THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **ANTOINETTE KING (AK)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: I think I'll start the way I always do and ask you to tell me where and when you were born and something about your family background.

AK: I was born November 3, 1932, the day that Roosevelt was first elected president. My mother always complained, "I wasn't able to go out and vote." At any rate, an auspicious day, and in Seattle, Washington. I lived there the first three years of my life. My parents came from the northwest, my father from Missoula, Montana and my mother from Spokane, Washington. They had both gone to college, and my father to graduate school, near Seattle. My mother was an only child and very cosseted, and she wanted to get away from home and really do something with herself, and work. So they let her leave home after a year, and she went out to Seattle. Actually, she wanted to be a newspaper woman. She had these ideas that maybe she could even be an international correspondent, you know, the kind of thing that a young girl is going to think of.

SZ: Maybe not in those days, though.

AK: Absolutely not. Well, of course, there was no such thing. Maybe if you were [inaudible] but at any rate, for my mother. So they offered her something like writing the ladies page for the Iowa News or something, but she gradually began to write publicity, and she wrote advertising, and she went into radio writing. When she met my father, he had done most of his M.A. in French literature, writing his thesis on *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Then it turned out he had neglected to

notice that he hadn't taken one of the early French language courses and that was going to hold him up, and my father was an impetuous, kind of irritable man, a rather angry man, so he kind of threw up his hands and threw up the M.A. I don't know whether it was a mistake or not, but he was still thinking about teaching. Then when he met my mother, their joke always was, he could write radio with one brain tied behind his back, so he also went into radio, and he was one of the pioneering radio writers coming out of the northwest. I forget exactly which station, up in Seattle.

SZ: Writing basically news?

AK: News and shows. They didn't talk a whole lot about what they were writing before I was born -- either it was before I was born or shortly after I was born -- I was the first and my brother came two and a half years later -- but he was writing one of these midnight shows where he'd redo Edgar Allan Poe stories. It was kind of one of these horror things, and a friend of theirs played the organ. And they would laugh, and they had a great time, evidently. There was a very active community out there. They started off in the university community, and my mother had been part of a kind of avant-garde community she knew, Vachel Lindsay, and there was a poem he wrote, *To My* [inaudible], to her. A friend of hers married the musician Roger Sessions. It was that kind of a community around there. So my mother's interests were the arts. Literature was for both of them; her major was literature. But art and music in particular. She always said that I inherited her love of music. So that was what they were coming from. There was an article on my father recently in a magazine from Alaska in 1986. It shows him in Seattle in those days and what he was doing in radio.

SZ: His name was?

AK: Hector Chevigny

SZ: And your mother was?

AK: Claire Graves. At any rate, after about three years he thought, well, the big time is Hollywood, of course, and so with the two fairly fresh kids, my brother just born, they flew down to Los Angeles, where he was out of work for about ten months, but then he did get work.

SZ: This was right in the heart of the Depression.

AK: But my mother said we really didn't experience it, because on forty dollars salary, which is what they had a week in Seattle, went a long way in those days. My father always said, though, that he didn't ask for enough money in his first job, when he was in Hollywood, that he asked for only seventy-five dollars a week, which he thought was wonderful, but that he could have gotten two hundred easily. Which I think I actually inherited from him, the tendency not to ask for enough money. But he did do increasingly well in radio, and we moved several times in Los Angeles, three times, actually, ending up way out in the San Fernando Valley near Sam Wood, the producer. My father wrote for Orson Welles, he wrote *The Arkansas Traveler* for [inaudible] the comedian. He was script chief of CBS Radio in 1939.

SZ: The CBS radio station there?

AK: There.

SZ: So that was quite a rise.

AK: It was.

SZ: And your mother?

AK: She stopped. Later on she picks up. But she stopped working when I was born and she always said, "They didn't pay me enough for a baby-sitter." It was hard. I'm glad she did, though. I must confess, it was kind of nice having my mother around, and I think, to some extent, that had a lot to do with her decision. But

it's only a guess. However, I certainly know that some kinds of regret were strong in my mother for the difficulties of those times.

SZ: Especially since she had those aspirations at that time.

AK: They were married in 1929, so this would have been the mid '30s.

SZ: Unusual.

AK: I guess she was born 1903 or 1904, so that she wasn't terrifically young at that time. But she said things like -- she's a very energetic, very good looking woman, an attractive woman. She and a friend who was an actress had wanted to go to Detroit and try to crash through there -- this was before she met my father -- and her friend's parents wouldn't let her go. So it's that kind of thing, that you meant, of course, as a woman, that early on. She didn't make a big deal of it. She liked her kids and she had her kids. She wasn't crazy about Hollywood. She had some of these old attitudes where literature is the important thing and the fine arts are the important thing, and of course, movies are just nothing, which I do not share. So we lived there in this way until February of 1944. My father had come to New York on business to see his publisher, because during this time, as well as writing for radio, he also wrote a couple of films, I think, that sank immediately [laughing] into the depths. He was very interested in Alaskan-Russian relations. He used to get up at six in the morning and down a raw egg and then he would write these books. I think the first one was called *Lost Empire*. I forget the title of the second one. Those books meant a very great deal to him. He has connections with Alaska through that. At any rate, there was a discussion of coming to New York, which my mother very much wanted to do. So they did, eventually, settle here, in that year. Meanwhile my brother and I went up to live with relatives in Spokane and then in Butte, and then in December of '44 in a trainful of troops, my brother and I came from Butte, Montana to New York.

SZ: So you were twelve years old?

AK: Yes.

SZ: So you had gone to public school in Los Angeles?

AK: Yes. Actually, it was déclassé to go to private schools. Everyone went to public schools there. It's not a great education, though. The California schools, I think, were just one rung above West Virginia, and my mother being the kind of person who is now becoming clear, can say, "I want to get my children into a better education." So that could have been part of it. I don't know. She didn't go into great detail. But at any rate, she was deliriously happy to get to New York and to the culture here and the city.

SZ: So did you say that you and your brother came on the train alone?

AK: There were problems, shall we say, for that year. My father was here trying to break in . They were trying to make all of these decisions, trying to find an apartment, and it was a little easier to have us staying with our grandparents, who were charming people and delighted to have us, and they had a big house in Spokane. But then, they were getting old, of course, so it was taking longer than they had thought, so then we went to live with my brother's[1] sister and her husband in Butte. Butte's rough. That was a mining town, and they had eight children on the rhythm method. My uncle was a white collar worker in the Anaconda mines and he worked two shifts in order to support the kids and so forth. And my aunt had a toy store in Butte. So they were very active. Eight kids is quite a handful, and to add two more. That was only three months, though. But still, it was very interesting to see Butte and to see a mining town and to have lived around in the United States. It's now an historic district and a historic preservation organization in the Unites States which I contribute to. My money went to preserving a different Montana mining town recently. Fascinating.

SZ: Yes, I bet. Have you been back there?

AK: We drove through Butte. I think it was 1954 I went out west with a friend. We were doing one of those "On the Road" but girls didn't hitchhike, so this friend of my father's was driving me out, and we went through Butte. But we also went to Missoula, and that was the first time that I had ever gone there. My father's parents were from Montreal. He was French Canadian. He said before the age of five the only American who could understand his English was another French Canadian. But my father's mother was the first salesgirl in Montana. Then she married a building contractor who was a fair amount older, and both my aunt and my father were born when my grandmother was about forty. So there's a kind of activity and what they were doing. So my father was definitely a self made man. He had a very, very rough childhood, and my mother was from the upper middle classes. They balanced each other somewhat that way. But that was the reason for my brother and I being there while they were getting off the ground here. It was very important where you lived then, and to find an apartment that they could afford as my father regrouped. Still in the same business, but 3,000 miles away. It wasn't easy, in war time. So we arrived here and we went to live -- I think we arrived the second day after they bought the apartment in Gramercy Park, 34 Gramercy Park, The Gramercy. It was quite different then. It was still a wonderful park, but the Third Avenue El still ran, so it made a nice, big, wonderful place to live in an elegant address, but it gave you what we all loved -- a split view of life in New York. With the El on one side and all of the bars and the drunks and what have you along Third Avenue, and then you went out the door, of course, to this elegant park. My brother and I went to Friends Seminary. You could just walk down Third Avenue to 16th Street, and that was wonderful. That was day and night from Los Angeles. I'll segue back just for a moment to Los Angeles; I shortchanged it slightly, but it was a great life, a great outdoors life. Many films -- I was just enamored of films, right to start with, because books at the library and films were the art forms in Los Angeles at that time. You didn't go to museums to see paintings. There weren't concerts that I know about. But it was bicycling and outside and swimming pools and orange

[1] Transcriber's note: King may have meant to say "mother's"

orchards and driving to the beach. It was wonderful for children. But getting back to New York, then you're flipping entirely, and Friends -- this is just after the war, of course.

SZ: Friends was at that time, I presume, pretty much what it is now, a fairly liberal, progressive school?

AK: Yes. Actually, my brother had gone there just slightly ahead of me for various reasons. I was studying music for the first year and then I went to Friends along with him. Yes, because my father, Hector, said, "Would you like to go to Briarley or do you want to go to Friends?" He said, "I don't want to influence you, but Friends is coed and I really believe in coed." And I think he also meant liberal. My father was a very liberal man, and actually he had been very active, and still was active, in Hollywood in the '30s and also fighting for the writers to retain the rights to their scripts. So he was a man who was very passionately out there.

SZ: Politically left.

AK: They were very left, my parents, although you had to be quiet about it. But, like everybody else in those days, and they went with those left-viewing people.

SZ: Were they religious?

AK: No. They had no religion. My father had been raised Catholic and then left the church, and my mother had no religion. So, of course, it was easier. But that could come as a kind of religion, also. Not card-carrying, I don't think anything like that, but just a kind of -- they thought it would be nice to go teach in Russia or something like that. Maybe that was the brave, new world which ended, of course.

SZ: A few years ago. [Laughter]

AK: But in order to come up to what my father was doing in the '50s, I thought I'd go back to that. But Friends was great. My brother and I both agree that that was one of the great experiences, and they were the children of some of the prominent refugees, all religions going to the schools, boys and girls, and there was a feeling of equality. You could be whatever you wanted, do whatever you want; they accepted. There were no African-American students there, and we used to talk about that a lot and go to meetings and protest, and we finally, several classes -- my brother was the third class down from me, so those three classes formed a kind of unit with friends of ours in all of the classes -- collected money and left money for the first African-American student to come to the school. But meanwhile, the religious freedom was remarkable. And kids coming in from all over, a lot of the kids coming in from the great public schools in New York. But the intellectuality -- it was the old high art days, the old post-war, high art days, that even though I became more and more Pop as time went on, maybe I'm glad I grew up on that. It's a bit restrictive -- everything was late Michelangelo and late Cézanne and that kind of thing. But the kids were great and there were twenty-six kids in the class, which I think is a good class size. People talk about there should be fewer than that, but I think it's good because you have a variety of kids. You can be in different groups if you want. You just don't have one sort of clique. So that was great.

SZ: Was there a big emphasis on Quakerism?

AK: No. My father hadn't been religious and I had presumed neither of my parents even believed in anything, but it turned out that my father did, and he became interested in Quakerism. At the school, the principal was a Quaker and his daughter was in my class, a very nice, low key, relatively non-religious girl who was my best friend in the first two years I was there, Betsy Prinz her name was. I think she was the only Quaker in the school. My brother used to say, "It's Jewish and apostate Catholics." So there we were, because I was baptized a Catholic, although I was not raised a Catholic, and this was to please my paternal grandmother. So, at any rate, my father became interested in the Quakers and the meeting house was right across the street from where we lived

in Gramercy Park. It later became a synagogue, but for years it was there and my father started going over and that filled this need, which, as I say, came as a surprise to me in my adolescence, that he had, for some kind of belief. He always said what he liked about it was there was relatively little or no guilt in this religion. Of course the Quakers had done a great deal to help get refugees over in 1940 and so forth, and bring the surrealists over, and things like that, so it all kind of fitted in. And then, of course, it suited his desire to rise in whatever organization; he became I think it's an elder. I went to a couple of meetings and they were interesting. It was very calm. There would be a long silence, then somebody could get up and speak. I liked it, although, already, along with kids in the late '40s or '50s, I was very interested in comparative religions. I was sort of looking at maybe Eastern religions that everybody was talking about, and what Zen Buddhism was like. But if it was going to be in the west, I would have looked at Quakerism, however, I had absolutely no religion whatsoever. Nor was it really in the school. It was just a question of you were what you were, and I think that the kind of try to express yourself as much as possible was what was important. Kids danced in the halls, and then said Virgil to the slide rule and they laughed and gave great parties.

SZ: Even though a lot of those kids had been together from the beginning and you came in in the middle.

AK: Fortunately, several kids came in in the beginning in the ninth grade, so I wasn't isolated in that way. We made our friends that way. I think Betsy Prinz was very helpful to me coming in, though, and I was very shy, in the beginning, there's no doubt about that. I think it was the first year, year and a half, that I was beginning to sprout wings and make friends and get to know everybody. She was a great girl.

SZ: You mentioned music. So tell me a little bit about what else you did, besides school.

AK: Well, already the art was starting. About the second grade I was drawing paper dolls in the beginning and things like that. That was kind of in my mind, but, although, as I say, there was nothing to hang your hat on in Los Angeles. When I came to New York I had piano and clarinet lessons and my brother was a jazz buff and he was playing the trumpet. It was New Orleans jazz then, and he got to be very knowledgeable and a collector and knew the jazz musicians and the blues singers and stuff. I was playing in this little orchestra and I was absolutely terrible, believe me, but starting to explore all that. I think we went to Carnegie Hall on Saturdays. There was a sort of kiddies day, but it was part of a music school that I went to. It was [Dimitri] Metropoulos, I think, conducting, as I remember. And they didn't talk down to the kids and they didn't hand around candies or anything like that. You went and listened to the music. We started with Bach and ended with Ravel. I actually won a prize. We had to do a notebook of that year, and I decided I would illustrate each week what I was writing about. I went up to the Met. I remember the Bach week -- I decided I would do portraits for each week -- I did a portrait of Bach, and then I went up and drew one of the harpsichords, then I did some kind of like dance for a suite or something like that. So it was illustrated that way. And my teacher told me, "They wanted to give you third prize but they realized it was for the illustrations." Some other people had done more with the music. So I did get an honorable mention. But, they were sending me out for painting lessons as well, to a friend of theirs who lived down on Irving Place. Of course it was painting the purple velvet with the pewter candlestick on it, three-quarter light sort of thing. Because Friends was a wonderful school but art and music was not high on its list; it was literature, philosophy, languages. I'm glad. It was great. Their music teacher was sort of nowhere, and actually, art was nowhere. I think there was an art teacher who was sort of up in the attic, literally, teaching more woodworking, so the boys would go up and do woodworking. A really nice guy, teaching art. But then my father had a falling out with the art teacher that I was studying painting with. So then I thought -- this would have been my sophomore year, when I was fifteen. I had a friend, Anne Katzenberg, who also thought maybe she would study drawing, so we talked to the art teacher at Friends and he said, "No, don't study with me," or something like that. He said, "Go to

Stuyvesant. They have art classes at night and it's great." So Anne and I decided we'd go down. We called, and they had an evening class once a week, and we bought our pads and we bought our charcoal, and down we went. And there was a guy posing and sitting there in a suit. Everything was fine, and then the teacher came in about half way through, looked at our dogs and then he looked at the model and he said, "Well, you're supposed to be posing nude," or something like that. And, of course, we were sort of aghast. [Laughter] Even though I had been reading Freud and all that sort of thing, still, staring at a nude man, even with a brother and father. But I was determined to learn art, but the man said, "I'm not prepared." That was worse. Better he had taken off his clothes and posed, would have been fine, but what was 'prepared'? We really didn't know. So the next week Anne dropped out, but I went down. Of course, men were not allowed to pose nude in those days; you wore a strap. So my career in art started there. I studied there for a while and then I started at the Art Students' League. Thinking back now, the arts and crafts teacher at Friends said, "You should go to the League, and that's the place to study in New York." So starting in my junior year in the summers and then late afternoon, four afternoons a week -- we had philosophy Monday afternoon -- I went to the League for a couple of hours and studied drawing and then in the summers I studied painting. I studied with George Grosz the summer I was sixteen. That was great. The master.

SZ: Was he a good teacher?

AK: Yes, he was. He would draw. I was still drawing -- this was for both paintings and drawings, but I was learning that to start with. He would draw alongside my pad. I didn't save them, stupidly, really just to show you how to construct a figure or what a line should be, and talked about ways of observing the models, and so forth. There were great models there, nude. By that time [Laughter]

SZ: It didn't matter. So you were good.

AK: Yes. I was considered to be a very good draftsman. I studied a lot with Robert Beverly Hale, who was famous. [Inaudible] and he was the curator of American paintings at the same time at the Met. He liked my drawing very much. I then, of course, added paintings along with it. But, he said my sketches reminded him of Daumier. So at any rate, I still wasn't sure. Freud was the big thing in the world in those days, and a lot of the kids at Friends were the children of very prominent psychoanalysts and so forth. Right? You know.

SZ: I'm laughing; yes.

AK: Yes; including Bertram Lewin. Then my best friend in the tenth grade was the daughter of a social psychologist who was friends with Gregory Bateson and people like that. The reason I'm going into that is that I thought maybe I'd become a psychoanalyst. Would that have been a mistake. But, I was still thinking along those lines, and my father was writing a book on some aspect of psychology. He wrote a lot of different things, mostly the Alaskan-Russian relations I was mentioning.

SZ: He was still in radio?

AK: Yes.

SZ: But then he would just write on subjects that interested him.

AK: Yes. He became very enamored of Freud and he was in analysis, and my father wasn't a man who liked to have anybody around who knew more than he did. So, of course, he was out to best his analysts. So, at any rate, he was writing a book that's kind of half-baked Freud -- I was relooking at it recently -- with a woman who was working in Boston with adolescents, very disturbed adolescents, on Rorschach tests and how they could be used to see something about the mental states of these children. She wanted a sane control group, so she asked my father if I would be part of the sane control group, which, as I have always said, since then, gave me a very jaundiced, but maybe realistic

attitude to scientific research. It stood me in good stead in conservation. [Laughter] So I got to take a Rorschach test, which was fascinating, a lot of fun. A really nice woman, Sidelle Braverman. She's the one with whom I drove out west in '54. But this is 1949, when I'm fifteen. She came in to talk to me about my Rorschach test and I was really nervous about that. She said, "Oh well, it's okay, a little bit of anxiety." I thought, "Well, a little bit," considering the nervous wreck that I was. But she said, "Do you want to be an artist?" This is like right out of the blue, and I had not really been discussing it, even though I was studying art. But the outlet thing was to be an analyst, probably to please my father, as well, or maybe a little bit of rivalry. She said, "This is very high awareness of color and texture and so forth." And we talked about it at length, and I said, "I suppose it really is in the back of my mind, but I'm kind of nervous about dropping this bomb on my parents." So she was very helpful in getting me to realize that that's what I wanted to do. And yes, my father was in radio, in New York, and doing very well by that time. By the time my brother and I arrived here in December of '44, he was on his feet and working.

SZ: Was he still writing, or was he in management?

AK: He was writing, and then very active in the radio writers guild. He actually became president of it. I think this would have been the early '50s, but throughout this time, active. I forget when he began to become active also in TV, whether it's early '50s or late '40s, but certainly he wanted to shift into TV. Radio was nowhere. He was also still interested in the film. Something fell through, unfortunately. He had written a novel and they were going to make a film of it. Herman Mankiewicz was going to do it, and they were going to have Joan Crawford star in it. My father was very well known by this time in radio and in all of these worlds for all of these different activities. It was based on Mary Baker Eddy, and they threatened to sue if they did it, and it fell through. That really broke my father's heart. It broke him a bit. That was going to be his great breakthrough. Jumping ahead, he was in TV in the early '50s and he was then writing dramatic programs for *Ford Theater* and things like that, and *Top Notch*, but as president of the Radio Writers Guild, and he also sat on the Authors'

Council of America with Lillian Hellman and Oscar Hammerstein II to fight the loyalty oath and what was happening under McCarthy in the United States. So particularly in the Radio Writers Guild and all that they were doing with Hellman and on the Authors Council, he was blacklisted, of course, along with everybody else in 1953. The McCarran Committee. They sent around a letter, "We the undersigned" sort of thing and they talked about Hector Chevigny, this well known Communist, which he hadn't been for years. He was a great admirer of Truman's, he and my mother voted for Truman. They were Democrats by this time. Everybody had left that zillions of years before. It was the usual.

SZ: Traumatic.

