." He worked on a way where everybody had little slips so they could order books. He was very good about ordering books, I must say. Nobody knew how bad Bernard was about it, because he had so little money. The library also had very little money, and I was also having to look over the budgets of both the library and the education department. It was very sad. The people who worked for him were sour grapes too, because he wasn't very communicative with them, and they all worked so hard. When he came in there were things he had to do -- sending books out, getting books in, and so on -- that people -- Danny [Daniel] Starr, who was, of course, a union person, was always resentful. But on the other hand, he really liked to be left alone too, so it was a very strange situation. So finally, the people like, oh, curators -- I don't want to name anybody -- they finally made a little committee once. The funny thing was, I thought, you make a committee, you go and see, have this nice meeting,

and then you know it has to happen over and over because you're dealing with ongoing problems and ongoing ideas. They never called for another meeting, and of course, Clive wouldn't get around to doing it. So I used to have to nudge him about that. Then Dick decided that yes, the library did need help, after all, they need money behind that library. I think finally, at the end, they had $55,000 a year for books. Nothing. And for long, years and years. Were you around when they were off- site, when the library was in the brownstone? It was appalling that they would put the library off-site in that building. And so they lived through that. In a way, the staff didn't like Clive because he acceded to it, but he didn't have a choice. So he had to have a [Trustee] committee. We tried it. It was so funny how this trustee and that trustee couldn't do it. Bob [Robert L.] Tobin was the perfect candidate, being a big book collector himself, and then he was sick and we didn't know it. So he couldn't do it. Then somebody else and somebody else, and finally we said well, let Evie Hall do it. At least she'll be supportive financially. And she was so happy. Nobody had ever given her the chairmanship of a committee. They had never given her any responsibility. She was on my [Prints and Illustrated Books] committee, just a member. And Clive said, "What do you do with a committee?" And I said, "What do you mean; you do show and tell." "What's that?" "Well, you know, you take a couple of subjects and you take Evie to lunch or you get together with her if she doesn't eat lunch" -- which she didn't-- "and you work at it so that once or twice a year you have a committee meeting. You should have it three." It was a hard committee to get going, but he got Lucien Goldschmidt. He had some professionals on it. He had gotten together a very interesting group of collectors of artists' books. That was another thing. The artist book collection, which was started with the *Information* show [MoMA Exh.#934, July 2-September 20, 1970] and Bernard Karpel, and nobody ever wanted to take it, so it was in the Print department for years and years and years. Clive already had published about artists books, so they went up there. I remember Kynaston [McShine], who really had made the core of the collection, saying, "Oh, what's he going to do with it? I don't know whether my stuff should go there." And I said, "Oh, give it, come on." So Clive did make the Museum a center for that kind of material, which, more from a documentary standpoint, is very important. So with getting Franklin Furnace's collection, his last big thing, and then he had a death in his family and decided he should go back to England. I think it's a

pity but he was right. And I guess they haven't named his successor either. Janis Ekdahl is your quintessential American kind of librarian, very helpful, very thoughtful to talk to people, and so on, and she was his associate, and she's running the department pretty well, I guess. There were always a lot of problems between Rona Roob and Clive, because though there had been archival material in the library in the Special Collections, Clive could see, and he was right, there wasn't room to put that whole archive in and have the library expand. So now the library can't expand. The archives are finally being handled, but that he had to give up an office for her and all of that was difficult. Her administrator, so to speak, was Beverly Wolff, and that was because they really didn't trust Clive at all in this area. And also at the very beginning it was a lot of legalese. But anyway, in the long run they co-existed all right. Clive was an eccentric. He obviously was a socialist, if not further left. He grew up and got to be a professional in England where this kind of attitude was establishment, and then came here where it was terribly radical. I think that he distanced himself from the staff because it was so unfamiliar to him, and he had marital troubles right away when he came. So I think that was too bad, and I did like him a lot. I liked both of my charges [Clive Phillpot and Philip Yenawine] extremely well, because they had very interesting intellects. They were worth talking to, if you would dig a little. But the problem was, most of our people didn't do that.

BEGIN TAPE 8, SIDE 1

RC: Philip, I think, was more of a problem for Dick. Dick, being on the sixth floor, would hear a lot about the library problems. It is my feeling that those people who probably were talking to him about the library were talking because they personally weren't getting as much out of the library as they felt they should. That happens in <u>every</u> college, university, everywhere. That's not an unusual situation. And in the end, I think it was fixed. I think the library was fixed. After all, the book boy, Danny [Daniel Fermon], ended up getting a library degree and being part of it, and all that. There was something happening there. It was nurturing in an interesting way, but not the way that they expected. The Education Department under Philip Yenawine grew like Topsy. That was his mission. He was hired to do it. His background was as an innovator. He was into things. He had a personality that was at least in certain

areas very, very charismatic, and he could get these things done. He put in place many programs, he extended many programs. He got, God bless him, Rubin and Kirk to agree to have guides to the galleries. He made children's programs. He devised all of these things. Actually, we had never really had an education department per se. Bill Burback had more-or-less established it. Bill Burback had, I think, made the outlines, for sure. But education had never been a positive thing.