AK: Very traumatic, and broke him. He was dead in TV and dead in the films, and he wasn't a very well man by that time. It just wasn't easy, to put it mildly, but radio wanted to keep him. I don't know why, but he was so well known, they couldn't get anybody to write for radio because people who weren't being blacklisted were off and writing for TV or they were ghostwriting or something. He couldn't ghostwrite. Somehow, this broke him. Then he was left writing -- he had two kids in school -- so he was writing things like "Mr. and Mrs. North" and those kinds of soap operas. Which was very prestigious. He earned a lot of money, but he hated every minute. He was very highly paid. The "We the undersigned" letter stating that he was a well known Communist and he was known to be emotionally unstable, and stuff; he was an emotionally volatile man, that's for sure, but somehow, he managed to keep it together. But, he sued them. He sued all of the people, 167 people who signed it, and he found that half of them weren't even in New York and none of them had been near that letter. They just, you know, everybody; it was everybody. But he was also disenchanted with both sides because the Communist Party was kind of trying to seemingly work with him to get rid of the loyalty oath, but actually they had their own agenda. He never talked much to me about it but that was the one thing he said: "I felt betrayed by everybody when I realized that I was really alone, that they were using me for something else, that they weren't really trying to do what I was doing." Meanwhile, the right, of course, and most people in the United States,

had gone down like ninepins, but he continued to fight. He had a lot of friends who had been blacklisted, and he would go to court with his daily notebook to prove that they weren't where people said they were, and stuff like that. He didn't get out from under, though, until about 1963. I know that the blacklist is really being raised now because of Russia no longer being this threat, and they're beginning to put the right names back on the films and the writings, and so forth. It didn't really lift, though, until 1963, when Louis Nizer won a big case. So that's ten years.

SZ: A long time.

AK: And then he died in 1965. He actually stopped writing all that, and he wrote his last book on Alaskan-Russian relations in the last five years of his life, from '60 to '65, and he went up to the opening of Alaska when it became a state. So there was all of that, late in his life, that didn't make any money, but that kind of made up for all of that.

SZ: So you were at Friends and going to the Art Students League. Using the rest of the city in any sort of nice way?

AK: Oh yes, everything. I went to all of the foreign films, starting, I think, when I was fifteen. All of the great films were coming out of Italy, and I went to [Roberto] Rossellini and [Vittorio] DeSica. They were first. First, I was going along because I asked my friend Barbie Frank, the psychologist's daughter, a very intellectual girl, but, the idea of a film in Swedish? I said, "But it has subtitles." She said, "Swedish." Well it turned out this was *Torment*, which was [Ingmar] Bergman's first film. He wasn't directing it but he wrote the script. Of course, I had no idea. I must confess, the title, *Torment*, and I thought. I have a little weakness for thing like that. But a little bit later on in the year, all of my other friends were going with me, and saw the great stuff. We went up to the Thalia and the 55th St. Playhouse, and then it was *Paisan* and DeSica's work, the great *Shoeshine*, which I think is his masterpiece. Then we went to see the surrealist film. There was a little film house down on Irving Place and 16th Street, which I

thought was sort of unknown, but reading some stuff by Parker Tyler lately, I find that it was a very avant-garde cinema, and one went to see things like Hans Richter's *Dreams That Money Can Buy* and all the [Jean] Cocteau stuff was shown down there. The Thalia, of course, was showing the great '30s and '40s French films, so I was going to everything. I was very anti-American, and you can kind of get an idea of why, from some of the things I have been saying. It wasn't that I was anti-American in any political sense, but the old high art days that I was talking about were very European oriented. It was the culture. I hated American colors. It was the whole idea of cheap plastics, which I now love; all of these things. We were very snobbish. If it was in French or Italian, it must be good, or the English comedies. But if it was American, we felt that was wrong. Although now that I look at what's on TV, I realize that I saw more of the really good American films than I gave myself credit for in those days. Certainly I went to concerts. I didn't have a lot of money, and my father was a cheapskate, close for money, shall we say. Baby-sitting didn't pay a lot, but I went to everything I could, and bought records. Went to all the museums, of course, starting practically after we got off the train. I went to the Met every weekend. I still wasn't up to The Museum of Modern Art, yet. It took a while to get into modern art. But my mother took me to everything. She just loved the theater, and she took me to the great theater. We went to see *Streetcar Named Desire*, the original production with Jessica Tandy, who was just phenomenal. I can't understand why people like the later actresses better. Of course, Arthur Miller's stuff, Tyrone Guthrie. She took me to the Balinese dancers and to the Kabuki and Martha Graham, that kind of life. She just loved every moment of it.

SZ: I think you did too.

AK: Yes. I took to it like a duck to water. Then it was fun, with all of the kids, and parties, and friends and stuff. In those days you sat on the front stoop, no matter how elegant your address.

SZ: What did you do summers?

AK: Summers were in the city, mainly. I didn't work. Well, I worked baby-sitting. I was kind of used to that. I could read while I was sitting for the kids, and then I could go out into Gramercy Park and sit in the park in the summer. I had my little charges and they knew me and I knew them, and it was a sort of regular thing; people who lived in the building or over in Stuyvesant. The first two or three summers, for a couple of weeks, we went up to Wellfleet [Massachusetts]. We'd rent a house, and my mother had become friendly with [Irwin?] Chermayeff, Sr., because the younger son was in my brother's class early on.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: I guess I was wondering when you made your first trip abroad. Had your mother been abroad?

AK: No. Neither of my parents had gone abroad. We went west a lot, because they would go out to visit their families every year. We'd take the train out west. I liked doing that. But then, my father was, in many ways, justifiably very worried about money, and when he died at the age of sixty, he didn't leave a lot to my mother. And I should say that my mother, when we came to New York, because things were up in the air with my father's health and getting started in slightly different aspects of his business, went up to Columbia and went to Teachers College there, to teach. She taught English at Hunter High School for a long time, then she taught Hungarian refugees in '56, and things like that. Then after my father died, she stopped teaching. She said she wasn't a good teacher, but then she volunteered at some of the rougher high schools around the city to teach English to kids whose native language it wasn't. So there was always that kind of thing, although she was more of an arts person than a political person. Still, she was a liberal democrat. So, we would go to Wellfleet for a couple of weeks. My father was a round the clock workaholic. He sat at his typewriter seven days a week, Christmas during the day, and that was it. Getting him out of that was impossible, so we couldn't really go away in the summers. But the

three of us would go away for the couple of weeks, or they would go out together, as I say, to the west coast. My father occasionally went to Hollywood, stay at the [inaudible] or something to do work there or to revive his connections out there. I saw a lot of the U.S. It's a beautiful country. I said I hated the U.S.; I hated these harsh reds that would go into clothes or something like that; I liked the softer Japanese colors. But my gosh, the rock formations, the Rockies, the train trips. And in those days you had the observation cars. You could stand out in the back and we would go down through the Rockies. It was sensational. So those would be the summers.

SZ: So you graduated from Friends what year?

AK: 1950. Then I made one of my great mistakes. I didn't go to college full time. Thought of being an artist, and my father said, "What do you want to do?" He refused to send me to college if I would study art history. He said that was a waste of time. He was absolutely against art. Kind of a man of his time in that way, I think. I thought it was just him, but now I see that a lot of people were like that. Now I think I should have just gone off and majored in German or something, but he said he would send me to art school, so then I started at NYU {New York University] at night and full time at the League and studied with people like Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and continuing with Hale, I was his monitor. As I say, I do regret that. Later on, however, once I knew that I would be going into conservation, I went up to Columbia to General Studies and I took advanced standing by examination in art history. Just started my art history on the graduate level and went to Columbia over a number of years, up into the '70s. But I never did get a degree. That was dumb.

SZ: Now you think that was dumb.

AK: I don't think it held me up in any way, except, of course, there's a little bit of a psychological feeling.

SZ: But you wanted to be an artist.

AK: I was considered to be good, and I was a good draftsman, and I was part of that world, and I loved it. I thought that would be my life, and that was the way to go.

SZ: Were you living at home when you were doing all that?

AK: Yes. I think, in a way, this sounds kind of shi-shi, but I think it would have been good if I had been able to go away from home to a college and study art, maybe major in studio art. Whether I could have worked and paid my own way, done something like that, and just been part of a peer group, also. You do miss that, and I think that's important at that age. And the League, at that time, which was great, and I had a lot of good friends there, and the artists were terrific, I actually, in 1950, I think I was in the same classrooms with [Robert] Rauschenberg and people like that, only I didn't know who he was, in '51 or something. But I remember somebody saying, "You should go study with Cantor[2] or Vitlich[3]. There are a lot of wild guys down there." So it was that atmosphere. But they were much older. A lot of guys in on the GI Bill. But still, I have a sort of knowledge of the art of that time and what people study as a result. And as far as working, I made clothes for people. An odd thing to do but I made my own clothes.

SZ: Did you design them, too?

AK: Yes, and made them. With a machine. But my father was supporting me. I was at home. I honestly think it would have been difficult for me to go to another city and try to earn my own way. I don't think I had that kind of strength, maybe.

SZ: So, did you go to galleries? What was the art scene like in the early '50s, from your point of view.

[2] Transcriber's Note: Name difficult to decipher, but perhaps "Cantor".
[3] Transcriber's Note: Name difficult to decipher, but perhaps "Vitlich".

AK: Well, I went to Kootz and The Stable and galleries like that. They were close to the League, and I was starting to go to MoMA by that time. And MoMA was definitely, for many reasons, for their film program -- I should have mentioned that I was always going to their film program, in the late '40s, even, when I was starting to learn to look at the pictures there. But to look at modern art there. Everybody went and sat on the terrace. It was a kind of gathering place, because you didn't have coffeehouses and things like that for people to go to, so if you wanted to meet your friends, we would go there for tea, look at the art, talk about the art. Some of the great exhibitions, the [Edvard] Munch exhibition [*Edvard Munch* [MoMA Exh. #450, June 30-August 12, 1950]] in 1950, I believe, the 20th Century Italian Painting [*Twentieth Century Italian Art* [MoMA Exh. #413, June 28-September 18, 1949]]-- it was then that I first saw [Giorgio] Morandi. Then certainly, up through the early '50s, and I think it was mid '50s, might have been as late as '56, that I went to see the British art and first realized how really great [Francis] Bacon was. I always liked a lot of the early Bacons at MoMA, but I just fell over when I saw some of these portraits on the wall of Bacon, and then the Balthus [*Balthus* [MoMA Exh. #611, December 19, 1956-February 3, 1957]] exhibition the year before that. But galleries like F.A.I.R. I'm passionate about Cézanne; I mean, who wasn't? I mentioned that I was still a little back there. I really worked my way up through Modigliani and Utrillo and Soutine and so forth to get into abstract art. Abstract expressionists took me a very long time. It was figurative art, Bacon and Balthus and Soutine and people like that, that I loved, and it could be my own work, the figurative. It wasn't really until I was at MoMA and right in the very early days immersed, of course, in De Kooning and Pollock and so forth, that the scales dropped from my eyes. Or, someone like [Franz] Kline, though, in the late '50s, of course, going to Dorothy Miller's great shows. I forget which one -- I thought it was 1959 but it must have been a different year -- walking in and seeing a [Pierre] Soulages. I neglected to mention that my favorite art was Chinese painting and sculpture, and had been since I was twelve, and then Japanese was added to that later. Of course, everybody was looking at the calligraphy and the painting, Chinese in particular, and Japanese, in the late '40s and early '50s, and then what [John] Cage was doing with the I Ching and with Zen. In high school, Christian Wolf, who was working with Cage

and Cunningham and who had given the I Ching to Cage, was in the class right below me. So he was doing *The Prepared Piano* and everybody was talking about the Zen and the brushwork. So I think that it was natural for me to be able to see abstract through Soulages and then Kline, and then some of the more painterly, shall we say, artists came a bit later. But I loved people like [Alberto] Burri and [Antonio] Tapies very early on, and they were being shown at Kootz and The Stable. Whether I saw Rauschenberg, I don't know, although certainly he was being shown. But the collages -- that could also be because of the sewing -- when I was seven I was trained to sew and I made my own dolls out in LA, then I used to get clay and make the furniture. My mother would drive me way out in the valley, maybe around '39, '40, 1941, to see two very old ladies who wore black velvet ribbons around their necks, and they would bring out these little boxes of wonderful pieces, fabrics, silks and satins, and they would choose one for me that I could take home and cut out and make something for my doll. I've often thought about [Kurt] Schwitters and Rauschenberg and so forth. You have a box and you open it up, and it's a treasure, and there are these fragments. Or a clay bed, along a riverbed, which was out near the last house we lived in, out in the San Fernando Valley. It would flood during the periodic rains, and then the clay would cascade down. So that would be what I was doing in the galleries. But I was talking about the Cézanne watercolors. There was a great Cézanne show in 1953 at the Met. I lived in that. It was just dynamite. I didn't know the gallery owners, but I was this kid who was glued to the art and they would take me in the back and show me stuff that they had. So a lot of the drawings and watercolor galleries around, I would be looking at. There wasn't a lot of Eastern art, but I loved going to the Met to the Chinese galleries.

SZ: Now you must really like them.

AK: Oh boy, yes. And they were quiet. It was very different. The Met in the summer, you had one show, and they were the gifts they wanted to get, and that was on all summer. When the Taiwan treasures came in 1961 to the Met, I went every free Monday, and I have the catalogue, and it was just glorious. There

was no one there. I liked it. Free for all you had recently in a show not nearly as good, and that's not just an old timer saying that. They filled it up with a lot of second rate stuff, and then they had two hundred great things. They still had great things, and also the mobs that went through and the noise. But you had fewer galleries. There weren't enough. You know, it's one or another, because it would have been nice to have more than that, but then you really saw the collections. You really learned the collections. Of course, the Whitney was downtown and the Guggenheim was the Museum of Non-Objective Art, so the early '50s would have been more the Met and MoMA and these galleries that I'm talking about. I didn't go to things like Kurt Valentin. I don't know why. Maybe because I was learning about Picasso. I had an artist friend who was teaching me and leading me by the hand, but again, it was something that wasn't easy. Although by 1957, the time of the great Picasso show at MoMA, I was living in that. But the early '50s took that time to learn. And I studied painting and drawing and different mediums, and, of course, talked to everybody -- what artists were using and thinking about it, the mediums. It kind of gives me, I hope, an open view, because conservators jumping way up are more apt to say something like, why do modern artists use poor quality materials. Well, if you've really been in the field, you just don't think that way. People would be talking about this oil or that oil or this color or that color. At any rate, a quieter art scene.

SZ: So did you have plans to try to sell your work as an artist? What happened? Because you did say before, "When I decided to be a conservator."

AK: For one thing, I had to earn money. I worked at various odd jobs, along with being a seamstress, and thought of this and that. I didn't want to work full time. In the back of my mind, whether I was tripped up by neurosis, I don't know. Since I was an orthodox Freudian, everything was neurosis. It was hard for me to show my painting. I did show at the ACA galleries and got right in immediately to a juried show, right off the bat. And they said, "Oh boy, you can really draw. You're good." And then I'd get shy. Then I went to an analyst for a while and talked about it, and took my work around a little bit, and then we

talked about how I could earn a living a little bit. I thought, to support the art and go on to Columbia and do that sort of thing. I was particularly interested, by that time, in Japanese, as well, and I met a woman -- this would be 1959. Now that's a lot of years. Two or three of them could have been better filled; let's put it that way. I was very shy about showing my work. I don't know why. It was a very hard thing to do -- to schlep it around, to get it out.

SZ: To have it turned down.

AK: [Laughter] Yes.

SZ: Or to face the possibility of it, anyway.

AK: Yes, definitely. Was I any good? I wanted to be very good. I couldn't quite get in between. I didn't want to be just kind of second rate. That's maybe an excuse. I don't know. At any rate, I met a woman who was finishing up her doctorate at Columbia in Japanese art, and she was doing research on two artists of the Rimpa school, 17th-18th century in Japan, Korin is the great artist of that school. It was considered kind of decorative in those days. Now, people would sell their souls to own one. Great collection up at the Met, by the way, of these Rimpa artists. They show Korin's famous scene of a wave along the shores to one of the haikus. It's a two-panel screen. Some of the great artists are also down at the Freer. Well, Hoitsu was a great follower of Korin, and then a follower of his was Honi. At any rate, my job was to go up to Columbia -- see, a lot of the people were passing off the Honis as Hoitsu. It was kind of a [William] Harnett, [John] Peto sort of thing, which would be in American painting. But the signatures were almost identical, except that Honi's had a slight raise at the end of one brush stroke. So I went up to do this research with her, and she was also trained as a conservator. She had trained with Mr. Oka in Kyoto. Oka was the greatest mounter, as they call them, in Japan. He was a national treasure. His nephew and a friend of his came with Sandra Castille, and they are the conservators of Japanese art at the Metropolitan now. Well, this was very new, of course, in those days, so, starting off with the art historical research

for her. And then she said, "What do you think?" I mean, people in those days, in 1959, one kind of started that way. There were no graduate schools. Well, that's the beginning of the conservation, when I went to work with her.

SZ: In other words, she asked you: Do you like it? Do you want to do it?

AK: Yes. It sounds so funny now. I teach at the graduate school; have since 1977. But most people sort of went into conservation that way, whether they came in with a BA or an MA, or as I did, from art, with some college, went into apprenticeships. And it was a very good one. Unfortunately, after a couple of years of really great training -- I emphasize my love of that art -- there were only two ways to go. You either went to Japan and you went through the whole apprenticeship, which, for many reasons, I would not have been able to do, nor would they have taken an American, I don't think. So after a couple of years, though, I felt that I kind of wanted to branch out a little bit. I was offered a job at the Brooklyn Museum. I had gotten to know Sheldon Keck and Caroline Keck.

SZ: Tell me a little bit about them.

AK: Sheldon was the great man then, and you're going to hear that from me. He came to lecture at the League, maybe back around then, at night, and all of the artists came to hear him. He was lecturing on materials and what was the right varnish to use, a standing-room only audience. But as soon as I went to work in Asian conservation, I knew the names of Sheldon and Caroline Keck, but particularly Sheldon, because modern conservation started in the '30s in the great Brussels laboratory under Paul Kormans, then in London at the National Gallery with Stephen Rees-Jones, who was the art historian presiding over that and people like Helmut Ruhemann as conservators. One of the greatest, perhaps the greatest scientific conservation laboratory, which was later on, in my time, under Gary Thompson, in London. Gary Thompson, really great. Very scholarly, very scientific, very knowledgeable, and with a group in Brussels, in London, and at the Fogg here under George Stout, the idea was of a triumvirate: that you had an art historian, a scientist, and a conservator, all well educated.

Gary Thompson, at the National Gallery, his field was museum environment. His book, called *The Museum Environment*, even now is still a kind of benchmark, and throughout my career was the book on the subject, for conservators. And Kormans doing the great pioneering conservation on Van Eyck and the great Flemish artists. But here in the United States, [George] Stout, John Gettins, who was at the Freer and at the Fogg, was the chemist in that grouping, and then Sheldon Keck was trained by Stout and became the conservator there. He had a BA from Harvard, then he met Caroline, who had an MA from Radcliffe, and they married, moved to New York, and became the conservators for the Brooklyn Museum.

SZ: When you said modern conservation started in the '30s, briefly, what was before that, if anything?

AK: Each time has its conservation, which it considers the right way to do things, and the best, and has great people doing work that everybody finds breathtaking. Then a generation or two or three, or maybe centuries later, comes the revolution, and everybody says, "Oh, my god, how could you do it like that. You ruined everything." Or, "The people who did that are really terrible." In the '30s, they felt that things were overpainted too much. This would be going back for centuries. The cleaning of the Sistine ceiling, a great job, in the opinion of everybody but a couple of media people, is a perfect example. You have centuries of trying to do the best you can with what you know at that time -- setting down the flaking paint with this or that glue, cleaning with urine or spirits of wine, and then another layer of glue, and then grime, and then it's so dark you repaint, and then another layer of grime. Then comes the time when you think, well, you really have to clean this off. It was more the idea of making things look marvelous. I'm not saying that's wrong.

SZ: But that's what it was, as opposed to finding ways to preserve.

AK: Henry James inveighed against this in the 19th century. Reading his travel books is a lot of fun for a conservator. It was the architectural restoration of the

19th century that he just had apoplexy, traveling through France, and of course a cathedral or a local church or something would be a little pile of rubble, and then when the restorers got through with it, it was an entire edifice. Or else it was so over built. Or like what they did at Carcassonne, which, when we did come to travel, I adored, but I was a little bit disillusioned when I found that all of the turrets were somebody else's work. But the idea was to make something whole, if possible, at least, especially, in painting. Even though you talk about the fragment -- maybe that's why, the fragment is more of our century. But murals and frescoes and so forth, you pulled the background together. Well, in the '30s, the idea was to have a more natural respect for the artist, their handiwork. So, for example, the term inpainting, which is still used today, became current. If there was a loss, if you compensated, you retouched it, you only did it within the loss. You did not, in any way, cover paint around it. Also, there became such purists that they felt that they didn't even want to make it match completely. The great old restorers, and they were geniuses, could retouch in such a way you couldn't see it in any light. I don't object to that, actually. It depends on the picture -- how big it is, what you need to know, because when you use some of the more modern materials, you can see it under ultraviolet light. It'll fluoresce much darker, a dark purple, so you know where the conservator has been. But at any rate, back in the '30s, the idea was to draw something together to the eye, tone it so that it just kind of blended in. But I know that by the early '60s, Stout had kind of pulled away from that a little bit, because he was lecturing over at the Institute of Fine Arts and he showed a slide that we did think was a bit clunky. It wasn't his work; I don't know who did it. It was of the time, and it was the way I was trained, in what was called a kind of tratteggio technique, which is still used and is still great, but just depending on how light you are. It was kind of in stripes, and they really wanted an honest loss. But George Stout has a kind of dry, scholarly humor, saying something like, "Well, perhaps we went a little too far the other way." So it was more that kind of thing. So visually, aesthetically, it was to get away from that. It's kind of the beginning of the naturalistic, artist's intent kind of thing which is so popular today. But always, in this century and back into the 19th century, from things that I've read, you had the idea of this triumvirate. For example, in paper

conservation, there's a great treatise by Bonnardot, who was the conservator of paper for the Louvre, second edition, in 1858. Bonnardeau was the hands-on conservator of prints and drawings and books and photographs, and he had studied with a chemist named Tenard in his youth, and Tenard was the man who developed hydrogen peroxide. Their first use was to reconvert lead whites that had darkened on a Raphael. Bonnardeau talked about how wonderful it was to work with the chemists and to work with the curators and the art historians at the Louvre, so already there was that idea, even though we consider the chemistry then hair-raising. That was modern conservation, and they published, and they became, in the '50s, the International Institute of Conservation.

SZ: When you went up to the Met to do this work and then were offered this opportunity.

AK: This was the Brooklyn Museum. I didn't go to Brooklyn. I was offered a job and didn't take it.

SZ: I guess what I'm really asking is, when you were introduced to the field and decided to pursue it, what about it appealed to you? What did you see in it for yourself then?

AK: I loved being almost inside the art. I'm sure, coming in as an artist, and probably why it enabled me to stop painting in the early '60s, I was really there with those pictures. I could look at them, and think about them, and know them, and know those materials. Then, of course, we did Japanese, Chinese, and some Korean. Oh, just gorgeous things. But there was a lot in the Oriental where we imported papers from Japan. Everything was imported from Mr. Oka in Kyoto, so they were the top materials that you could use in conservation in the world. These beautiful mulberry papers. It's manual work. If you're going to be a good conservator, you'd better have good hands; that's the bedrock for all the rest of it. Just to be able to even weigh out different so-called same papers into different lots of heavier or lighter, and the beauty of those papers with light coming through them. We made our own paste from pure wheat starch, and

that was wonderful. There was a whole library of books of the designs for kimonos and so forth, from which we could take stencils to recreate the silk or brocade mountings. We followed some very traditional Japanese ways, which are still done, at the Met, because that's all part of those scrolls. Remounting them is part of them, different from Western conservation, in which you kind of add your work, or subtract it, or hopefully it won't show, but nevertheless, it isn't just an agreed-on part of it. It's like redoing a Shinto temple every twenty years. Every hundred years or so a scroll is rebacked, and then, if it's a very rare mounting, you will conserve that as well, or a newer painting, you might recreate them, as I say. We'd have special pine cones and we'd make dyes from boiling the pine cones or purple dyes from the shells, and we'd be dying the silks and stenciling them and cutting them just to fit the scrolls and removing all of the old mountings. It's just a wonderful feeling, to see something that you worked on and your colleagues have worked on, and hopefully have done a good job there. Maybe somebody punched a great hole in it or it's falling to shreds and it's all cracked, so then you remove papers from the back and put on new papers and you put it on a new screen, and it's kind of resplendent. It's resurrected, sort of. It's a very difficult thing to get across. Later on, in the early '60s, I was in painting conservation, but to be cleaning a painting and see those colors emerging, is a phenomenal experience, aside from being kind of gut-wrenching and you've done all of your tests and all of your x-rays and everything and you're going by feel and all of the nervousness that goes into a treatment. There's still that wonderful feeling, and that carried me through thick and thin, I would say, to kind of be one with the art.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **ANTOINETTE KING (AK)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **WEST 70TH STREET, MANHATTAN**

DATE: **NOVEMBER 17, 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: We were going to pick up a few threads from last time, so let's start with that, then move on.

AK: I want to pick up a few from the '50s, because it sounded a little bit as if I had stayed home the whole time, but I should say that, late in 1953, after a thorough training at the Art Students League, I went off for a *wanderjahre* in Europe which was actually about eight months. I started in Austria because a friend of my father's and his family were there on a wonderful little lake near Salzburg, so that I could go for the music festival in the late summer. Then I spent about four months in Italy looking at art. That was the whole purpose of the whole time. I did have languages, so that I could practice them, and I did the sort of usual thing that people do -- going to Florence and Venice and Rome and the hill towns. I stayed at a great student house called the Villa Fabricotti, which is on a hillside about twenty minutes outside of Rome, where, for $2.50 a day, you got full room and board, if you didn't mind cold water washing your clothes in the railroad station, and that sort of thing. Students from all over the western world were there. It was really exciting. Then you could go out to other cities in Europe with people one had met. It was considered sort of daring for young girls to travel. Although I had roommates -- there was a four-girl room I was staying in there; a wonderful girl from Denmark and French girls, and a German girl who was still throwing the window open and doing her Hitler Youth exercises at six o'clock. It was kind of sobering for everybody else, but she was a very pleasant person, young, and, what can I say. But it gave me an idea what the war had been like, too, because when I landed in Rotterdam -- I went over on a Dutch student ship, which cost about $150.00 and took nine days, but even though I had seen the pictures from the war, at great length, as everybody did in those days, I was unprepared for the reality, coming off the boat and going to the place where I was staying in Rotterdam for a couple of days before I went down to Austria, and seeing a good part of Rotterdam still in ruins around me. Going down, maybe along the Rhine, I remember Cologne, because I was going to

Munich after the two days in Rotterdam, and my father's friend, Adatto, was to meet me in Munich. But I've never forgotten going past the Cologne Cathedral, third-class carriage, people in the carriage saying, "That's Cologne Cathedral," and we looked out and it was sunset, and everything was flat, still, and all you saw was this black spire in the air. I went back to Cologne in the late '80s, I think, on a courier trip for the Museum, and I found it very difficult to go into the cathedral and look at it. The stained glass is gone. It was all replaced in the '50s. I had a sort of terrible, psychological backache, which went away after that, but just to try to even look at this cathedral. Then, going along through some of the cities in Germany, the same thing. But when I got on the train and we were just outside of Rotterdam, and, of course, all Dutch people -- I still can't bring it visually, because I tend, when something is really terrible, to kind of obliterate it from my memory, but -- all I can remember is going, "Ah," [gasp] and I was looking at these ruins, and there was this silence in the car, and the Dutch people said, "Is this the first time you've seen the ruins?" And I said, "Yes." It was a long time before we got to talking again, because here was this American girl -- what did we know, really, even though we saw the pictures?

SZ: By the time you were there, was there plenty of food, and things to buy?

AK: Yes. Austria was doing well. A lot of kind of former barons there, and I met some really interesting people who were sort of connected with the music festival. It was a feeling of well being -- former wealth, but still fine. It was in the countryside, and Mr. Adatto was with the armed forces, so they would have been on a certain level to see things. Italy was extremely poor, however. It wasn't just that I could live that cheaply -- eleven dollars a week, in Venice, for heaven's sakes, without too many facilities. But, it was poor. I went to see a show of Italian design in photographs at the Guggenheim just a few years ago, and there were photographs from the '50s and it looked exactly -- the whole feeling, a kind of depressed sense. Beautiful as it was, and the people were some of the most beautiful I had ever seen in my life, but everyone wearing black, and the women with the black babushkas. There were some American girls in the student house in Florence, and they found out that the first television to be in Florence was

somewhere in the outskirts of Florence and everybody tramped over. About half the city had come to see this. But again, a feeling of sort of depression. Of course, they were part of the Axis, but, come on; it's kind of hard to think about it. Still, we'd go to a concert in Florence and it would be kind of a hole in the ground. They had finally started to dig out, and you'd sit on the stones and then people would play; Carl Richter, for example, would be playing Bach or something. But that's the way you would be sitting. When I went to the Rome Opera, it had just been opened after the restoration, in December of 1953, after the war. I just remember people seeming poor in Rome and Venice. A lot of poverty, of course, in Venice. A woman -- I was taking the train to Siena, maybe a day trip out of Florence, and we were chatting; I was practicing my terrible Italian; and she said, "*Siena e una citta morta*," it's a dead city. To me, it was just beautiful. I mean, my gosh, I rushed to look at the Duccios. But to her, it was smashed and it hadn't come back yet. But still, a wildly exciting place to be, to see things you had no conception of here, in that quantity; not to see them in black and white reproductions. Then, I guess, I did the usual. I went with some friends that I had met to Barcelona and Madrid. I did what people did then. It's odd to think that we went to Franco's Spain, and I felt sort of funny about that, and everybody talked about it, and about how you could die instantly from the cheap oil. And, of course, if I thought that Italy was poor, Spain certainly was. We stayed with a family in Barcelona that a boy from Barcelona who was at the student house had told us about, and they cooked the most marvelous meals and talked *sotto voce* about better times late at night. A friend and I were staying there for a dollar and a quarter for a couch in the living room and these exquisite meals.

SZ: They were happy for the money.

AK: Yes, they were. At some point I said to the friend, "I have to go and get a little bit better food here in Spain than I'm eating. It's just not good for me." She said, "I don't think I can afford it," and I went and I had this glorious dinner for fifty cents -- lamb chops and spinach and a nice waiter helping me. Of course, you're riding in these great third class carriages with all of the chickens and

everything. But I'm glad I went then, because even though I am a conservator and I believe in encapsulating things and having the right environment, it was still nice to see El Greco just kind of hanging there, in the church where it's supposed to be in Toledo. And I hear now that even conservation feels that maybe they went a little too far, and that it's very hard to see it, and you don't have a feeling of the real picture somehow. But, oh, the poverty in Toledo, and people were running after you and grabbing you, and kids, really starving. But, at any rate, let's face it, we were looking at art, and spent two solid weeks, I think, in the Prado, looking at everything. So glorious. They had all of the Goya drawings out on the top floor in those days, along with, of course, the painting collections. So that was exciting. Then Paris and then England for a couple of weeks, and got very saturated, but it was a wonderful trip. I wanted to say that, after a year or two of returning to New York, I did go and have my own studio and apartment for the rest of the 1950s and painted there. I had mentioned that I was at home, but it was only in the early part of the '50s.

SZ: The studio was part of your apartment, or separate?

AK: First I had just one room, and then I was waiting for a friend to vacate a four rooms with heat in a six-floor walk-up with a lovely view of downtown for $31.00 a month. He was going into advertising, so he did finally vacate it for a seven-room apartment for $60.00. They took me. They said, "We're going to tear it down in two years; are you willing to take it anyway?" And I said, "Yes," and I was there for quite a while and they didn't tear it down. It was in the East 40s and it was great. So then I had a studio and a place to live at the same time, and more interior facilities than most people had that I knew. So that was just to kind of wrap up the '50s.

SZ: Where we left off, you were talking about the offer that you had from the Brooklyn Museum. So let's pick up there.

AK: I had written to Sheldon Keck and a few other people in the city, about getting work, and it was Caroline Keck who answered my letter. She said, "I don't really

know you, but Sheldon's recommendation is fine. We can offer you a job during the work on Oriental paintings at the Brooklyn Museum," as I had mentioned before, "but we can't pay you." I had also mentioned that I didn't really feel trained for a job of that magnitude, and also, I couldn't work for nothing. I was forthright with Caroline and she understood that. Then, I forget whether it was more letters or by phone, but at any rate, she said that she had talked to Margaret Watherston, who was the conservator for the Whitney Museum. She didn't work in the Whitney Museum because it didn't have a laboratory on site, but she had a wonderful studio on West 77th Street, just opposite the Natural History Museum.

SZ: In that beautiful block.

AK: Yes. It's one of those beautiful old buildings that were designed for artists.

SZ: With the double ceiling.

AK: Yes. And Margaret had been trained by Sheldon and Caroline, and she was a really fine conservator, innovative as well as well-trained. She also had ties with England. She would go back and forth, so some of the slightly different ideas about approaching things, that were around in England, she was putting together. So I went to see Miss Watherston, and we got along well, and she said, "Fine," that would mean, retraining in painting conservation. I know this all sounds kind of sudden, but, as I say, people did that sort of thing back in those days. One thing I hadn't mentioned about the Oriental, was that there were one or two Western things that had come in -- a couple of Modigliani drawings on newsprint with good old graphite pencil, and even though they weren't breathtaking -- I didn't feel the awe that I felt with the Japanese works, which were certainly masterpieces in comparison -- I still felt this affinity. I knew newsprint, I had drawn on it, this is my culture, my life, so maybe all things considered, it's better to be in the Western anyway, aside from all of the other considerations of not being able to go ahead and take the Oriental training. So I worked for Margaret, as her chief assistant, for four years. Of course, we did

the Whitney Museum, but being outside the Museum, we did the American Federation of Arts; we -- Margaret and myself and a couple of other assistants -- did Betty Parsons' work, Andre Emmerich, and Roy Neuberger, who was a private client at that time, and Allan Emil. I may have mentioned this before, but, a very wide range of important 20th century works and also 19th and even 18th century paintings. Of course, we did a lot of early American works for the downtown gallery, so I had a very thorough and excellent training as a painting conservator.

SZ: All paintings. American Federation of Arts?

AK: They had circulating exhibitions, and we didn't do a lot of work, but sometimes, "have briefcase with paint samples, will travel" kind of thing. We would go to a show, and maybe there would be a damage and it would be inpainted. There was some space at the Whitney, where, it was just a minor work or something that had to go up on the wall, usually I went over. I sort of remained packed, and I could do some kind of work like that.

SZ: What year did you start with her?

AK: '61.

SZ: And the Whitney at that time was located?

AK: Was the Breuer Museum already there? I can remember working with the registrar in the sort of basement of the Whitney where the painting storage was? Could it have still been with MoMA?

SZ: I'll look it up. It could have been.

AK: And I don't remember when the Breuer building was built. I love it so much, I suppose I want it to be in that building. I have a feeling it might have been still with MoMA, though.

SZ: Before that, I think it was downtown.

AK: Yes.

SZ: It was on Eighth Street or something, right?

AK: Yes. I certainly know it wasn't there, because actually, I rarely got down to that, even though I loved Hopper. Almost everybody loved Hopper, and still does. But nevertheless, didn't go to the very early. It had to be at least the one on 54th Street. And, of course, the Primitive Art Museum was still across the street, if that was it. But I did love the Whitney. I frankly liked their shows. They were a little more unusual. It wasn't kind of bandwagon or anything, and I liked American art, and had actually studied it formally at Columbia, so that put me in the picture.

SZ: In those four years, you really learned painting conservation under Margaret Watherston.

AK: That's right. Now that would have been the way people did things in the United States in the '60s. This is early '60s, of course, we're talking about. Techniques, as I had mentioned, starting from the Fogg, going through the Kecks, who were so important at the Brooklyn Museum, then spreading out through their students and through other people in the United States. Paintings were wax lined. The feeling very definitely was that canvases deteriorated and they needed to be preserved before something went wrong. Later on I'm going to talk about the change in the field, and why. The same with maybe varnishing paintings, but we never varnished anything -- we didn't varnish color field works, or anything like that. As I said, we were working on 19th century American and English paintings, that are supposed to be varnished, so I was thoroughly trained in that. But again, there was a feeling that a painting should look beautiful, that the paint should be saturated, that it should glow, somehow. Everybody, it isn't just conservators, but the curators loved that look, and

owners. That was, somehow, the way paintings were supposed to be. But very thorough. But Margaret also was a great inpainter. I was talking about the tratteggio technique, and she had a kind of pointilist technique of inpainting. Her feeling was that if you stood a little bit away from it, you shouldn't see it, but that when you went up very close, you could see it, so there was a scholarly feeling about but also, if you put the ultraviolet light on the painting, you could see where the inpainting was, and, of course, everything was thoroughly documented -- photographs before and after, and that sort of thing. A thing she was thinking about, going to England, was the use of what was called a hot table, now called a low pressure table because it's without heat, for lining paintings. If a painting is completely cracked and cooked and the paint is falling off, it does need lining of some sort, otherwise it simply doesn't hang on the wall. I'm only talking about wax lining as one kind of painting. In Europe, people did glue linings or glue paste linings, and that was a boiling hot glue, and the painting face down on the table, and the glue ironed in with heavy irons, exactly the technique as the wax resin. Wax resin was used in the United States because apartments are hot in the winter and air conditioned in the summer, and if you have a glue lining, the glue expands and contracts so much that it tears the painting apart. So the thought was to have something that would be inert to these changes. However, it does saturate the canvas much more than the glue paste linings do. At any rate, Margaret was also looking at pressure on the tables, and beginning to innovate very low pressure linings and also changing some of the solvent mixtures used to clean paintings. It didn't necessarily make it better or worse, it was just a different way of approaching things. But on the whole, those were the techniques, and also beginning to pioneer dry cleaning techniques for Morris Louis's works. As I say, very conservative ways of approaching how to treat those paintings. We were working with Kenneth Noland and Larry Zox, who was kind of popular in those days. Larry Zox was very concerned with what happens to these acrylic works in the future. What happens to unprimed canvas when it is unprotected in any way? Is there any coating you can put on these surfaces? Margaret was experimenting with it, but we, by that time, didn't feel that there was anything that didn't change the appearance of those works. But it was that kind of thing that was ongoing in

those days, so we're up to mid '60s by this time. Somebody else came to work with her who was really very difficult, so I thought, maybe time to move on, maybe go to a museum, if possible. So I wrote to Jean Volkmer at MoMA.

SZ: Did you know her?

AK: Yes. By that time, I knew a great many people in the field, particularly painting conservation. It was a small field. They were a great group of people -- humorous, down to earth, friendly. They all liked each other. Jean Volkmer and her associate Tosca Zagni at The Museum of Modern Art, it was always, "Jean and Tosca." They were a great working team. There was one in Baltimore, too, Kay Silberfeld and Paul Kiehart, the objects conservator there. There was only one scientist, and that was Bob Feller, who was and still is very famous and very influential in the field, studying the effects of light on material and varnishes and their qualities, and trying to work out the right kind of easily reversible varnishes for paintings that you would want to varnish, for example.

SZ: This group of conservators. At that time, the '60s, did most major museums have conservation departments with their own conservators?

AK: It was still relatively rare. You would have on, maybe two people, to a museum. For example, Kansas City had one, and St. Louis had one person. There was one person out in LA. The Fogg had several people. The Smithsonian, I believe, had several people. But on the whole, individuals. One person at the Chicago Art Museum, a very influential guy. That shows you why it was such a small field. There wasn't a lot of money in the art world and in museums in general in those days. There weren't so many shows. You didn't have the gallery scene that you have in New York and in other cities, much less on the west coast. It was starting, though, because we worked on David Parks and Elmer Bischoff and [Richard] Diebenkorn, even in the early '60s. More preservation, because those paint films are so heavy, they would pull the canvas forward, and even two years afterward, there's be huge cracks, so it was mainly

a question of almost with a dry mount method, no infusion, to hold them. But still, there was the feeling of, that was the west coast, and not much going on.

SZ: And if an Andre Emmerich or a Leo Castelli needed something worked on, there were freelancers around, as Margaret?

AK: Yes. Not very many, though. As I mentioned, Paul Kiehart, who also did some of the American primitive works. He did The Garbisch Collection, for example. He was, oh, a brilliant conservator, a brilliant inpainter, very close to Jean and Tosca. They were a nice threesome. Private business? I think it was really Margaret and a couple of other people who worked for the auction houses and the galleries. A woman named Mary Todd Glaser in paper conservation.

SZ: But it was basically apprenticeship. It wasn't institutionalized.

AK: I'm jumping ahead of myself somewhat.

SZ: Well then, don't.

AK: Well, I'm going to back track. I wanted to mention that the first school did start in 1960-61. I just learned the other day from a lecture by a conservator who is doing a history of conservation and of the Brooklyn Museum, that it had to do with Sheldon Keck, that he was very influential. He was already teaching courses in painting conservation in the late '50s at NYU, then he got money from the Rockefeller Foundation to host a symposium on conservation, and he invited people from NYU, Harvard and Yale, with hopes that one of them would set up a conservation program. NYU was indeed, interested, and it was set up, and George Stout from the Fogg and Sheldon were the first conservators to teach and start the school, and it was also connected with the Metropolitan Museum. So you had the curators and art historians from both the Institute of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan, and George Stout and Sheldon Keck, and the scientist who came there. Mary Todd Glaser was the graduate of that first year. It was a four year program, two years to take your MA in art history, and two years to get

a certificate in conservation, in order to get the degree. Winterthur would be the third school, connected with the University of Delaware, headed by a man named Peter Sparks. However, the Kecks, set up the second school, in Cooperstown. There were various politics, which aren't of any interest any more. Caroline's love for one thing was early American art. Then they set up what is, in actuality, the second school, which is now in Buffalo. It was then, and still is, connected with the University of Buffalo, and when the Kecks retired, it was headed by Christopher Tahk, a really terrific chemist. So those were the three conservation schools then and now in the United States. But still, by the mid '60s, there weren't very many people, but some had already started. The man I mentioned at LA County was a graduate of that first class at the Conservation Center at the Institute of Fine Arts. Tom Chase, who was, until very recently, head of the scientific laboratory at the Freer, graduated from that class, and the man who became painting conservator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. So you had the beginning of what is now the conservation field in the United States, but coming out of these three schools. Recently, there's a fourth, The Queens Program in Canada, which is part of the North American group of schools, and which is also excellent. They have a terrific paper conservator, as a matter of fact, Thea Burns. They're turning out some top notch people. The woman, Erika Mosier, who has become the associate paper conservator, this last year, at MoMA, is a graduate of that.