SZ: It really wasn't a department, and then Dick got Bill to do that.

RC: Yes. But there had been, well before our time. It was something that had been killed before I came. Also the People's Art Institute was killed in the '60s. All the educational ideas were killed. I think that probably was a Board decision about how to keep the Museum afloat, because those were expenses that they figured they could do without. It was a disaster in a way, because it led to the public schools doing away with art programs in the '70s. Everybody was down on art education, even though we had gallery talks without an education department, with Sylvia Milgram, who I've known forever, it seems, who really set the style for what gallery talks would be about. Certainly there isn't that much difference between that and Visual Literacy, which was a program that, together with this gal from Harvard, Philip put together, and did these big studies and so forth. They never did a correct study, I think, for at least our audience. It was always too small a cross-section. So, part of the problem was that in Education, money was available, and tremendous amounts of money, and Philip was very good at getting it. He would see where the money was and establish a program, too, the other way around, make it, like the Lincoln Center thing, where he found a way to be invited to be an institution as part of the Lincoln Center Institute, which brought money into the department. I don't know to what extent those programs went on. I never saw the programs operating. I only knew that we were obligated to do these things, and they did operate. There was never, as far as I saw, any letter saying that we didn't serve what we promise. But, in a way, the Museum wasn't big enough for Philip and his ideas, because he was a great innovator but he was very poor in getting things finished. He was on to the next project, and Dick found this very disconcerting. In some instances, there were some conflicts of interest. He didn't pay enough attention to Aggie [Gund]'s Studio in

the School program. Then when we got into the Institute, that was the same sort of program. He was in a very uncomfortable situation in that he was a terrific -- not only innovator, and maybe innovator is too good a word for him, but he was a great instigator, and he was a great influence on other people to do things. He had very defined ideas about communication, and it wasn't at the level that the curators wanted communication. Emily Kies, who was sitting in his department as a kind of equal to him -- not necessarily administratively, but an equal of the person who should administer the department. They had for a long time an administrative person who did all of the office work. That was always a difficult position. I think it started because Emily had done most of it, but, she was the one who had to write all these brochures and this and that and the other, and he would talk with his educators. He had the educator background. I don't think he ever went to teaching school or anything like that. But he felt that the language in the brochure wasn't accessible to the people who didn't have any art background. And that was one thing. And he was not supportive of most of the things that she did, and of course, she was teaching at the university as well, and ended up then part-time because there wasn't that much for her to do because he didn't want it done. He wanted these people who were educators to do it, like Amelia [Arenas]. Also he felt that a person like Amelia, who has a Latino background, could communicate better with the people that we were having the hardest time communicating with. At this time, there was also a problem about the audience, and audience development was a big deal. Both Jeanne Collins and he were trying to develop an audience that was outside of the WASP area, so they started an ad hoc committee on these issues and they brought in very high, important people. There were discussions but there was never enough follow up. That was partly the fact that Philip then went on to the next project. They brought people on their committee who were from the minority communities and, as the Museum had been trying always to do, even on the Board. But even the people on his committee eventually said, we're not getting anywhere; we're treading water all the time. It was literally because of two things, I would say. Philip didn't codify the stuff and put it into motion, but he really had the same problems as Jeanne always had, which was: you had an idea and it has to be signed off by so many people and the director can't take the time to get really expert in it, and so, we didn't make movies about the Museum, we didn't make videos, we didn't do this kind of

publicity campaign. And the same thing happened on the other side. So certain initiatives ended up being taken; they made a Friends of the Education Department, which was a black group. I don't know what's happened to it, but they were very, very high-powered black women executives. We had them in our department once. What a group. I was astonished. But they got them; they brought them in. There were people who could do that. In the long run, life was not made very pleasant for Philip. He got involved with book deals which he thought were good for the Museum but of course everybody saw it as being good for him. Ellen Harris, who had come to more or less oversee these kinds of things was ruthless with him, and in a way, being more adept at financial things than any person in the Museum and making studies and this and that, she probably was right, that he was simply taking the time to do all these things without understanding the full implications of what it was going to end up being for the Museum. So it was one thing after another. He would have these endless meetings with Dick and then I'd hear about them, and Dick would tell me about them, and they would tell me two different stories. So he left. He did divide the department, eventually, because he was so committed to the studies that he had made and his attempts to use the education people who would write all sorts of things and then take up so much of the other curators time to get it back to what they want. So Glenn, in truth, ended up with the right idea, which was to get somebody who was at the chief curatorial level and who could at least ameliorate some of this. I think he's going to get into just as much trouble, frankly. After all, I was at the same level too, and I didn't get very far.

SZ: You've said a couple of times, you've at least alluded to the difficulty Dick had making decisions, and yet, he lasted for twenty years.