SZ: So, back to MoMA. So you wrote a letter to Jean Volkmer.

AK: Right, and to Suzanne Sack, who was chief conservator at the Brooklyn Museum. We're talking '65-66 now, and the Kecks had moved to Cooperstown, Suzanne, of course, trained by Caroline and Sheldon. I always got along very well with Caroline. She was a feisty woman, Sheldon being the more philosophical. And a man named Lawrence Majewski took over as the head of the Conservation Center after Sheldon left, here in New York. At any rate, both Jean and Sue Sack answered. Sue said, how would I like to come out and work with her for a day at her private studio in Brooklyn Heights. She worked three days a week at the Brooklyn Museum with two or three assistants, and then

privately, as I say. So I knew I was being tested, so, a very nervous conservator went out, and it worked out very well. We were still friends; a very long friendship; colleagues and friends. She asked if I would like to come and work two days a week at the Brooklyn Museum because they were opening a new wing and they wanted a lot of things worked on, again, the early American paintings, since I had been well trained in that field. And Sue was a real stickler, too, I can tell you. She was kind enough to say that I was a very well trained painting conservator, and, of course, she knew Margaret. Sue was integral with all of these people I was talking about, although she was the only one on regular salary at the Brooklyn Museum. Everybody else had to be on grants or something like that. At any rate, Jean also answered, and she asked if I'd like to come down and work one day with her and with Tosca on something, and some and chat. We got along very well. They were great fun, I must say. Jean and Tosca and I looked at things the same way; we were on the same wavelength in art and politics and humor, shall we say. We laughed a lot. Jean then asked me to come back, and she said, "I don't have the money for a painting conservator; I've had a heck of a time getting Tosca on salary; but we do need a paper conservator. I want to start a paper conservation lab and a sculpture conservation lab here, and have a whole department." And that would have been relatively new in the United States. And she said she wanted me, though, to take further training, of course, in Western paper conservation, with Marilyn Widener, who was primarily in private work in Philadelphia. She was also professor of paper conservation at the Cooperstown graduate programs. So I said, "Fine." Here I was, with two out of town jobs. I then commuted three days a week to Philadelphia and two days to Brooklyn. Because I'm divorced, I'm forgetting that I did get married in 1960. [Laughter]

SZ: I was just going to wait and see when that popped in.

AK: I did meet my husband late in '59. We were married in '61, but we still didn't have much money. He had been a very brilliant mathematician, but he really wanted to write, so we decided, to thine own self be true, sort of thing. So he was writing short stories. [Laughter]

SZ: And you were working.

AK: [Laughter] And I was working. Well, that was the deal. Later on, he was pretty much supporting me, I must say. But in the beginning, that seemed fair, and he was selling. Everything he wrote he got written up, and he was terrific for two hundred dollars a throw, comic magazines, and that sort of thing. So we were both working, but I think our first year we earned something like three thousand dollars. It was just incredible how little conservation paid. But it was sort of hard, too, to be going to Philadelphia, being married, but it was only two evenings down there, and then I just commuted day to Brooklyn.

SZ: So you were being paid by the two institutions.

AK: Right. Our first year would have been 1961, so I still wasn't that well paid, just starting with Margaret. Although once I became her right or left hand, shall we say, I was relatively well paid for those days.

SZ: You were going to Brooklyn a couple days a week, then you were going to Philadelphia for MoMA.

AK: I didn't have a firm job offer; I didn't have a firm job from either place, of course. I'm sure Jean wanted to see whether Marilyn thought that I was going to be a good paper conservator. Jean liked the fact that I had the painting conservation, because art on paper in the 20th century has plenty of paint on it and all of the mixed media. You have a little bit of sculpture conservation when you're in painting conservation, and that sort of thing. I'll be quite honest, at that particular time I wanted to go and work in Brooklyn. I just loved that job. It would have been a terrible mistake. And Charlie, my husband, kept saying, "Don't go to Brooklyn. If they offer MoMA, take MoMA." But I was more interested in painting conservation. I still wasn't sure about the paper. There's a thrill to painting conservation; I had discussed it last time. It was hard to go down to Philadelphia; I was being trained on maps and prints of Baltimore.

[Laughing] It wasn't very exciting. It was a real come down from the terrific things I had been working on, once I was trained with Margaret. However, luck was with me. There wasn't more money in Brooklyn, and Jean offered me the job at MoMA, and I had sense enough to take it. So all's well that ends well. Then, I was still working at Brooklyn and I started at MoMA part time, but then they offered me full time and I left Brooklyn to go and work full time. Marilyn Widener said, "You grab a full time job. Are you crazy?" It was exciting at MoMA.

SZ: That was what year?

AK: That was December of 1967 I started part time, full time July of 1968. They wanted me to start with the Cézannes, and I had sense enough not to do it, but by this time would have had maybe three and a half years of paper conservation and four in painting conservation. I had also audited those first couple of years at the Conservation Center when Sheldon Keck was teaching. They offered money to some people who had come up through the apprentice way, or one could audit. Tosca Zagni and Orrin Riley, the conservator of the Guggenheim Museum, were auditing, and I went and audited the lecture courses. We didn't need the hands on, of course, because we were already working. We had the good fortune to study with Sheldon, who was a great teacher. It sounds like I idolized him, but, as you can see, he was it in the field, in those days. He was a brilliant teacher. And then we took the chemistry courses, and so forth. So that's what I had when I started at MoMA.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SZ: I guess you first started going in December of '67.

AK: Yes.

SZ: You were headed into a very rough period, I guess. Tell me, what was your initial impression of the institution?

AK: Well, first, I was very excited; reality set in somewhat later on. But, it was a beginning. Jean had gotten what seemed like an enormous amount of money, I think it was $5,000.00 for Paper Conservation, and I don't know how much she had for sculpture conservation. At the same time that I started, Anton Conrad, Tony Conrad, started as the sculpture conservator. He was thoroughly trained, I'm forgetting now where and with whom. Also a great guy, personally; a lot of fun, a very feisty guy. Now, the space for paper conservation was tiny but beautiful. It was up a short flight of stairs, opposite the library, and we would have been in the building that was taken over from the Whitney, that is, the old Whitney Wing, as it was known. The library was in the east side of that building, painting conservation in the west side. A fairly big space. I think it was the second or third space that Jean had. There was also a big sculpture photography area next to the space for painting conservation that they just took over, finally. Kate [Keller] said, "OK, you can have it," sort of [laughing], "those paintings are huge and I can see you need it." But Jean had very cleverly gotten this space, which was over just part of painting conservation. Beautiful east light. Sculpture conservation didn't fare as well. It was down, I think, on the third floor in a tiny room, no windows, no solvent evacuation, or anything like that. I profited greatly from Marilyn Widener, who had worked in the Registrar department for a while before she went into conservation, training, I suppose, with a lot of people, but also at the Freer. So both Marilyn and I had the Japanese in our background, and a lot of these Japanese techniques were being taken over by some of the Western paper conservators, changing over from some of the older European methods. Marilyn was also very good at setting up labs. She was going to set up a good, modern lab, with the two of us together. So it was great to have her help. She was a very strong person, and she and Jean got along very well, and Jean and I, and Tosca all got along very well. I don't know why sculpture conservation got shortchanged. There was a lot of curatorial back-and-forth, too. I was hired to work on the things in the collection of the Painting and Sculpture Department under -- Barr had retired, but in my

first year, Dorothy Miller was still there. That would have been the watercolors, collages and pastels. There was a real double standard in those days. Prints were looked down upon, even black and white drawings didn't quite make it into something like paint on paper. Even though they're called drawings, you had Cézanne watercolors and Picasso collages, and you could hardly argue with that.

SZ: Who was supposed to take care of the others?

AK: A great conservator named Christa Gaehde, who became my mentor, I am happy to say. Christa was close to William Lieberman, who, of course, early, would have been the curator of drawings and prints, then when I started was over in Painting and Sculpture, and then Prints and Drawings divided up among curators, and Christa Gaehde doing the Prints and Drawings department just superbly. She came from Dresden; lovely woman. Her husband was a medievalist, and art historian at Brandeis, and she was the leading paper conservator in the United States at that time and for many, many years thereafter. She did everybody's work. She had a four-year backlog working in a private studio in their home in Boston, but bringing over these exquisite European mending techniques. Also a very lovely woman, very low key, a little bit shy, but knew everything. She had worked on everything, seen everything. When I was saying curatorial back-and-forth: I know that I was told -- I don't know; maybe there were arguments among the curators, but at any rate, the upshot was to not have quite as good a space. Maybe there wasn't any in the Museum for sculpture. I just don't know. I knew the ins and outs of paper, but not of sculpture. At any rate, we got a great setup the first year and got a microscope and wonderful tables and just the kind of modern Formica tops, good materials laboratories should have, a sink for washing out beakers and that kind of thing, good off-gassing storage and everything. A beautiful lab. Of course, I thought money was going to go on forever, so you're talking about the kind of shocks one can run into, well it was a shock to find that in the second year there was no money whatsoever, and there wasn't going to be in a big hurry. I mean, I was on salary, but no money for equipment and things like that.

It didn't sit well on Tony Conrad who had a -- well, we all had short fuses; his was maybe a little shorter. But also, he had had a very lucrative private business. He didn't need problems. I forget how many years Tony was there. Patricia Houlihan came to work with him, I think maybe the first, second year; by 1969 she was there. She was Margaret Watherston's sister. She had also worked with Margaret and she did lovely work -- hands on inpainting and cleaning. Very thoughtful; a lot of fun, also; a delicate sense of humor.

SZ: So she came in as Tony's. . .

AK: Assistant. Again, on an apprenticeship basis. Tony left, I don't remember exactly what year, early '70s. He went down to the Smithsonian, he was an objects conservator at the Smithsonian, then he ultimately went down to head up a lab and museum in San Juan. He did very well. But sculpture conservation, until the expansion in 1984, was somewhat shortchanged in space. Of course, paper was too. We both had small spaces, but at least I had light. I had a fume hood to take the solvent fumes out to work under. That's the physical and person plant. I got an assistant in, I think, '69-70, Ann Pelican, starting on an apprenticeship basis. She went to Columbia to study chemistry. She had had art history and stuff, but fortunately, she went to study with Dr. Warren Falconer, the chemist at the Bell Labs. He loved art, and Ann was very smart, and she got friendly with him, and she was talking about the needs of paper conservation and research needs, and the questions that needed answering and the problems of should you de-acidify paper, what did washing do, all of the chemical things that were ongoing in those days. I've talked about painting conservation and what was happening, but works of art on paper got bleached and they were also lined. Things were supposed to be flat. It was Clement Greenberg and things were flat, in the 1960s: paper, paintings. People got very nervous if there was a little liveliness or a cockle or something like that. At any rate, Warren came down to see the lab, and Jean and Tosca were very excited, and the four of us were talking to him, and he said he'd be delighted to come in on Saturdays, this being 1970, and see what he could do to think about, particularly, the problems of de-acidifying, that is, neutralizing the acidity, of the papers that most 20th

century art is on. Newsprint is quite acidic, to say the least. So that was great. So the five of us, because Jean and Tosca were all excited about that, too. Jean found some money in the budget and we were able to get the right beakers and setups and the sort of things that were needed. Then we got a grant, the first National Endowment for the Arts grant, I guess would be late 1970. We were so green. I forget who was in the grants office; I don't think he lasted long after this. [Laughing] He didn't notice that you had to match the grant. [Laughing] It was a whole $2,000.00 -- we thought big, you can see that. But that $2,000 was to get us all of the glassware and all of the stuff we needed to titrate to test my theory that de-acidification would be harmful to works of art. There were whispers of that feeling in the literature, both in England and in some of the translations of Russian research being done in Leningrad. At any rate, we did find that to be true. The Museum finally, grudgingly, matched the grant. They didn't dare send it back. [Laughing] First they said, "Well you'll have to pay for it yourself," sort of thing, and I was, "Well, good luck." Charlie just twiddled his thumbs because he was already unimpressed by my salary, which was rock bottom, to say the least. At any rate, then we published, because, of course, if you're a chemist at Bell Labs you published. We just published a couple of short things. Jean and Tosca, by that time, figured this was really paper, so they said, "You and Ann go to it and work with Warren." But there still was definite support and the publications were dynamite. This top notch chemist -- he became head of chemical and physical research, I think, at Bell Labs, and then, of course, he didn't work with us any more. Really neat guy. Our first publication we sent down to the *Bulletin of the American Society of Conservation*, and they said, "Oh boy, is this on a good level; send it to the *International Studies in Conservation*." So we did and we sent another publication, and we were in, and we became very good friends with people like Bob Feller, and Nathan Stolow, who set up all of the labs in Canada and was their scientist. So also we had the opportunity to have great chemists come in. Dr. Philip Luner, who was the leading man in paper conservation at the College of Forestry in Syracuse, for libraries and archives in the United States, came in to think about these problems. People from the National Bureau of Standards; Dr. Browning came. So we didn't de-acidify MoMA's collection. I'm emphasizing

this because I am very proud of the fact. Sometimes what you don't do. Now, for books and archives, you need to do that, but you can do a lot of harm to paper, not to mention the mediums that you have in the work of art on it. Then we went ahead and got other grants. We got a second grant from the NEA for more work with Dr. Falconer, and this time we asked for more. We were working with a young man named James Snyder, who was brilliant at getting grants. He noticed that we needed to match it. I think we got $12,000-$15,000 in just one phone call to Washington, and they said they'd get us whatever equipment we needed. So we got some big equipment for paper conservation. We got an environmental chamber to do accelerated aging on our samples, you could put at certain high temperatures and humidity which would relate to what you might see in the long term in the natural environment, to see how papers would age if they were de-acidified or washed. We looked at all kinds of adhesives. We worked with a wonderful paper conservator at the Boston Museum, Roy Perkinson. We were sharing research with him because he had some money for some things and we had money for others, and we'd send samples back and forth.

SZ: So that sort of set you up as a very viable operation.

AK: Yes. Whatever might have been problematic internally -- there always is, in institutions -- I had all of this outside.

SZ: Let's go back to middle '68, because you were doing basically Painting and Sculpture works on paper. Tell me what curators you were dealing with and how that went.

AK: [Bill] Rubin was there, of course; Bill Lieberman was head of P&S. I forget how that related to Rubin: of course, as we know, I think it was [inaudible] they didn't speak to each other. But I was bound and determined to get along with both of them, and Dorothy Miller. I worked primarily my first year, 1968 and into '69, with Dorothy Miller who would have been the chief curator, then Betsy Jones her second in command. Dorothy very much the grande dame. I was very nervous.

Although I had worked at the Brooklyn Museum and then for the Whitney, it was more just in the conservation department; I hadn't worked one-to-one with the curators before. They were unto themselves. But they came to the labs a lot and talked to us and talked to me. I wasn't yet working with Rubin. I was more apt to be working with Lieberman, because it was still paper, and I think he was also kind of trying to evaluate me and paper conservation in general, I'm sure, the P&S curators evaluating sculpture as well. Everything was money. That was a little bit scary. Dorothy would say, "This was worth $80,000 but now that it's been worked on it's worth $100,000." And I would think, "Oh gosh; I'm nervous enough." [Laughing] I mean, I say nervous in the sense that, hopefully, if you're a conservator, you always have a sense of that this is a masterpiece and what I'm doing on it really counts. But that was very noticeable, money and art. That was sort of a new one to me because I thought of this ivory tower I was supposed to be in, and I got a good view of why my salary was so low and everybody else's so low. We then got the Gertrude Stein collection late in 1969, and that was quite a coup. The trustees bought that collection, however, part of the deal to get it and have some go to MoMA and them some be sold later on, was to have it conserved. Of course, Jean and Tosca were very anxious to work on this collection. It was quite a beginning, I can tell you: The Picasso works and Gris collages, Picasso studies for the *Demoiselles [d'Avignon]* and the *Three Bathers* in Leningrad. Just one masterpiece after the other. Now, Christa Gaehde came into the picture at this point, because, as I mentioned, people were bleaching in those days, and the bleach that was considered the safest for a good rag paper that would not harm the fibers of the paper and that would be safe to use, say, on a carbon-base material like a charcoal, would be a chlorine dioxide gas bleach method, which had been studied by the chemists at the Freer, working with the conservation and science labs at the Fogg and the Boston Museum. At any rate, I didn't have the equipment for that, but Christa Gaehde did, so she came in and we met. We got along very well. I was really in awe of her. She taught me a lot. She worked on two of the cubist Picasso drawings. They were very badly foxed. There were these red brown splotches all over the paper. That's an English term. They called it foxing because it was the color of the fur of the fox, and it's still commonly used for what are probably

fungus stains, and now, some of the newer research fields, that it may be where water sits on paper and maybe some of the degradation products of the paper go to those wet spots and then the acidity of those spots both in the fungus and in the water areas will end up creating brown in the paper. And then iron all adds into that. So they were all blotched with these foxing marks, and many of the works were also pasted down to orange brown cardboards, which is a favorite French framer's methods. Those were just steamed off. We didn't do more than that. Now Marilyn Widener was still coming up one day a week as a consultant, and then Christa Gaehde was there. It was also good to have two or three people. Christa and Marilyn would have been separate only in the sense that Marilyn was for the P&S department and Christa for Drawings and Prints, and I was getting the benefit of both knowledges. At any rate, a lot of glue in the surface of these things; collages in really terrible shape, all falling off the canvas and paint falling off. But that brought Bill Lieberman into the picture, particularly. I did ask Lieberman's opinion about the Gris collage *Roses*, which was the most important thing that I worked on in that collection. I gave a talk on it at a meeting in Lisbon and published it. Leonard Lauder now owns it. It was in Margit's [Rowell] still life show [*Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life* [MoMA Exh. #1772, May 21(25)-August 26, 1997]] this past year at MoMA, and the treatment is still holding up. Lieberman and I began to began to be friendly at that point. There was still a distinct feeling in the P&S department that I was not to be friendly with Bill Lieberman. I'll be quite honest. I was anxious to have all departments. I mean, we're all ambitious, no? But I wasn't about to rock the boat because of Christa. She was such a sweetie. Although she ended by just saying

SZ: Good-bye?

AK: Yes, and we've remained friends to this day. At any rate, Lieberman appreciated being asked about things. I would have to keep a little bit quiet about consulting with one curator or another. I think Dorothy Miller had retired by that time, because I remember going to the farewell party up at Philip Johnson's house, which was such great fun. Jean took her whole department

there. It was a close department. We had tea every day down in the painting conservation.

SZ: So civilized.

AK: Oh, yes, and Jean would tell these great anecdotes, and a wonderful sense of humor. Also a good opportunity to exchange all our knowledges. And of course, I'd be working with Riva Castleman in Prints. Didn't start off too well. She heard about my publication. She came up the stairs saying, "You're not allowed to do that sort thing on Museum time." I don't think it's necessarily shyness. I tend not to answer when I am very angry, and I thought, "For this salary, we're working six days a week." But I didn't [say anything]. Later on in our relationship she talked about how great the publications had been. Betsy Jones liked them, though. On the whole, though, in the Museum, although ostensibly I was fine, do what you want, there was a lid on it.

SZ: All the way though, you felt?

AK: No, just in the early days. They weren't yet used to conservation being anything other than just hands on. Well, actually yes, all the way through, until possibly the last couple of years, there was a feeling of, hands on is really the only thing, and the rest is tangential. Maybe we'll fund it, and yes, that's great, but.

SZ: Those early days. Three directorships, if you count the troika, in three years; strikes. How did that all affect you?

AK: Well, the three directorships was a pain, to put it mildly. For one thing, you couldn't get anything done. You didn't know what was going on. Everybody knew they weren't right for the job.

SZ: Was that something you knew too? I guess Bates Lowry was the first one, right?

AK: Yes. Oh, there was so much talk about the fact that he kept painting the sixth floor over and over and getting new carpet and not doing anything, and [John] Hightower was laughed at for that 'turkey in the oven was a work of art' whatever that famous saying is. And, of course, the loss of René d'Harnoncourt was still felt, because he was still alive when I first started. That legend was still around.

SZ: Did you ever have any real. . .

AK: I never met him. I did meet Alfred Barr, though. Working on the Stein collection, I was working on a small study for, I think, *The Three Bathers*, a head which is quite famous, actually, and it had a hideous mahogany brown water stain right in the middle of the forehead. It was a watercolor and gouache, which, of course, is water soluble, and it looked like she had a huge diadem in her forehead, and then the water, which had somehow dripped down a wall onto that, had washed the watercolor away. I was doing a very time-honored: using very warm water just dripped through and then blotted; no chemicals or anything, and just pulling that stain out, and consulting with Marilyn, in this case. But, oh, you just had to be so careful because, in paper conservation there's just no going back. If you put too much water on and your stain starts to move out, it can just start moving into the picture. You have to contain it there. So it's really quite gut-wrenching work. Well, up the stairs comes wafting this man I had never seen, believe it or not, after all of those years in New York. And this wonderful presence came over and looked at that and he said, "I hope that's going well. I've just persuaded Nelson [Rockefeller] to pay $25,000 for it. I'd like to introduce myself; I'm Alfred Barr." Yikes! It was just wonderful, though. He said great things, and I was awe-struck. I did meet him other times and had the good fortune to have him talk about Magritte to me in front of Magritte paintings, but I didn't see very much of him. But that was a wonderful aspect of MoMA. Back to the nitty gritty of the early '70s. What we were going to do was a real feeling among everybody in the Museum, and staff still a bit off like this, although I think I was now doing the work for all of the different departments and working then with all of the different curators. Then when Dick Oldenburg took over, he and I got along very well. I had had the good fortune to know Carl

Morse, who had been the head of Publications before Dick came in, or was working under Dick. But, I knew Carl through other friends, just personal friends in New York, so Dick and I had met -- while he was still head of Publications -- at a party at Carl's. Because I felt relaxed and he wasn't the Director, he was just the head of another department, we had gotten along fine and chatted. So, when he became Director, I felt good about it, for that reason. I just felt, personally, that this was going to be fine. There was still little money for salaries and things were very much up in the air, and staff relations weren't as close as they might be, to put it mildly. I think the union was starting about that time. Now the union started as a staff association, and I am ashamed to say that, at the very beginning I didn't go to the meetings. I think I really had so much to do, plus I was married, and every once in a while. . .

SZ: You had to go home. [Laughter]

AK: We did like to go to the movies and have our own life. My husband, by that time, had gone into advertising and was working himself to death, and supporting us. I have to say that his salary was a great help. I mean, we would have gone on, starving, but, nevertheless, it was nice.

SZ: So you said that you didn't go in the beginning.

AK: But soon after. Pat Houlihan told me there was going to be a big meeting, and I should go. And what was going to happen with the staff association? I don't remember exactly when we were also looking at who was going to be the lawyer, Michael somebody, and my brother was a lawyer. At any rate, I went to that meeting, and I was, I must confess, very disenchanted with Michael the lawyer for the association. But I must be jumping ahead of myself, because I knew that while it was just a staff association, the chief curators were in it. Arthur Drexler went, and Riva, and so forth. I frankly, was one of the few, I think, who thought it was a good idea. I just thought it would be great to have a forum where we could all talk instead of, what was apparent to me, which was that working at MoMA is like being at the court of Louis XIV. You have your trustees, you have

your director, you have your chief curators and the curators, and you have everyone else, and you have to dress right, and you act right, and you say the right things, and there's a distance. No matter how close you may think you are, there's a courtly feeling. It's much less now. It became less, I think, due to the union. But I remember the very first vote in the staff association, that I was now attending regularly and became very interested in. I voted to keep the chief curators in it and have a forum, and, of course, that lost by a landslide. So we then had the association. It might have been then that Michael was being considered, and my brother, Paul Chevigny, wasn't too happy with that. At that time he was with the New York Civil Liberties Union. I started going to the meetings and began to speak up, not only about how terrible the salaries were at MoMA, because it was well known that the upper echelons were so much better paid than many museums in the United States, and we were so much worse paid. I was actually told some time in the mid '70s that my colleagues considered my salary a national disgrace, because by that time I had an international reputation in paper conservation. I also spoke up for the way the pictures were being treated. I said we weren't yet perfect on our environmental controls: the lights weren't low enough, our engineer was the pits, and that kind of thing. They were discussing a strike even then, before we unionized, if memory serves. Talking to my brother Paul, he said, "Oh, my god, don't go out on strike. You have to have a union. They'll fire you. You have to have some strength." Other people had also told me the same thing. I had actually been advised some years ago, complaining about my salary to one of my advisors, he said, "Unionize." So, a number of us were really talking up union. I didn't want to lose my job, but I did think that it would be nice to have things working somewhat better, and, I suppose, my background, then, began to come out in me. You know, my father, and all, there was a feeling of being active this way. I was asked to be on the bargaining team. Jane Fleugel came around; she said, "We like the way you're talking," and "How would you like to be on?" and I said, "Yes." I was delighted. Now, this, I think, was the first rift between Jean Volkmer and me, because she had said before this, "You and Tosca will be out of the union. Tosca's title is Chief Associate and your title would be," such and such, and I chose to be in the union, which, I must confess, for a long time, I

regretted, "Oh, my gosh, what have I done? I'd really rather be management." All of the things you think about. It ended all right, except relations with Jean never got back, because then, of course, I had to be on the other side of her.

SZ: But this is what the union did with the way it was organized to the Museum, right?

AK: I did not continue to regret this, by the way. I did then, you know, you get cold feet and you have this idiotic idea to be management. I mean, what does management mean if you're still being paid peanuts and if so many other things are wrong? And also, the levels, as we all know -- someone would be paid $6,000.00 for doing the same job that somebody else was doing for $28,000. This was true for the curators, and it drew us closer with the curators. At any rate, I went on with the bargaining, and was very, very active in the union. I do not regret a minute of it. I still think it's a good idea. I still think it makes a difference in the Museum, that it always has kept the salaries up. It gave us more, though; it gave us a forum. It was very professional. The curators -- Betsy Jones was a very professional curator; she was out on strike. We did, of course, have that long strike in '74. I was on the garbage side. I mean, I was in the back of the Museum, and the garbage was [inaudible]. I was reading *Domby and Sons.* Bill Lieberman used to come in the back, and he'd say, "Antoinette, when are you going to finish that?" And I'd think, "I'm still reading the same page." But we won so much. Salaries went up by one third in my department, and also it put conservators on the same level. Painting conservators had been paid more than paper; paper was way down, sculpture was way down. It was just ridiculous. People were part time. What Pat was paid was just absurd. I was paid better than most, but my assistant in paper was paid nothing. So that helped, and then we had another research time; all of the things the union won.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**ANTOINETTE KING (AK)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**NEW YORK, NEW YORK**
DATE:	**DECEMBER 18, 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: I think last time I was asking you about your interactions with different department heads in the early '70s, but neglected A&D [Architecture and Design].

AK: Well, I wanted to say that an important part of the work in the very early '70s was with Ludwig Glaser, who was semi-autonomously in charge of the Mies Van der Rohe Archive, funded from outside. He was setting up a very good system for cataloguing that huge collection -- the best in the world, I believe, held by a museum -- and also to set up conservation for it. So he got the criteria outlined, then we went over it group by group, because there were thousands of works, to separate them by value and whether they were original Mies drawings or by part of his group, and also by necessity, for conservation. He set up a wonderful space. Architecture and Design, in those days, was down on one of the sub-levels. People called it the basement, but that's really not fair, because A&D had tremendous space down there, better than they've ever had, I would say, as far as offices went. But they had no light, of course, and that is crucial. So Ludwig got a terrific space, bigger than my paper lab up on the fourth floor, to conserve the works once we had studied them and put them in order, and he had gotten the money for it. Then Anny Aviram, who had been hired by Jean Volkmer as a painting conservator but who also had experience in paper in her background, thought that she would like to work a couple of days a week on the Mies Archive. I mean, did, and still does. She's still on staff in painting conservation; beautiful work. So that began really beautifully, using some painting conservation techniques of dry mount tissues that could be ironed onto the delicate tracing papers, because you couldn't use moisture on them. After a while, though, Anny felt that that was maybe a little too much for her to carry, along with the painting conservation, and Helen Otis, who later became head of paper conservation at the Metropolitan [Museum], but who, at that time, was working at the Lincoln Center Performance Arts Library doing paper conservation, came in to do the Mies archive. This only lasted maybe three years, because then Ludwig left and went up to Montreal to be with Phyllis Lambert, who was funding this whole collection. But that made a very nice extension to paper conservation in the way of starting to work with A&D. Then, after he left, I would begin working with Arthur [Drexler], not very much, though, at that particular time. Some of the really great Mies drawings, though, that he was starting to show and that we talked about, I would do minor work on, or we would decide maybe they were fine the way they were. He and I began to go

over some of those. He was a brilliant man. We didn't always see eye to eye. There was still a little bit of a feeling of, maybe you could kind of trim them to make them squarer.

SZ: He had that feeling?

AK: He had that feeling. I won, though. We had a big pow-wow one morning, I remember. I brought in Bernard Walsh, who was the great framer of art on paper in the [New York] city at that time, a low key, decent, terrific guy. We just had a whole morning with Arthur and went back and forth on all of this stuff, and he [Arthur] finally decided it was all right to have the Mies at a slant, and then maybe we'd just frame over it -- which is a perfectly good decision -- and leave the work the way it was, but maybe make it, in essence, look better a little bit squared off. I'll jump way forward to the mid and late '80s when I was head of the whole department and began to work more closely with Arthur in A&D. I don't remember the year of the big Mies show at the Museum [*Mies van der Rohe Centennial* [MoMA Exh. #1415, February 5-April 15, 1986]]. Then, of course, we worked very closely on the great Mies drawings. Again, sort of minor work, mending a tear, or something like that. So there were these two sides to working with Arthur. I did admire his incredible brilliance and wit; I would hear it at department head meetings, for example. But there was no doubt that he really loved these works -- of the many curators, he would be in there looking at them and thinking about them and talking about them. This, again, we're talking late '80s, and I didn't see that in the early days with Arthur. And, of course, I was much younger, and maybe not quite as flexible myself in dealing with situations, and maybe a little more nervous. Another incident with Arthur that I think is what made me realize how much he loved these things, would be maybe about 1986, after the expansion, and I was in a new laboratory. Arthur had just acquired a really superb Frank Lloyd Wright drawing. It was a study for the Millard House in 1926. Wright had given it to somebody who had just kept it under his bed up to about that year, or, that's the way Arthur put it, and it certainly looked like it. A wonderful drawing in colored pencils and graphite pencils, and all his hand, on what we thought, at first, was a tracing paper. Then

it had been, with kind of clear paper tapes, taped to a gray cardboard, and oh, it was a wreck and it was just pulling itself to pieces. It was stained and discolored, and the cardboard was acidic, and it was just a shame. Arthur was really looking at it, and we were talking about it, and he wanted it lined. So we were having a little conversation about not lining it and why, but he really felt lining would be right, and I really felt, for a lot of reasons, that lining tracing paper is not the best thing to do. It changes the appearance, and it doesn't do anything for the strength of the drawing one way or another, besides which, as I really began to look at the drawing under the microscope, I realized that it was a beautiful Japanese [inaudible] paper. At that point, I called Arthur, and he came right over, and I put a sheet of lining paper under half of this [inaudible] paper drawing, which immediately dropped the wonderful light that came from that paper. I had removed it from the cardboard by this time, by just slipping it off with some spatulas. I showed him it with just the [inaudible] paper, and he said, "Fine." Well, there is something you can do, that we think is relatively conservative, to draw discoloration out of papers. You can, with great care, float them on a bath of relatively purified water, and the discolored matter that is water soluble will simply come out in the bath. I had it floating in the bath, and I took a lot of slides, and I felt so great about it that I called John Elderfield, who was then the Chief Curator of Drawings. I had never been able to show him some of the techniques we had, a I thought, wonderful, this was a great way of showing John, with whom I got along very well. John came in and he looked at it, and I was talking about it, and he had his usual, wonderful, quizzical humor. The water doesn't go up to the surface of the drawing. The pencils and everything were very solid; I had tested them; the whole thing was fine. And you just kind of lift it out with a sleight of hand, and then let it dry on a blotter. Well, the next morning at 9:30 I arrive at work and Arthur Drexler is standing in front of my lab and his face is white green. He said, "Antoinette, I know you would have called me, but you were afraid to because it's ruined." And I said, "Arthur, what are you talking about?" And he said, "The drawing. I was at a party with John last night and he said you had my drawing in the sink." [Laughter] And that's how I know that Arthur Drexler really has a deep feeling for the works of art in his care. It was great that I could show it to him. I felt kind of bad, though, that I

hadn't called Arthur, too. You learn a lot about how to deal with people, that way. And the drawing looked fine; it came out very well. Anyway, I never said anything to John, though. I also decided maybe I should show slides rather than invite people in.

SZ: What about Photography? Were those considered works on paper?

AK: I did some work with Photography, and John Szarkowski and I got along very well. He was one of my absolute favorites: such an extraordinary sense of humor; he'd come popping over a lot and kidding around. I didn't work on a lot of photographs because I felt that I didn't have the chemical knowledge. If it was strictly a tear or maybe some inpainting or something like that. John knew a lot about the field, though. He sat with some of the chemists for photography conservation on a committee that was up in Canada, so he was knowledgeable that way. He'd have a very low key way of jiving me about things: "Aw, I just lick the brush and put it on." I did hold that department off a bit for the reason I mentioned. In the late '70s, though, there was a terrific young woman who was trained in photography conservation, and I thought it would be great if we could hire her. I talked to Jean [Volkmer] and she said there wasn't any money, talk to John. So I did. I wondered whether his department could raise something as a way of getting her on staff. But we were just beginning to go into the expansion, and John didn't think it would be the time to work for that, on top of everything else, and that we would be [inaudible] for years. But it was a very good relationship with the whole photography lab, looking at things and talking about them, because by that time I was in a new laboratory, and I think that's kind of crucial to all this. I had talked about the fact that I started in a very small place up a flight of stairs underneath the library, just above painting conservation. Well, I lobbied and lobbied and lobbied for better space, and Jean told me to go and talk to Dick Koch about it and I did, and he was very sympathetic, and he said, "If you just want to move down to the basement right away, you can." And I said, "No, I really need the light. It's crucial." So it took a few years. They brought Mrs. Rockefeller around one day. She came in with Dick Oldenburg and a couple of people, and as luck would have it, in my little aerie, it was one of the

worst winter days and the water was pouring down my east windows, and the humidity was all to heck and gone, and Mrs. Rockefeller said, "Oh, this is just appalling." And I said, "Yes." Well, it's really thanks to a big-hearted woman named Mary Corliss, that I got a new lab; she had to move to another building. She had this wonderful film archive in a room with the most magnificent, 20-foot span of north windows. And Mary did say to me, they asked her if she would go to the other building and let me have this. She was really sweet about it. She said, "That's all right, Antoinette. I think you should have it." Isn't that wonderful? I was back and forth. I kept saying, "No Mary, I can't do this to you," but, I did. It was a beautiful lab. I got a grant from the NEA to get some equipment for it and set up a very modern paper conservation lab, then on the fourth floor facing north, and that meant I went in the same entrance with the Drawings department. They went right, and I went left. It was pretty much where the lab is today, after the expansion of 1984, but it was just a little further east than it is now, essentially the same space but not as big. But it meant that I was really with the curators, and then, the Print Department was just down the hall from that, and Photography and Film right across the hall. A little later, when the expansion went through, Architecture and Design had their department and their offices right there. It is a perfect setup, we've always felt, to have the conservation lab and the curators and the storage facilities and the preparators all right there as a unit, and that just transformed my life. So when I talk about people being able to pop in and out, and a good rapport with photography curators, and people have lunch together casually -- it is terrific. I don't know what will happen in the next building. So, those were my relations. Then when Peter Galassi came in, and Susan Kismaric, again, very good, low key, trading knowledge, and back and forth. Susan was in charge of the [photography] collection. She was also very thoughtful and very knowledgeable about the preservation side of photography. Print and photography curators tend to be -- there are multiples of things; the condition is sometimes of even more importance than it is in a sculpture or painting where there is only one of a kind, although, people think in those terms much less now than they used to, considering the cost, and also the fact that we know there is no such thing as "identical" work. But it only served to make a very knowledgeable curator.

Painting conservation used to say, "I wish we were as close," because even if curators are on the fifth floor, there's just that much more time you spend calling, making an appointment, then you get held up. Although painting and sculpture [conservation] are very close to their curators, it's not the same thing as poking your head out and saying, "Hey, Wendy!"

SZ: I have a list. We've talked about Jean and Tosca and Pat Houlihan and Anny. Then I've got Ruth Morton.

AK: Now, Ruth was there when I came on board in painting conservation. She didn't do the full range of the work, but there is a very valuable part of the work that you can do helping with linings and removing old linings, and all that kind of thing. Ruth had been head of the personnel department for years, before my time, and she and Jean and Tosca were good friends. Then Ruth left, but she wanted to come back, and they said, why don't you come in and work with us? Again, in those very casual, early days, but I think they felt that maybe Ruth wouldn't do the cleaning and inpainting and some of the other particularly tricky aspects. A very pleasant woman, and very well organized. When Jean and Tosca would go on vacation, Ruth would run the department. It was great; you could go and talk to her. She had her ducks in a row.

SZ: Henry Cohen?

AK: Now, when Tony Conrad left, leaving Pat alone there, kind of in her early days, in sculpture, Jean did not hire another experienced sculpture conservator. I don't know why. There may not have been anybody to hire in the field.

SZ: Is that true?

AK: Well, for a very long time, many fewer people went into sculpture than into the other disciplines. It's very heavy work, for one thing. That's one place where maybe you have to be at least a very strong woman, or a man. And there was less activity in the field of sculpture in the United States. For a collector to

acquire a big sculpture, or a museum, you've got to have a lot of space. Also, Bill Rubin would have been head of Painting and Sculpture, or would take over relatively soon, and his interests were painting and paper. So all of these, I think, were reasons, but I think it had to do with the dearth of sculpture conservators. At any rate, I forget when Henry came in, but Henry was a friend of Pat's. He had been an electrical engineer, I think, so his knowledge of technology was excellent, and that was very much needed. He had taken very early retirement -- I guess he cleaned up on something -- so Jean hired him two days a week. She never had sculpture full time, until much later. So Pat remained three days for quite a while, and Henry always two days. Then they worked together, and also then Henry could do the heavier work. And Pat's skills in inpainting and that sort of thing, that she'd had from painting conservation, were her strong points. She was a great inpainter.

SZ: And Jean Portell?

AK: She was only there a very brief time. She was a trained objects conservator, sculpture conservator; I'm not sure if it was one of the schools or one of the regional centers. At any rate, she lived in Brooklyn, she knew Pat, and she wanted to work very part time, so Jean hired her just one day a week, I think, for a couple of years. That didn't work out too well. I mean, Jean was very good, but one day a week takes more of your time.

SZ: The last name I have is Trudy Schwartzman.

AK: Trudy Schwartzman was my really excellent, wonderful associate during the '70s, in the new lab that I was talking about, and, in a way, during some of my finest times, I think, in my own feeling about what we were working on and the kind of research that I had talked about before; and Trudy did the most beautiful work. She was a graduate of the Conservation Center at NYU, so I knew her through there, also. There weren't a lot of anybody around. There were only four students per class at the Conservation Center, and I forget how far along the other schools were. So she came on as an intern for one year, and it was

terrific. Her hand skills and her thought -- this woman did everything perfectly from the word go, and technologically terrific, and very good at equipment, and I was not, so she could fix the spray gun when it broke, and that kind of thing. And we were doing the research together, by that time in the lab and in a small room in the basement, and we had the environmental chamber which I alluded to, to do accelerated aging on samples of paper or adhesives. I could run that all right, but Trudy was good at it. So it was fun. We were doing all kinds of testing to the de-acidification that I talked about, and what did all of the different adhesives do to pieces of paper. It didn't take very much time because you could cut the papers and coat them with something and have a statistically valid sample, and then the oven would do the rest of the work for three days. Maybe other people up at the school -- by that time we were quite close to Dr. Norbert Baer. He was the chemist at the Conservation Center. A very amusing man. We were working with him on all of this. That had started even earlier, I think about 1972. There were a couple of reasons for it. I forget what year, Larry Majewski asked me to come over and give a talk to the conservation students, and I did, and it went well, so Larry took to asking me, from time to time. And then he asked me to start demonstrating a little bit in some of his classes, which is how I happened to know all of these people. I had had an intern, Wynne Phelan, before Trudy. Her husband had been relocated to Houston, so I lost her in about 1973, and then I got Trudy. She had been doing some research with Dr. Baer, then in her turn, Trudy did, because Dr. Baer's interest was the different adhesives that were commercially prepared that were being used in paper conservation. Did we feel we could rely on them in any way? That was really great research. Then by the time Trudy picked up on it, they were really going strong, and we were learning a lot. Trudy was with me for five years. When I say "some of the best", it was just before the expansion and just at the beginning of it. The expansion really derailed me. But, we had such a nice setup of working so well, and I may have mentioned, we also worked with the conservators at the Boston Museum. Roy Perkinson, who was the <u>great</u> paper conservator at the Boston Museum of [Fine] Art, and his then assistant, Tim Vitale, were doing some research on a bleach called chlorine dioxide, one that was supposed to be safe to use on rag paper. Well we knew it was, from the

industrial literature, however, it was not safe to breathe. There were also a lot of questions. They had a grant that enabled them to do some of the testing after the samples had been run, but they didn't have the environmental chamber. So we decided to share it. So they did the sampling and sent them down. Trudy would put them in the environmental chamber, then she would send them back. There were two great things that happened on this. I think it was Tim Vitale who called Trudy one day and said, "You got your samples mixed up." Trudy came to tell me this, and my thought was, "Trudy never mixes anything up, believe me." It turned out to prove something going on in the field, as to what kind of water you should use on a work of art. Of course, the feeling was, the purer the better; take out all impurities. We were talking with the Library of Congress, and a man marvelously named Peter Waters, a real genius who was head of the labs then. He was the man who set up the labs in Florence [Italy] after the flood in 1967. He was the great book and manuscript conservator in England at that time, and via all this, the Library of Congress stole him. So we benefited. They were doing all kinds of research down there. They had huge labs by this time, lots of people, lots of scientific equipment for paper conservation, and Trudy and I were looking into the kind of water we would have, and we were about to spring for a whole $400.00, which we managed to cadge, to put in water purification. We had been, also, meeting with the conservators at the Metropolitan [Museum]. We were all going, to set up. The phone rang. It was Peter Waters. He said, "We've just discovered something ghastly. We have found that the totally purified water wrecks the papers." There's a fold strength test, that is, you take a strip of paper and then you put it in an MIT fold tester and you keep folding it until it breaks, then you can do various equations to see what strength it has left in it before and after treatment. Well, my god, what a show stopper. It turned out that it is then ion hungry, because a totally purified paper is totally neutral. It's neither acidic nor alkaline, so it doesn't have the ions that kind of protect it, so it can then be grabbing things out from other environments in, that leads to its weakening. So Trudy and I asked them to send us some of their papers, and they did, the same papers, and we ran them through, and sure enough, the fold strength dropped. And it turned out that what you needed was good, old New York water, which has the right amount of calcium in it, and then you just put in

filtration for certain impurities like iron and chlorine. Plus, working on all of the great shows. So Trudy was an associate up to 1979, and then she left. She decided -- it was a real shame -- that she didn't like conservation, and she wanted to go into fashion. She had a wonderful flair for clothes, and she was very beautiful -- that doesn't necessarily mean anything, but, that's where she was happy. She said that she felt that the experience had been very rewarding and she could have gone onto anything she wanted from MoMA.