RC: I think that David Rockefeller, when he insisted on the Cambridge surveys, was finally trying to come to grips with that. There was no doubt that as a director of the Museum, Dick was excellent in many, many fields. He was, when possible, very great at getting corporations to give money. He did know how to speak and he spoke very well. He could never prevent himself from getting involved with the nitty gritty of the Publications department, and that took up an awful lot of time. He really, I think, had great difficulty with the discipline of the more horrible things directors

have to do, such as the budgetary process and the union negotiation process. Those do get in the way, and those are the things that he really needed Jim Snyder for, and that's why he had Jim Snyder to help him. He should have had two people. Ellen Harris was the other one upon whom he was, I'm sure, depending, and that didn't work. For sure, that never worked at all. Part of the thing was that he really didn't want to talk to people about things. He was able to talk with Jim. They had a very good rapport. Jim was a good sycophantic type of person for him. He was used to him. He did have problems. I was not, for example, the deputy director in charge of Jeanne Collins, who insisted on seeing me as frequently as possible to keep me up to date because she couldn't see Dick. Snyder stood between her and Dick. This happened to many other people. It was a hard decision when they named Dick, I'm sure. They were reeling from the problems, and Dick was somebody they knew, and in a way, the diplomatic thing just sort of oozed from him. I think that a lot of people worked hard so that Dick could stay. We would have curatorial meetings and after I became Deputy Director it was very important to use those moments to really understand or get a grip on certain problems, and Dick did not want to have a group talking about things. We did, we gossiped a great deal and we did talk around a lot of things, but he was only good talking one-to-one with the staff. And that meant that he didn't have time to talk to all of the staff. So it was crisis talking for most of them, and I think that was too bad. We had a meeting every week and since I really didn't have much more to talk about than the library and Education, because the whole curatorial thing was not gelling to any extent, we would have very short meetings. I would occasionally write him long memos about the need to articulate this or that. When we had to do the “Statement of Purpose” again and again, there was no innovative thinking. That's what a director probably should do. I think Dick was pretty pushed to do some really hard thinking. They would have retreats and stuff like that, for us too, and we would talk, and it was as if we just let it out into the air and nothing happened. The director of a museum really, if he or she is going to talk about these things with many, many people, then has to put them together, and then articulate a point of view, based on what he or she thinks is the best thing. It just never gelled. It wasn't the next step. He went from one to two to three to four very well, but he never made the jump from three to five, and that's what I think they were waiting for. They just had waited so long for

somebody to really give, I think, a big shove to the institution, and I think it was putting a lot of weight on him. I think that because his dynamic wasn't Aggie's dynamic, and for all his seeming public laid-back-ness, David Rockefeller knows what dynamic is. And I think also, having Rick [Richard E.] Salomon on the Board, who was the eyes and ears of David for a lot, and as David got older and got to be the only Rockefeller left that was involved in the Board, I think that he felt that he had to take the reins in his hands and get something organized so that when he wasn't around anymore, he was leaving the Museum as the right monument to his mother that he conceived of, and that I'm sure may have been because he was not the loved brother, he was the baby brother. He obviously never came on the scene when Nelson could devote time to the Museum, which was before my time. But I think he really had a vision for it and he has a Rockefeller kind of vision, David does.

SZ: Can I ask your opinion of the solution, so far? First of all, there was this big search for a paid president, which was going to be the administrative solution, but which didn't work.

RC: No, it couldn't work. It could have worked if Dick had been a curatorial director. I think that's why it worked so well at the Met. After all, [Philippe de] Montebello was already there, though he wasn't, I don't think, the director when they started it. If I recall correctly, it was established with him. But when you have somebody sitting there, there has to be a real reason. It's the same for Anne d'Harnoncourt, which is how there's an agreement, more or less, there. She never wanted to do that, and she's curatorial. The curatorial thing does help, and Dick was at sea, because he was, after all, an administrator, so that didn't work. I think now it's going to work very well, because you have somebody who has already dealt with some of the worst problems any museum could have -- the end of a construction job, the end of government funding. Really and truly, he has had all the bumps, and has come out with still a good personality and a good sense of what he wants, in all areas, as far as I can see. Whether they're going to work or not, that you have to leave up in the air. I think it was amazing that they found this person. I ask all kinds of people who are usually one hundred per cent negative about everybody, and they all say that he's working out well.

SZ: So when did you retire?

RC: I retired on the 31st of August of 1995 and ever since then I've been doing everything I want to do and not deciding on doing anything more than I want to do, or deciding on anything. I was made an honorary member of the International Council, so I still get to see some of my friends there. I don't plan to go on any of their trips any more, but that's neither here nor there. I noticed I'm also an emeritus member of the Print Council, and I decided I wouldn't go to their meeting either, it sounded so awful [laughter]. Right now I'm interested in certain things that are going on at the Museum, like exhibitions, predominantly. And I can't help but be curious about what's going to happen with my successor. I know that a lot of people are very unhappy that there wasn't somebody named right away, and they had to be reminded that even Peter Galassi, who had been in his department, was named after fifteen months. So now everybody's sort of settled in. It is difficult, because this decision is the first curatorial decision that the director will have made, and I think it's going to be another sign that people are looking for of where his head is. That's all. I'm happy and still curious about a lot of things but not necessarily modern art.

END TAPE 8, SIDE 1

END INTERVIEW