SZ: So in this time period, when you said, "work on all the great shows" I presume that you were talking about, well, the Cézanne show.

AK: That's the one that comes to mind, of the string of wonderful shows put on by everybody.

SZ: There was a Beaux Arts show. [*The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* [MoMA Exh. #1110, October 29, 1975-January 4, 1976]]

AK: I forget whether I was working with Arthur or one of his assistants, then. That was pleasant; a very interesting job; a lot of work, because they were so big. But the Cézanne show, oh boy. That was so extraordinary. Of course, like everybody else, Cézanne was just my favorite. He creeps into the 20th century. But the opportunity to study the watercolors, and because it was Bill Rubin's show, and he loved, as I've mentioned, the art on paper so much. They were just glorious watercolors. At that time we really needed a new microscope in paper conservation. The one we had gotten when I first set up just no longer cut the mustard. We also needed a better photography setup so that we could photograph through the microscope. Riva Castleman had kindly given me a couple of thousand dollars in the early '70s to buy some microscopes and get set up, but it was a little bit jerrybuilt, as they say, because they had to be kind of pieced together. This was a kind of impetus -- that we could do great photomicrography on the techniques of Cézanne watercolors, was right there, so somehow money was found. I forget exactly whether we managed to get it out of an exhibition -- Bill was sometimes helpful that way. We got a beautiful

microscope, and the slides are still at the Museum, of what those watercolors look like. You really have another sense of why the light shines through these works. They do in the paintings also, but we were looking at the watercolors. The pigment particles in watercolors of that time are more roughly ground than they were in the later century, so the light is refracting in more different directions, for one thing. They'd be sitting along, say, a paper fiber; you could just see clumps of them. The light given off that way was -- they're just beautiful in their own right. It was just a treasure, frankly, to listen to Bill on the floor, and the show went very well from my own standpoint. I was very closely working on the floor. As time went on, in the lab, in my experience, there began to be more and more involvement with exhibitions, beyond being in the lab and doing work that was brought in to you. That is, you'd be down there working with Registrar and with Jerry Neuner or Fred [Coxen], with the Exhibitions people and the curators, and just being involved with the art in that sense, and moving it in its environment, working with the engineers, advising them on the environment and becoming part of that, expanding out from what we had been doing in the labs. I used to have Cézanne watercolors up on the easel and I'd eat my lunch and I would look at something from the Courtauld, turned away from the light. There were some small Mies shows, too, in A&D, great photography shows. I worked on a big three-part screen [Ansel] Adams had made of some of his work, that had gotten damaged, and that was interesting. John Szarkowski and I became closer together over that, too. Also, just the collections. In a way, it was a little skewed toward the Drawings collection. I'm not quite sure why, just that I loved drawings, I loved them all. But somehow I think they had more need. They hadn't been worked on as much. I think I mentioned that in the Prints department, Christa Gaehde had done a lot of the work in the past. A&D was beginning to think about what would be done on the non-Mies collection, and the photographs I have been over. Print department, again, I thought, being that there wasn't so much needed on 20th century prints it'd probably be bought in good examples, so I think, just working on the masterpieces in the collection was one of the great things at that time.

SZ: Anything that stands out, that really was in trouble, a good story about working on any particular piece? You don't have to have a yes to that.

AK: A good story come us in 1980; it's a little beyond that, though. I think there were a whole lot of good stories in the sense of just what it was like to experience 20th century art and really learn its needs. How did those papers move? What did the media require? What was the art supposed to look like? Build up our knowledge on that kind of thing. Or, where you really didn't need to remove a cardboard, for example. We always took it for granted that if something were on acidic cardboard, you took that cardboard off. Well, Paul Klee put his works on cardboard. Paul Klee was a big part of that time, and that's a good example, because his watercolors and drawings were spot glued or entirely adhered to card stock. He would sometimes take his works that were in the drawers and in the evenings at the Bauhaus he would bring out nine or ten watercolors and he would mount them, as presentation. You could show them to people that way. Paper conservators, and curators, as well, didn't really understand, at that time, that this was the way he did it. We hadn't yet done all of the library research, for one thing, or seen a great many of them. So, it was building that up, and then sharing that with colleagues in the field; that was the great thing. And to kind of reverse the idea of, "Yeah, we really have to work on this." Because we also found with research about on paper that we were doing -- we just had samples of all kinds of things out on the window sills. Then we would monitor them for the fading, and also for, if you screened the light out, did you see harm? Also even from removing cardboards that had to be removed, I could see that if not very much light and no ultraviolet shone on that work of art, the acidic cardboard would not degrade in turn and harm that work of art so much. So if it was really an integral part of the work of art, you could leave it. If you come really up to date, with an artist like Ray Johnson, for example, that was a very good thing to know. A lot of his collages were deliberately put on those cardboards and intended to stack up. So that's kind of the '70s. There were a whole lot of

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 2

AK: The big thing was the *Guernica* studies.

SZ: It sounds to me like it was pretty informal, the way you'd get money for things. Were there trustees who were particularly interested in conservation at that time?

AK: Very good question. It didn't come from the trustees. I'll be honest: the budget was a shock to me. My second year at the Museum, there wasn't a budget. When I took over as department head in 1983, the budget for the entire department, exclusive of salaries, was $4,000.00. Well, there was a shock in 1970 because the first year Jean had gotten $5,000.00 for paper conservation, I think just through the regular budget meeting for the year, through Dick Koch, who was her boss at the time. By happy chance, in 1969-70, I had an intern associate sort of thing, Anne Pelican came in to work with me, again through that just 'come on in and learn' sort of thing. She was good and careful. But she was going up to Columbia to take her chemistry, which she didn't yet have in her background. She had a BA in Art History. By the greatest good luck, her chemistry teacher took an interest in the lab, and the great good luck being the fact that Ann Pelican went and talked to him about. His name was Warren Falconer.

SZ: And pelican. [Laughter]

AK: Serendipity. Well, he was chemist with Bell Labs and he a couple of years later became head of physical and chemical research at Bell Labs. He loved art, and he decided he would come in and work with us on Saturdays. Jean and Tosca were interested, and then Ann and I and Warren were working on the problem of de-acidification, which I had decided, from some indications in the literature, would not be a good idea to do on the MoMA collection. Warren was there to help me prove it, and we did, for art on paper, not for archives. But Warren thought in terms of articles and raising money, so we published right away in the

International Institute of Conservation the first of a couple of articles on our work, which led to others and also led to knowing a great many of the preservation scientists at the National Bureau of Standards and at the Syracuse College of Forestry. Warren, though, said, "I need a setup here. I don't need a whole lot, I need a couple thousand to set up." There wasn't a couple of thousand [dollars] to be found, anywhere. I forget how we came up with it, whether Jean suggested it or who, but they said, why didn't we go the National Endowment for the Arts and get a grant. So I wrote a grant for $2,000, and didn't even know enough to know that you needed to match them, and neither did the head of development, at that time.

SZ: Who was?

AK: I forget.

SZ: Jack Limpert?

AK: No. Charles something, way before Limpert. At any rate, we got the grant. They thought it was super. But then, it came to matching it. Evidently everybody in the Museum was just outraged that we were asking for $2,000.00, and they felt I should match it myself. I had no way. I was a green paper conservator. My husband and I, as I had mentioned, had absolutely no money. [Laughter] Nor did I think, on my salary, that I should come up with any more. Of course this was Charles's business. Finally, the Museum did match it. So we applied for another NEA grant the next year. By this time there was a new man in Development. There was an intern in Development named James Snyder, and he really knew his onions. We were asking for a lot more money, maybe $10-15,000, something like that, and he knew that you matched it with salaries and soft cash match, and all that sort of thing, and it was done [finger snapping] like that. I wanted to get a fancy, big, low pressure table to do some work, and that was $6,000.00 and he just picked up the phone and called Washington to ask whether that would be something the NEA would look on favorably, and they said, "Sure," and it was just done. I wrote it up and then Jim and I went over it,

and he said, "Well you say this and you correct that," and we got that grant right away, too. So a very long and happy relationship with the NEA set in there, and that set up the whole paper conservation lab so I really had a wonderful place. The other labs went ahead with no money, though, for a very, very long time. There was another source of money; this did come from Jean. I couldn't keep going to the NEA, of course, unless I cooked up some reason, and by that time, Warren's duties were so enormous that he went on and we had our other chemist ties that I had mentioned, so we worked with other people. But I didn't then have something to hang an NEA grant on. But occasionally one of the trustees would want a favor on a work of art that was supposed to come to the Museum. This was written in their will as a promised gift. There was one in particular, of Mrs. Connie Cartwright, who was on the Drawings Committee, with whom I got along very well. She had just acquired a really beautiful 1868 Cézanne study for *Achille Empéraire,* which was all crumpled up. So she was going to give $500 and I wasn't supposed to accept that. Jean said, "I'll set up a discretionary fund up for you," and she did. From time to time the fund would fatten up a bit that way. There were things that we did have to do: Bill Lieberman, there were always favors of one sort or another. There are plenty of museums that do it, and it went into buying papers and that kind of thing. When I took over as department head, who, of course, is and was just absolutely wonderful right from the beginning. He was tremendously helpful. I thought that I could just go in with my quarter-of-a-million-dollar requirements and get it. This was right after the expansion and we were still in limbo. But, no way. Everybody was supposed to go ahead four percent. We did work out various step-wise increasing the budget of the department through the Museum. Also, in 1979, Dick Oldenburg had called me in out of the blue and kind of said, "Antoinette, I really wanted endowment money for the labs for the expansion, but we got a million dollars to match one-to-one for Library and Conservation, the whole department, from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, and they just un-asked, gave us half a million dollars, not to match, just for paper conservation." Being Dick, he kind of said, "I really wanted endowment, but, it's great!" I was just stunned. They had it for a while. No skullduggery. But just because I didn't use it right then, I didn't need it right then, because by that time they were tearing

down the whole Museum to expand it, [inaudible] about three-quarters of a million dollars and the money that it earned was an endowment on paper conservation and helped the whole department, so that when I took over I had the interest that it earned to work with. So I began to build that up, and then constant grants, every year from NEA for interns and equipment in painting conservation, sculpture still being a little shortchanged. It was just starting to rev up; and then we did begin to get equipment in there, too. One year I did get a quarter of a million in, they put in huge exhaust chambers with us and with the frame shop because of the solvents. But for a long time we were an NEA lab and it was great. Then I got a grant from Getty for Anny Aviram to clean our [Monet] *Water Lilies* triptych and for Eugenia Ordonez -- this would be mid latish '80s by this time -- who first came in on a sort of volunteer basis to do pigment analysis. She had been trained in that after graduating from the Winterthur conservation programs, then trained in pigment analysis at the National Gallery in Washington with a wonderful person. Her husband was up at Yale, by this time, to teach, so she was commuting. Then I got her hired, so she was doing pigment and medium analysis on the *Water Lilies*. So Getty gave us $25,000 and Sue Dorn was there by that time and she matched it. So we were beginning to do pretty well. The great thing that happened, though, was the trustee committee that we did get two or three years before I retired. Sue Dorn and I had been working on it for about five years before that. It started with a conversation with Dan Vecchitto. I had had in mind, for a long time, the idea of having a trustee committee. I had talked about it with Jack Limpert a bit, then with other people, then with Dan Vecchitto and Jim Coddington, a painting conservator who is my very excellent successor, who by that time was also a part of the department. He and I were just kind of schmoozing with Dan Vecchitto, and Dan, greatly excited, went to Sue Dorn and went to Dick. At any rate, about five years later, a phone call came from Jeanne C. Thayer out of the blue. Dick had asked her to be the chairman of a new trustee committee and she, of course, as I'm sure you know, is such a marvelous woman. She came down and I was just in the [inaudible] astonished. But she was such a wonderful woman, so warm and she really made you feel good. For anybody, that's important; for me, psychologically, it's particularly important to feel that

somebody outside is championing you. Of course she was so great because she had been the head of the International Council and had just retired from that, so she had some time. I was able to learn from her how to do a trustee committee - the letters and the way of inviting people. Then Dick said to work with Riva Castleman on getting the committee together and getting the trustees we would want on it, so Riva and I did and we worked very well together. I had already had in mind a list, hoping some day this would happen.

SZ: Of people who had shown interest, or?

AK: People who had shown interest. They didn't all accept. Or people we thought we sort of knew were kind of interested in materials or had shown an interest in conservation in some way. One thing we had done for years, for Development, was have big evenings, show and tell for the whole conservation department, all labs, and different groups of people would come through. They could be higher level memberships or real estate committee kind of thing, we had trustee evenings. We had a great trustee evening for the *Water Lilies* after the work was all done, a little dinner and speeches afterward. So, we could also kind of know from that who was interested. So we got the list together and then met with Dick and got it all passed -- how much money they would be responsible for and everything -- and almost all of them accepted. Aggie Gund was particularly interested in conservation, and I will say, probably crucial in this whole thing. Serendipity, along with her being a great human being and very warm. She had been a close friend, and still is, of a conservator at the Library of Congress, Margaret Brown. Margaret had worked with me for a while, just a kind of study work thing, they sent her up from the library in 1969, and we had gotten along very well, to work on modern art and everything. So Margaret and I were long time, very close friends, so that was great, and Aggie knew about conservation because of her friendship with Margaret. It made it easy to be with Aggie, too, because we had this threesome, and we'd had lunch together in Washington sometimes, the three of us. Aggie was President by that time. We would of course ask her to be on the committee, and she was very good. But to have Jeanne as the head of it. Jeanne wasn't feeling well and she moved to the west

coast and we asked Patty Cisneros, and she was great also, very thoughtful, very intelligent. This was my last year. We raised an enormous amount of money. They were so great. And Dick said, I heard that it was reported at one of the board meetings, that this committee had created the most generous giving first year of any committee in the history of the Museum. We raised hundreds of thousands of dollars over those two years for all kinds of great equipment, internships, for study for conservators to go look at collections. It was wonderful. It's still there, and it was the first trustee committee for any museum department in the United States. So that's the history of money. But I think it had made it on a very good footing now in every way, particularly with the problems of the cutbacks in Washington, to have a good, interested committee.

SZ: Because it won't be another NEA lab.

AK: Right.

SZ: In this time in the '70s, what was the atmosphere at the Museum? I know that the expansion was coming up, but I am not sure that people were that aware of it until the later part of it.

AK: I wasn't.

SZ: Did a lot of your life revolve around it?

AK: Yes. [Inaudible] in two parts. I was quite close and just friendly with a wide range of people in all departments, in the departments that I would be meeting on a regular basis and study centers and Registrar and so forth. In the earlier part of the '70s, yes, friendly atmosphere, curators, but there was still a little more of a sense of everybody being in their own place kind of thing. Stand-offish, maybe, but also, as I mentioned, it's not so easy when you just don't have an easy meeting with somebody over a work of art. And then the union. But after the union, something I think a great many people on the staff noticed, it had brought the whole staff together, so we all knew each other through that,

whether people belonged to the union or didn't. So I would say all through the mid and late '70s, there was a very good feeling of camaraderie, maybe in comparison to the early days, certainly, then, say, the early expansion days, because the restaurant and so forth were all down, so the staff lounge became a kind of very easy meeting place. You didn't have to make a luncheon date, as such. You'd just kind of show up and sit with people. I thought that was a great year or two, also. In that case, you met a lot of people that you wouldn't even under this greater spread of camaraderie. The Museum never fundamentally changed from that kind of court of Louis XIV that I mentioned, because there's still, between the very top administration and the top curators and other people, I don't think "gulf", but in the '70s, I would say, there was still a little bit of a gulf, but that was, I think, because they were excluded early from the union. That created that stand off thing that I mentioned that I was sorry had to happen. The Museum itself, to be so financially strapped in the labs, I found very difficult. I was usually looking for another job, to be quite honest. I can't even quite remember why. All is not perfect anywhere, and I had mentioned that some of the relations in the lab had begun to go downhill too, because the union did kind of set up these stresses with your bosses. The Drawing department I was very close with, and we had lunch every day. We'd sit in the Garden and it was terrific, a really wonderful professional set of people. But I think they all felt this way, as far as I know, and it did snap back, somewhat after the expansion.

SZ: Maybe we could just do *Guernica* before we stop, although the *Guernica* was in '81.

AK: We started earlier, thanks to Eloise Ricciardelli -- and I was very close to the Registrar people and Eloise and Sherry Summers; a real bonding situation. This had started originally because I had been friends in conservation with Betty Burnham, who came to the Museum to be the Associate Registrar and was, I think, one of the two people in charge before Eloise. So I got to know all of Registrar that way. At any rate, Eloise came to me right in the beginning of 1980, or whenever she first found out that *Guernica* was going back. And I said, "For a long time I've had sitting in my desk drawer a memo from Bill Rubin

asking me to check some of the mediums on some of the studies on *Guernica* and see if we could test them chemically." He wanted to know whether it was gesso or gouache, and so forth, and somehow I hadn't gotten to it. I know why: because we were so busy; there was just a ton of work. I said, "Eloise, it would be just so marvelous to work on these studies." I said that one of the things you could see on the studies were a lot of very bad Scotch tape and masking tape stains, and I had tried, on the very first study, May 1, 1937, to see whether I could remove a little more on that Scotch tape stain in the corner, and I couldn't. I would get exactly what my predecessor had gotten, which would be a kind of wringing out of the solvents in the paper. So, I had stopped at that time, but there was a new piece of equipment in the world, a very simple one Tim Vitale had dreamed up, and it was just a little mini vac. And you just took a beaker full and you kind of took the top off it so that you had a fritted glass surface, and then the bottom of it was attached to a long tube, and that was attached to a silent pump, and you had a little vacuum. I was telling Eloise it would be so great to see whether the Scotch tape stains would come out, and could we look at the drawings? Eloise said, "That's great. I could get them down. Should we look at them together. I would bring my Registrar notes." So we did. In 1980 we were doing this, and at that time I had two interns, Jerry Nelson and Ellen Pearlstein who is now head of objects conservation in the Brooklyn Museum. They were both from the Conservation Center. Ellen in particular had a really great eye. They were looking at the drawings, and we did a whole technical study, Eloise doing her notes. We looked at the techniques together and analyzed them, wrote down everything, took the photomicrographs with the new equipment we had after the Cézanne show. I have hundreds of slides of the *Guernica* studies, and indeed, it was like magic, this little piece of equipment took the Scotch tape stains out, so I was able to do that on all of the studies. One didn't do more than that. It's very complicated mediums on it. But I do have to say that, in my own heart, those studies were the most exciting thing that I ever worked on. Some years later I was talking to the woman who was the head of scientific conservation at the National Gallery in London. It was in New York and we were chatting, walking up Madison Avenue and kind of window shopping. [Inaudible]. She said, "I've never forgotten visiting your laboratory

when you had those marvelous studies all over the tables. I've never seen anything so beautiful." But I thought, my gosh, here is a woman who works on the San Rocco Tintorettos and Titian and Rembrandt, and I thought, yes, that's how I feel. They were so beautiful.

SZ: When you were working on those, was that sort of secret?

AK: Yes, it had to be. People didn't come to look at them. Sherry Summers did, of course, and Eloise. Yes, we had to keep it secret. That was too bad. I really would like to have shown them to people. You didn't have all eyes on things. It's funny; I thought, now why didn't the curators come around. Even John. They must have known they were there, but we couldn't trumpet. We just didn't say why; you could say now was the time to work on them. Maybe that was the way that we did it, because, of course, Cora [Rosevear] must have known, and Eloise had gotten Cora's permission to take them off the walls on Wednesdays, the ones that were hanging. Since P&S people knew, they were kind of beginning to show the studies and then take them down and show some more.

SZ: This is another '70s question. Were you surprised when Bill Lieberman left?

AK: Yes and no. I suppose you think that when somebody has been there that long that they'll continue on, and my being vaguely young at the time would make me think maybe an older person would stay on, which I now know isn't true, but, nevertheless. Things weren't going so well. I think he really needed new pastures. When you have to leave one department and go back to what everybody considered a demotion -- although why being over all of the paper would be anything like a demotion; that was the way it was viewed -- and I think that really crushed him. He was still tremendously exuberant about bringing people into the labs and so forth and that was great fun, and there we would be working with the trustees, but it's because the great acquisitions he had done, and one has to say it, that the drawing collection is just superb. And Bill Lieberman's <u>enormous</u> wit and humor is in a lot of those acquisitions. There's a liveliness. Not only were they great, but when I say liveliness it's that I

remember looking at some of the Hirshhorn works by one of the early German artists, Feininger, *Ships on the Sea*, I was going to say. Well the Drawing Department and Print Department's Feiningers were just great. These figures would be so alive and the ships would be alive and the watercolor was wonderful. And the Hirshhorn, they just lay there. They were those kind of tired Feininger things where he was just cranking those ships out. I think that's just a kind of example of what Bill Lieberman in his heyday was doing for those departments. He just loved works of art on paper, but then he wanted this other thing. So I think maybe it perked him up to go to the Met. But then when John [Elderfield] came in, I really liked him.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **ANTOINETTE KING (AK)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

DATE: **DECEMBER 23, 1997**

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: Why don't we start today talking about a couple of the early exhibitions that you worked on that you have some interesting memories of.

AK: Well, it's interesting that the first exhibition that I worked on, which started in March of 1968, was Bill Rubin's Dada and Surrealism, and that was a great entrance for somebody starting in modern art. It had all kinds of wonderful objects with buttons and what have you, but I think the best part of the whole thing was [Salvador] Dali actually coming in because they were recreating his *Rainy Taxi* of the mid '30s -- I think '36, '37, something like that -- and Tony Conrad, of course was there. And Jean [Volkmer] said to me, "You've got to go down to the subcellar, Antoinette, and look at Dali." So I went down, and tried not to look at him, but he wanted to be looked at. He was sort of sitting in the middle of everything on some kind of packing box and he had on a sort of purple velvet jacket, and, of course, the wonderful mustaches that were just divine, and he had a great slender cane, silver or ebony or something like that, on one arm stretched out in front of him, and just posed with his head up, sort of like this.

Meanwhile, the wooden model for the woman in the front seat, or back seat, I forget, of the *Rainy Taxi*, was being redone by Tony Conrad, the sculpture conservator. Tony was drilling through it and fixing the arms so that they would move. It was a very complicated thing to do, and he was having a great time, and Dali was paying no attention. Tony did a wonderful job, and he got the arms to move, and everybody oohed and aahed, and they dressed it, and Dali, of course, took all of the credit when the show opened. Now, that was kind of fun too, because the *Rainy Taxi* originally had leeches in it, but our trustees, and I actually do agree with them, felt that maybe they didn't want a lot of leeches let go into the Garden, so it was sort of museum-ized and opened leechless. Also, the arms didn't move, but Tony had positioned them in a great way.

SZ: What was it like working with Bill [Rubin] in those days?

AK: Those days are hard to remember. I don't think I worked as closely with him because I was just beginning, as I did later on, so it could be that I usually saw his assistants. My memory is that he's calmer. He actually taught at Sarah Lawrence at the same time my sister-in-law did, so I had already sort of been introduced to him by proxy, but she did not ever mention temper.

SZ: You discovered that on your own.

AK: [Laughter] Yes. There were a couple of other shows right in the beginning, I forget exactly the sequence, but either after that or very shortly after, was the Claes Oldenburg show that Alicia Legg did. That was also a great introduction, and also because I could work with Oldenburg himself. He was very good. He'd come up to my little lab and look at things and talk about them. I wasn't that familiar with Oldenburg's work, I must confess, before that, but I just loved it. The great one with the ice bag on his head, and there's a wonderful little drawing study in tracing paper on graph paper for it. It kind of summed up the way everybody felt in the middle of an exhibition. He kept things calm. And, of course, Alicia was a great person to work with, so friendly and up front, and coming by and talking about everything. And in the *Machine* show [*The Machine*

as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age [MoMA Exh. #877, November 27, 1968-February 9, 1969]], -- I think I put third, but there were other shows at that time, but, at any rate -- that really stands out because every material in it, and just a field day for sculpture conservation. But actually, I think Jean, and maybe working with the curators, had brought in a man who did the electric stuff, and some of the really tough, big machines, and he was very good. I think his name was Jeff, as I remember. But I remember there were great openings in those days, too, you know, once I'd recovered from working on all of the materials. Maybe it's because I was young, or I was beginning, but they were just great. I remember at that opening, everybody there and throwing balls into one of the machines. I forget who had done the machine. The balls rolled down and the machine threw them back. People stood around all night looking at those sorts of things. There was another machine that had a plant attached to it and it was like a figure of some sort and it had little flapjack spatulas for hands. I was admiring it during the day or lunch hour, and you were supposed to pat the plant and then the sculpture would walk forward. So I patted the plant and the sculpture just collapsed. I must confess, I don't think I said anything; I kind of vanished. I didn't really, because Jeff came along and fixed it. I have no idea what I did, but again, there was a kind of healthy feeling. When they say hands off, or hands on, you can't tell. A propos of the kind of exhibition going on in the early '70s, an *Information* show, and all that kind of thing, with incredible variety of materials. I don't know whether in the '80s, which had really fabulous shows, they were a little more straightforward as far as materials went.

SZ: I think they were, yes.

AK: Yes, I think so. And this, a really mixed up time. One last thing, a propos of the openings, perhaps you remember, but there was the *Ab Ex* show, we always called it, abstract expressionism. Did Dorothy Miller do that show? Was that her swan song show? If I am remembering correctly, they had a 6:00 to 8:00 opening just for the staff, in honor of Dorothy, or maybe a great part of the staff and a few people invited. Like some of the openings in those days, or parties for

the staff, they were up in those double trustee rooms that we had that looked out over the Garden.

SZ: In the back of the building.

AK: Right, before the expansion, that we lost. But I remember a terrific party for the *Ab Ex* show, and then it spilled out into the old penthouse dining room area that was still there. It was one of the great parties. Everybody came in terrific costume clothes to kind of say good-bye to Dorothy. Just, fun.

SZ: Anybody else from that time on staff? Was Frank O'Hara there when you were there?

AK: No, he had just died. No, I can't think of anybody.

SZ: Well, Frederick was there, wasn't he?

AK: Frederick?

SZ: Frederick [Lunning] from the Information Desk.

AK: Oh, absolutely. Do you know that his sister is a well known paper conservator? She was assistant paper conservator at the Boston Museum for years, working with Roy Perkinson, whom I had mentioned before. Elizabeth Lunning. And we actually talked about hiring her at MoMA once, when I was advertising a job in the '80s and she was thinking of leaving, but she wasn't sure about coming back to New York. She's the paper conservator at the De Menil now, down in Houston, working with Carol Mancusi Ungaro. She's known for her work on the Rothko paintings down in the chapel. Well, Frederick cut quite a swath through everybody, as I remember. A lot of people in the frame shop, too, were great fun. Andy Olot[4] was still in the frame shop when I came. I guess when you're in the hands on sections of the Museum -- Andy was very well known. He had

come from Sweden, I think. He and Jean were very good friends. So when I first arrived, the frame shop, under Andy, did a lot of the work that later came in to Conservation, which would be mounting works on big panels, or something like that. There's a huge [Arshile] Gorky, *Study for Summation*, it's about the size of my side wall over there, and pastel, and I think it's on a kind of brown, pastel paper, wrapping paper base, pasted to plywood. I've never forgotten coming down to the frame shop and seeing Andy standing there, and they had it face down and they had put a kind of strainer on it to hold it and support it so that it could be carried and so forth, and to steady it they had put wood beams all the way up to the ceiling to add some pressure to it. I took slides of that. That was fun. He had pioneered a lot of ways of framing things and so forth that later got taken over by the preparators and individual departments. When I came also Dorothy Dudley was still there, kind of the tail end of Dorothy. As far as I was concerned, she was everything people said -- really approachable and great and low key. Also, she had a very good relationship with Jean and Tosca [Zagni] and the rest of us in Conservation. Then, David Vance was second in command to her, and then third is a man whose name is escaping me but he was terrific. Both he and David were terrific. The third man was very outgoing, knew every piece of art in the Museum, everywhere it was in its entire history, and all you had to do is call up if you had forgotten something and he would tell you. David was terrific at the computers and all that kind of thing. He also oversaw the environmental controls in the Museum, hydrothermographs and so forth. Conservation began working with engineers after that. But David was top notch. Both very interesting guys. When Dorothy left, she left David in command, so the third man waited a while but then he left. He became the director of the main museum in Melbourne, Australia. I don't think he would have stayed anyway, but, that was great fun. Betty Burnham, I think I had mentioned before, was on staff at that time, in Registrar, and I had worked with her when I was doing the oriental conservation and she was thinking about conservation. That gave me a very nice friend, so that I got to know a lot of these people. At that time, Carolyn Lanchner was in charge of the Study Center.

[4] Transcriber's Note: Uncertain of spelling.

SZ: The Painting and Sculpture Study Center?

AK: Yes, exactly. And that either had just opened or opens a little bit later; I'm not quite sure. That International Study Center they had raised a million dollars for, was really lovely. And John Minks was in charge of it on the kind of day to day basis, and then either Carolyn took over or she came in to be the senior person. It was great for Conservation, also, if you wanted to go and look at P&S objects, aside from the scholars coming. It was very well set up to look at things and to look at sculpture.

SZ: That was a Bates Lowry. . .

AK: Was that it?

SZ: I think so.

AK: Well, that was a good one, actually. Of course, when they remember Bates Lowry, they only remember the bad things, but actually, it was a serious loss in the later expansion. We never got back that storage space or access to things. But again, though, I became very good friends with Carolyn and also with Betty Burnham, and there was a kind of a lunch group, too, with Registrar people. Again, fun. I think the curators -- we have talked about who came and when in the curatorial department, although Joan Rosenbaum was a curatorial assistant in Drawings back then. Of course, we know, she's director of the Jewish Museum now, and the head of the Drawings Center downtown. At any rate, somebody I knew so well; I used to go down and give talks. At any rate, she and Joan were quite close as curatorial assistants in Drawings in those very early days. And then Trixie, Beatrice Kernan, came in to survey the American drawings collection. Again, somebody I liked a lot right from the start. This was even before I had moved over. I was still over in the old place. And I remember Bill Lieberman saying to me, about Trixie, "Underneath that Peck & Peck exterior is a very intelligent girl." And she, again, a wonderful sense of humor. And then Magdalena Dabrowski came in at some point, too, in that time, and I think both

when Joan and the other woman had left, they came in to fill in those roles. Of course, Magdalena is senior curator now. They were then part of the group that I knew in the later '70s. And of the Film people, just across the hall, I think the Film Department, except for the head of it, was a relatively unchanging great department. Then, of course, Mary Lea [Bandy] became the head of it. I think Ted Perry was head of it for those early days when I was there.

SZ: So you had fun.

AK: It was fun. Yes, it was. And it was close. One last thing about spaces; this goes through the whole '70s, when we were talking about the staff growing close together after the strike and so forth. I remember noticing, at least on the fourth floor and the fifth floor, that you'd be dealing with one another every day, and offices kind of changed, and study centers changed, and people with them, so that slowly, people who worked together began to actually be in places together. It was kind of nicely done. It sort of meant that throughout the later '70s, there was forever hammering and sawing as somebody's office moved. But I think, frankly, just about the time that everybody thought that was perfect, then they had the expansion, which changed everything again. But still, interesting, about how people seek their niches according to work patterns.

SZ: The main thing we neglected to talk about last time, which we should get to, is the Matisse stuff that you worked on, *Swimming Pool* and others, because that was a huge thing.

AK: That was the biggest project that I ever had, and, to the Museum at large and scholars and the public, was certainly the thing they knew me for. It started with Riva [Castleman]. One day, I think maybe around 1975, she said, "I think you should know, Antoinette, that they have acquired the Matisse *Swimming Pool*, room sized, 53 feet, of nine panels." She didn't put it that way. She just said, "*Swimming Pool*" and I sat there paralyzed -- oh, my god -- because I did remember seeing it in Pierre Schneider's 1970 Matisse exhibition in Paris. I was looking at a lot of old masters then, and I thought, "I'd better go look at this

Matisse." Thank heavens. It was a kind of quick go through, but I know that the *Swimming Pool* stood out as being in the worst condition, or, the only thing I noticed in bad condition, in the sense that it had these round, brown stains all over the white paper. It was exhibited simply horribly, from a conservation standpoint, and it just stood out. They had set it up as a room, and then it had kind of hot, bare, klieg lights baring down on it, and I didn't think it was a very gracious way to light it. It needs a certain amount of light to sparkle and move formally. So, I kind of sighed that I didn't have to worry about that. So, Riva and I kind of looked at one another sympathetically, as I remember. Then, I think before the time it actually came physically into the Museum and the time I talked to Riva, the Matisse cutout show had come up among the scholars and was on the books, originally to be divided between the St. Louis Art Museum and the Detroit Art Museum, so John Neff was the one who called me about it from Detroit. He and Jack Cowart from St. Louis were the curators who started the idea of this show, working with Dominique Fourcade in Paris, who was a guest curator to work on the catalogue. They called and asked me if I would do a technical study on the materials and methods of Matisse's cutouts. They thought it was a good time to do it, not only for the show, but because Lydia Delectorskaya who had been Matisse's assistant starting in the early '30s -- it might have been as early as '32 -- and with him until his death in '54, and living with him as his wife, shall we say, in the later years. But certainly, the two of them working so closely, and her being very friendly with everybody, they thought it was a great opportunity to have somebody talk to her. So then I found out the *Swimming Pool* was coming. In order to buy the *Swimming Pool*, which cost a million dollars, Bill Rubin decided to sell the *Women with Monkeys* cutout, and then Mrs. Gimbel gave the rest of the money. I forget exactly how much *Women with Monkeys* sold for, but, not very much, actually. But, of course, *Women with Monkeys* was over the doorway of the dining room in Matisse's home in Nice, in which was the *Swimming Pool*, so that they formed a marvelous unit. So, the Museum did lose that possibility, and nobody knows why that happened. But, I also bring that up because when I was first there, Dorothy Miller and I had looked at the *Women with Monkeys*. It wasn't something I wanted to start with, I can tell you, and I didn't, fortunately. But still, they wanted

me to look at it because it was mounted with brown wrapping paper. And this is the same way that most of Matisse's cutouts were mounted onto a linen canvas, and they were wondering whether those were good materials, and was that acidic, and so forth. But I didn't know, and I will say, fortunately, I didn't go near it. What I wondered about were the scratches on the ultramarine. There were a lot of scratches on his cutouts, some supposed to be there, and part of just the working methods. Dorothy didn't know, and I didn't know. I remember, in the show in Paris, there were a lot of the so-called blue nudes that are so famous, and only one of them was without some scratches. So it just stayed the way it was. And then again, when it came into John Elderfield's great show in the '90s it still looked the same. It's now in the Museum Ludwig. I saw it there, I think in the late '80s, and they had it hanging very high under skylit windows just pouring light in on it. I literally nearly fainted when I saw it. That isn't something I usually do. I was so upset.

SZ: Where is the Museum Ludwig?

AK: It's in Cologne. It's a wonderful museum, a beautiful collection. That's the only thing hanging out in too much light. I couldn't understand it. It was twenty feet up on the second floor of that museum, which I spent a couple of days studying. At any rate, I made plans, funded with the money from Detroit and St. Louis, to travel in Europe and to see cutouts. There are great cutouts that were never mounted; they're still pinned. What he would do, very briefly, is -- of course, he was bedridden at this time, after a stomach operation in 1940, which throws into even greater relief Lydia's part in all of this, and other assistants. So, he would lie in bed and assistants would paint with linel gouaches the pieces, then he would cut the pieces and either they would be pinned to the wall or to fabric hanging on the wall, and Lydia or other assistants would move the pieces and then Matisse would say, "Stop," and they would pin them. He chose the pieces according to the directions and everything. Three of them were sent before his death, and all of the rest from time to time after his death -- those that remained in the studio -- to be mounted with Lydia's assistance by Lefebvre-Foinet in Paris. But I was sent to Copenhagen because some of those were not pinned

because there was a show in 1948 of cutouts of his, and a lot of them were sold, and they had not been mounted yet. So I went Denmark and looked at things, then I went to Amsterdam, then I went to Paris and sort of sat at Lydia Delectorskaya's feet. And it was great. She gave me materials. There was all kinds of typewritten material, exactly how the work was done, and what Matisse thought about it, and what he might have wanted done more or less, and that he had okayed these mounting processes. Then we talked about the scratches, too. Lydia kept saying, "They got shipped around. We'd make tracings of them then take them off the wall, then they'd ship them around, and they got scratched." And the scholars at that time all felt that these shouldn't be inpainted, the *Swimming Pool* cutout. So at any rate, well, there's a great deal more, but that's kind of it, in a nutshell. Then, I did write the technical study. Before I talk about the work, briefly, I felt great about this because it's sort of where our field was beginning to go, because our field began to change absolutely dramatically in the '70s, as I'll allude to later on. It changes, like I talked about the changes in the '30s and '40s and from the 19th century. But, the idea of working closely with an artist or with his or her assistants and with scholars, and really looking into the materials and really being able to do the library work and all of the documentation and know as much as possible in a given time -- what's the artist's intent, what that work is supposed to look like -- is a phenomenal thing. More and more, that's the name of the game, if a museum can afford to have that sort of thing done. Then, briefly, Trudy Schwartzman was my associate on the work, and fortunately, because I've talked about how great she was. Armed with our new-found knowledge and the fact that all around us were people who knew a lot about Matisse -- Jack Flam, a great Matisse scholar, was also one of the four people working on the show, because they added another institution. Jack was in New York, but the National Gallery got interested, and, of course, it had to start there, but it gave a great deal of clout to the show. It took us a year, Trudy and I. The difficult thing was to determine the reason for these discolorations. Nothing like that shows in any of his other work. Actually, we had learned that a kind of what you'd call schlurpy way of doing things [inaudible] and the cutouts kind of relate to the way his paintings are built up and built up. There are pentimenti and things scraped

out, and his drawings, the same way. There's tons of charcoal left, as he changed and changed and changed and changed. So that's left on the surface of the cutout. Some glue splatters, because when they were taken down from the wall they were unpinned and then spot-glued, then they went Paris and they glued entirely. Or schlurps in mounting, or tears in the paper, or dirt, and that sort of thing, were all part of that working feeling of the surface. But just how you thread your way through something that possibly is a damage and does stand out from the norm of his surfaces. We finally thought, everybody, starting with my feeling maybe that the round, brown stains were really only on the white papers, because in the dining room, originally, there was a whole long kind of frieze high up on the wall of the white paper, and then the ultramarine blue papers were pinned to that. I felt that there had been some kind of damage, something went wrong when it was mounted. Something got splattered on it. We didn't have any equipment to test this, and maybe even now you couldn't test what had splattered on that, but you could go with ultraviolet or with solvent testing. It seemed to be a resinous material. They mounted these cutouts with a resinous oil, resin flour mixture that was used in painting conservation linings. I felt, maybe it was splattered on there. At any rate, we managed to figure out a way of removing those, and then we inpainted. But, gosh, it was a long time. The two last panels were too big to go into our lab, and we were in the newer lab by this time, so they had to rope off one of the galleries downstairs. It turned out to be, unfortunately, the most popular gallery in the Museum because it had the American art in it, and we all thought, "Oh, the heck with that." But people would be beating on things and saying, "When can we get in to see that?" But it came out very well, and we were pleased. As I said, I felt so comfortable because each time, each decision on doing something would be supported by these people.

SZ: Don't you worry that somehow it's going to be the wrong one?

AK: Oh, yes, and even now, I know, for example, the inpainting, and that's why I'm kind of emphasizing it. Every generation looks at things a different way, and no matter how many scholars you have around you, and all the rest [laughing], you

can change your mind. There really is a lot of evidence to us now, seeing all of the blue nudes again coming into John's [Elderfield] show, there are a lot of scratches. Ultramarine happens to scratch more easily, I found. Three of us working in paper at that time, Karl Buchberg and Erika Mosier and I, were rethinking all of this stuff, rephotographing, retalking. And also, everybody is doing courier stuff, so they were over again. And then Karl went to Nice and looked at some stuff. People kept saying, "You know, these scratches." And I know, even in some of [Fernand] Léger's studies I saw recently for a ballet, none of the other colors in his gouaches were scratched except ultramarine. Now, is it just me that Lydia is right, and it scratches more easily, and yet, should you leave it, should you not. It's reversible. But nobody questioned taking out the discolorations, fortunately. I was also afraid, could they return? We used a kind of poultice method and just dropped acetone on it and wicked it out. But could some have been left in? So far, so good. But there are all kinds of things. Any treatment can be either rethought, or, as I say, there can be some reversibility to it. But we felt, again, we learned a lot from the new Matisse show because, again, material that hadn't been sent around or wasn't accessible at that time. Also the conservators at the National Gallery, painting conservators and paper conservators, Shelly Fletcher, the paper conservator there, had done a great deal of examination and work on their cutouts. Before she came, the painting conservators had removed the lining on their huge *La Négress* because that adhesive that I described, that painting conservation adhesive, it's like a wax resin. It turns a dark brown and it discolors the paper. And should you do something to that? So there was new knowledge coming in from there, and they also saw things that had been put down with different adhesives. So my publication was just a start, and we kept talking about the fact that we should all get together and do a symposium and then have a newer publication, but that's still on the shelves.

SZ: Right now, you mean.

AK: Yes.

SZ: The *Swimming Pool* then got exhibited, right?

AK: Yes, and that was great, too, because then I was working with Danny Clark, and Danny was the genius who was the head of the carpenters for so many years. He was such a sweet guy and so great, and he and his staff were just superb. The Museum would have fallen down without Danny and his people. Danny was designing, along with everybody else, but structurally, how to install the *Swimming Pool*. The first installation was Bill Rubin's, the ideas of how it should look. Bill liked things low, even though it had originally been hung quite high. But he felt, and I think -- usually I definitely agreed with him -- that there were [inaudible] ceiling [inaudible] the Museum, and you didn't want to hang things too high. He felt that would look odd; you couldn't see it the way you were supposed to. I think, even he, a lot of us felt that it came out too low, but at any rate, the actual installation was great. Danny had made a wood structure so that you could close them off from the back, but you could open it up from the back if there was a disaster, a flood or something, and take them out. But they were meant to be put in from the front. They were also under Plexiglas. They were terrifically heavy. But even Matisse himself, it's in the documentation, had said he wanted them "sous plastique". He was very worried about their condition in the future, which is why he okayed these mountings, bad as we know they are from the standpoint of the adhesive. But he was afraid the pins wouldn't hold these pieces in the long run, in the huge wall-size cutouts. So then we had Plexi. Because they then had to travel to all of these shows, which you wouldn't normally do, but, as you know, you get overruled on things, we decided to have a kind of travel frame with the Plexi in it. I remember one of the conservators at the Detroit Museum said something about, how could a fragile old Frenchman have cut out papers and make them weigh so goddamn much. [Laughing] I think it weighed four hundred pounds. But everybody, and the preparators, of course, were part of this installation. The installation was breathtaking, but great to see them put into the wall, and then finally able to see them all done. Although the best thing, I must say, frankly, was without the Plexi, because it does cause things to look yellow a little bit. But, it was a smash hit. But then they did a slightly different installation for John's show.

SZ: The ninety, whatever it was.

AK: '92, '93, something like that.

SZ: I'll look it up.

AK: And Trixie Kernan with him. And he decided to do it somewhat higher, and they moved it in the Museum. And then they colored it a little differently. It was painted white, top and bottom, and then the cutout. The paper cutouts are mounted on burlap. Madame Duthuit, Matisse's daughter, had chosen burlap in 1957 when the *Swimming Pool* was mounted by Lefebvre Foinet and Lydia in Paris, because she said that was the closest thing to the material that was on the walls of the dining room. Nobody knows for sure what was. Speculation that it might have been a straw-fibered material, linen or something. The burlap was rather discolored, though, because light will discolor it the same way it discolors newsprint. It has lignin in it. So rather than having white around it, which kind of made the brown of the burlap stand out, they decided to make a whole brown wall, because in the original dining room it would have been floor to ceiling, and the cutouts floating on that, and then the mantelpiece and furniture. I did think that was better. The figures seemed to leap more. It flowed a little bit better.

SZ: I wonder what Bill Rubin thought.

AK: You know, I didn't ask. I wouldn't. [Laughing] Well, I do think that he had changed his mind a bit on that early installation, and in my memories of working with him I don't have any particular memory, so it must have gone ahead very smoothly. [Laughing] Actually, sometimes he asked, because when he was doing his cubism show, the *Picasso and Braque* show, and in the wheelchair, he said to me, "Are these hung high enough?" So I think he liked to check himself on something like that. Maybe he was thinking of the *Swimming Pool*; I don't know. I don't think he thought that they should be that high. There's still a lot of feeling back and forth. Nobody necessarily agreed. They took the light a little

bit better because the ceiling lights, you tend to have a little bit more light on them, and the white papers and the ultramarine vibrate. Something we noticed, too, when Trudy and I were first starting to remove the discolorations -- it took months to figure out how to remove them, frankly. I woke up at 3:00 in the morning, believe it or not, and I thought, "Why don't I try such and such," and I came in and the little poultice thing worked. But we first started -- there's one panel that doesn't have any blue cut papers on it; it's just white, so it might have been unfinished. So that was our test piece, shall we say. But then we moved to a small panel which had a blue star on it, and when we were looking at it with the brown stains, it just was kind of static, the composition. When the stains were gone, it just vibrated, because the ultramarine blue and the white painted paper -- it had a lithopone white pigment on it. It was just incredible together. So the whole piece did vibrate. Maybe that again, though, is where there's a feeling the stain should definitely have gone. Also the fact that the backgrounds were painted white. Not all of them are. Some of them are just plain white paper, and then some, painted. Lydia said the mounters painted them because some of them were discolored a little bit because there was so much light in his studio in Nice, and the luminosity of a paper was crucial to him, the light coming through something. I mean, Matisse and light are sort of synonymous. I wondered also whether it was to cover, if there had been some splattering. It probably would have been clear at that time, and then darkened as time went on. But who knows. At any rate, that was great to see what stain removal can do. Actually, that kind of idea was stated by Deborah Wye, who was the associate print curator at that time. In talking about cleaning abstract works on paper, this again being in the time when conservation was beginning to change and what methods should you be using, and what was good and what wasn't and so forth, and she said, "If there are discolorations or something on the papers we know are from mold or something like that, I think they should be treated aesthetically, because if it's an abstract design it needs all abstract components, and if you introduce another abstract image in the form of a damage, you distort it. If you have a figure there, cows in the hay wain, you're focused on that and you don't notice the stains as much." I thought that was a very interesting insight.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SZ: You mentioned something about the field changing so much. Maybe you could go back and talk a little bit about the specifics of that.

AK: I think the beginnings of the field changing, just in conservation, this isn't to say working with scholars or something like that, was a lining paintings conference in England -- the impetus for changing, I think, came from England; I don't know why; it just did -- and sort of questioning techniques, in Europe. I think I had gone over that when I was talking about my training days and the reasons for wax lining in the United States and glue in Europe, both with their problems. But the feeling was, did this change the appearance of the painting? Could you have discoloration, for example? If you have a very solidly primed painting, your lining adhesive is not going to go up through that priming. It's simply going to support it. But if you have a lot of cracks, or if you have a very porous priming and you line it, you can have either lowering of tonality from a glue-paste mixture or a fair amount of discoloration from a wax lining. [Inaudible] I say, of this, you don't have to, but you can, and they were beginning to look into newer adhesives for lining things. They were also looking into less pressure on paintings when they were to be lined, and they were looking at different kinds of what we call low pressure tables. We used to have hot tables, that is, a table that heated up. The paintings were put up face up and then there was a membrane over everything and you could line with the canvas and the adhesive in between and not too much pressure. But they were thinking of almost no pressure at all. Paper conservation was beginning to come in and think about these things too, because, I had talked about the fact that flat was the norm, certainly in America in the '60s. Maybe because [Clement] Greenberg talking about that things were flat; what you see is what you see. I know that's Stella's comment, but nevertheless, there was feeling that things shouldn't be lively and cockled. Of course, with a painting it could be harmful, because if it does buckle or sag, the

paint cracks, so you do have to have it in plane, and how do you keep it that way. But still, there's no doubt, everybody went overboard, especially in paper, to have things flat [inaudible] because there wasn't as much necessity. But that, beginning to come over here, too, so that they were trying to design so-called air flow tables, where air could be drawn down or there could be a lateral flow, so there would be almost no pressure on it at all, and no heat. Then, of course, everybody's still thinking about, are these newer adhesives the right adhesives? Because then people had to look into the synthetic resins, acrylic adhesives in particular, some of which are considered to be very good and seem to have stood all kinds of tests of time. But, as you were saying very cogently, there's still another 20, 30, 40 years in all of these things. Also, in modern art, should paintings be varnished? What painters didn't want the varnish? Who might have thought it was okay? Also there began to be a lot more research, as I was mentioning, about the Matisse, that would lead people to know that, for example, Monet definitely did not want his late paintings varnished. When I talked to Michel Hoog at the Orangerie, he was so proud of the fact that Clemenceau could never get Monet to give the promised paintings to the Orangerie: he kept saying they weren't finished yet so that they weren't varnished by any of the restorers of that day, and that they have that lovely matte quality that the Monets are supposed to have. Nobody knew this sort of thing, no conservators, no restorers, no scholars. That kind of material look at hadn't been done yet. I'm just using that as an example. So that beginning, in other words, a kind of real "less is more" idea was coming in in the '70s and really getting set in the '80s. Chemical treatments in paper; are those right? Even water? How should you approach your object? Should it be done very delicately locally? Should you even be lining something on paper? If something is falling apart, you do have to line? But I do remember being in the Tate [Gallery] I think on a courier trip in the '80s, probably early-ish '80s, to look at something Kynaston McShine wanted to borrow. It was a Gormley, two beds made of bread soaked in wax, and they were growing mold and a lot of trouble in customs. Anyway, it was a great opportunity to look at the Tate labs, which are wonderful. They tie in with the Courtauld [Institute] and the Courtauld scholarship. Great conservators there. A man named Gerry Hedley who, unfortunately died in a mountain climbing

accident when he was only 38, possibly the greatest modern painting conservator of his time and a wonderful guy, also. But at any rate, they were showing me an 18th century painting that they were examining to see what kind of treatment it might need. It was in wonderful condition. They didn't need the lining if it wasn't necessary. You can't throw out everything with the bath water, by any means, but why, from the 18th century. It seemed that this had been, from the beginning, not resting completely against, slightly away from, a wood panel, so the air did not get into the reverse of the canvas, so that the [inaudible] spaced linen canvas did not desiccate, which is of course the main reason why you'd have to line, when you have no strength holding that paint. Then they began to do a whole lot of research on how you might just be able to back. Unfortunately, you might also have to glaze from the front. I'm not going to take sides on that. Combing my hair in front of the [inaudible] I don't like any better than the curators, although some of the non-reflecting glass now is really great. I was fooled recently by one. But if you could sandwich something that way, fairly from the beginning, it would be the equivalent of lining. So that was a whole long step, a great giant step in what you can do with the environment. So it began to be a lot more looked at in environmental controls and [inaudible]. That's where we are now in the field, too, really looking at the new materials, not, if humanly possible, wanting to make the same mistakes all over again with a set of new materials, and just maybe, if possible, letting things just sit for a while, or framed for a while. It doesn't solve problems in really contemporary works that have to stand out, for example, and there, I think you just have to kind of roll with the punches. Of course, at MoMA, we're lucky. I was lucky; they are lucky, to have a great engineer on staff now, and, of course, they're spending a fortune on the environment, maintaining the temperature and the humidity and the light very closely.

SZ: They're very careful.

AK: Yes, everybody, looking at that. That's really the strongest. I have slides, as a matter of fact, that show, for example, two Juan Gris collages, one of which had been in Gertrude Stein's collection and had hung in their apartment in Paris for

decades, I'm sure. I guess it was near the Seine. Everybody talked about open windows, and they had a pot-bellied stove, and everybody smoked cigars, and that kind of stuff. So that collage that came in in the Stein collection that I talked about, the two of them, were -- the one *Roses* that I had talked about -- mahogany brown and they were falling and all cockled and the paint was falling off, and oh boy. Now, the Gris collage *Breakfast* that has been in MoMA's collection since 1935, certainly has some discolorations on the newspaper -- it's bound to -- and on some of the magazine papers, but nothing like this other one. If you put them together it's really night and day. But building up that kind of knowledge, working at the Museum for so many years and being able to monitor things, and take slides, and seeing collections coming in from places that weren't careful that way, built a great case, too, for leaving things a little more alone.

SZ: And that's where it is now.

AK: Yes, that's right.

SZ: How did the '84 expansion affect you? You had managed to get a good space.

AK: I give Jean credit for the space for Painting and Sculpture.

SZ: You're talking about now the new space. I was talking about the fact that you had managed to end up with a decent lab.

AK: I'm sorry, are we talking '75 or after?

SZ: I was trying to talk about the '84 one, but what I was saying was that in '75 you did get a fairly good space. So then there was this disruption in the '80s.

AK: It was the '80s I was addressing on Jean getting the good space. I forget whether Dick Koch was still there in, say, '79.

SZ: That's right when he left.

AK: Did we first hear about expansion in '79 or so?

SZ: It was right around then; late '78, '79.

AK: So I'm not sure who Jean was working with, but she did get a huge space for painting and a much better space for sculpture right there. Originally, she had thought of having all three labs together; have paper move over there. She did discuss it with me, however. I appreciate that, definitely. That space would be where the Library was at that time, so that would be on the 54th Street side of the fourth floor of the old Whitney building. So the painting lab would expand from about the middle of the floor back to the long windows across the 54th Street side, and then part of it overlooking the Garden, with an east light, and then sculpture would get a lovely new space with some good light, which they had never had in all of that time. She had also thought that paper would go in along maybe the windows on the 54th Street side, because they had clerestory windows in the main part of painting conservation, so she thought it would all fit in. I must confess, I didn't think the light would be as good, and I really liked where I was, and it wasn't very far away, and I wanted desperately to stay with the Drawing department simply because I enjoyed being with the curators. I thought we could all be sort of together, painting and sculpture and stuff, they were just around a kind of L-shaped hall then. So that was negotiated and Jean said that was all right. I pretty much stayed where I was. They still thought that Central Park core of the Museum wouldn't be torn down; good luck. It turned out that Cesar Pelli's atrium effect in the back would cover half my lab with extra windows. I forget who, thank heavens, noted that -- it might have been John Elderfield -- and that I would have greenish light in that area. So Riva then said it would be all right with her -- and I didn't get this out of her; she offered and it was really nice, because by that time we knew that Prints and Drawings would change place -- she offered to move my lab down a bit out from under that, and her office would be there, so they would kind of be around us and we would come in through Prints in the Drawings lab. So, we stayed with that. I also

thought, and everybody came to agree with -- I think Jean was relieved because they had so much better space -- nobody would have had quite enough space had we all been in that three-lab place. But I think Jean was trying to get the best light and the best space, and that was great. There was, however, nothing to set it up with. However, if you don't have the space, you never can do anything.

SZ: It was a very disruptive time.

AK: I think it derailed me very deeply. I do remember '79, because that meant I'd have to leave the lab. And as I've said, it was really on a roll, as they say, and even the loss of Trudy -- could have had other people, would take a while, but nevertheless, and set up for the researching, and so forth and so on. And I was divorced then, too, so, all in all, not the greatest time. Maybe I could have used a little peace and quiet in my working life. But at any rate, concentrating particularly on the working life, Pelli came around to everybody and talked to us about where we wanted to be, and our needs, and so forth, but nevertheless, I wasn't prepared exactly for what it was going to be like to have a building torn down right next to me. Philip Johnson's famous phrase, "This is the first of my buildings to be demolished," that was that staff building that was next to MoMA. I did take some great slides of when they were jack hammering right into the wall of Paper Conservation. Of course, we had to stop working. I went up on the roof on top of the old Whitney Building, where the Library and Paintings Conservation was, and I took slides. It was like a rain of fire. I hoped they were set up for that, although, we didn't have a fire then. I'm sorry, Trudy was still there in that beginning time; thank heavens. Because I decided, oh the heck with it, I was abandoning ship and I went down to the New York Public Library; that was OK, and Trudy gallantly said that she would stay. But I think it suited both of us; I honestly do, since she had in mind what I didn't know yet. Nevertheless, I went down and did a whole lot of great paper research, and read in the rare book room all of the early books on the subject. I had a huge notebook full of all kinds of stuff on adhesives and chemicals and bleaches and all the things that were beginning to be questioned so much. There was the

Chemist's Club Library then on 42nd Street, still, that later went over to the science and tech division at New York Librarians now over in the old B. Altman building.

SZ: Yes, right, on 34th Street.

AK: And they used to run searches for me on stuff. So the time wasn't lost. But then there came the time when you had to come back and be part of that uproar, and that was when the collections were being moved and so forth. I forget when Dick Oldenburg put me as the conservator and John Elderfield as the curator on the expansion committee to represent the staff, so that then we were beginning to go to a few of the expansion meetings where they were announcing things, not for the legalities or the money, but for the space and the design and that kind of thing. So that was great. I was actually there when Pelli presented his maquette. It was very exciting. Usually I didn't have that kind of inside view. However, disruption after that went apace. It was the moving of the collection almost more than the lab, if that's possible, because, there was damage. I'm going to speak frankly: you just can't hastily move collections back and forth. And there was almost no place for storage. And of course it was the worst winter in history, and it snowed, and it was freezing, and the storage areas that were outside walls, and things would get stacked against them and water would run down. You'd have to move them back and forth constantly. I think the Print storage was in a good place and Drawing storage got a little closer to the outside. Actually, there were a lot of bugs in the Drawing collection when they got reinstalled, and that all had to be reframed. Nobody knew what an expansion was. I forget the people who were on it originally. As this was going on, the unions -- I don't need to tell anybody what working with New York unions is like: hopeless. And the guys were pigs, frankly. They threw their lunches on the rugs in galleries that still had art in them and they'd pee on the floors in the corners. It was revolting. Then they'd suddenly say, 'We're gong to do that gallery and that study thing for you tomorrow; you'd better get the art in here.' And trouble; and the unions really hold you up. They'd have to get a skeleton crew of people to run down the halls carrying Morris Louis's paintings, flapping

behind them. There was a whole lot of research in conservation in the environmental side. I went to an ICOM meeting in Zagreb in 1978 just to talk to people -- I guess I knew by that time that I would be on the expansion committee -- Gary Thompson, who was the great environmental scientific conservator heading the science conservation lab at the National Gallery in London, and everybody else, about what it would do to be in a new concrete building, and what was given off. We did all of that. There was a lot of evidence that oil might darken in new concrete; it didn't happen. It took forever; it went on for about five years. Everybody was so stressed out. The collection they would install and deinstall, install and deinstall, and preparators would show me the damages on the pictures from that, paintings, the things that aren't supposed to be framed. But personally, it was a very long time. It had the good side of the fact that I could then come back to the new conservation field that I had been talking about, and just start anew with some of the newer ideas. The bad side was that I never got my environmental chamber back again to do that kind of research. There was no space. Then, I was a very new, very green department head, and all that that entailed. Just that kind of onward flow was disruptive in a way. Period.

SZ: Now they're facing a new one.

AK: I know. I think it was serendipitous for me to know that I needed, for my own sake, to retire at that time, and that I could two years early, but also, that it left young people who hadn't been through that. Jim Coddington, my successor, is the same age as Glenn Lowry, who was new. I had very good feelings about him, as a director. I'm sure I would have worked well with him, but there's no way I could have dealt with an expansion. I couldn't even think about it, to be honest.

SZ: One is enough.

AK: One is enough. And you don't come in with a fresh, 'oh great, this is an opportunity.' If it had been a year or two, it would have been different, but five

years is a really long time of not having -- I didn't have a lab during that time, to do the kind of networking you need to do.

SZ: Did you hand pick your successor? How did that come about?

AK: No. Quite honestly, I presumed that he was picked. I was sort of picked before Jean retired. Dick had told me maybe a year before at a great, crazy lunch. We had a great time.

SZ: Where did you go for that lunch?

AK: I forget. A nice restaurant in the fifties. We had a terrific bottle of wine, I remember that.

SZ: Did you know what was coming?

AK: No. I was floored, I must confess. They just said, "Would you have lunch with Dick?" I thought maybe it was expansion or something like that. This was late '83 or late '82, something like that. He said, right off the bat, "Do you want to be head of the lab?" I think it was known that I did want to be it, because a few years before that, Bill Lieberman had said to me one evening, "Did you want to be head of the lab?" And I said, "Yes." So I don't know, was he the front man for that sort of thing? So then I said yes a little too fast, I think, to Dick. [Laughing] But it was great. We were drinking our wine and I remember saying, "I think I've had a lot to drink for this lunch." We were on a terrific wavelength of what to do in the future, and who to have, and what we needed to fill, and who would be good, and what areas we wanted to concentrate on, what was going to be the great lab of the future and how to equip it. Because, there was nothing there. Paper was well equipped, but you need new floors and new ceilings and a new roof on Painting and Sculpture and all of the equipment needed to be redone. We had this pie in the sky idea, that we ended up by doing, of what I was saying I thought, and he was definitely with me on all of that. At any rate, I

don't know why I thought that would be true of Jim [Coddington]. Jim was really my second in command.

SZ: Did you hire him?

AK: Yes, I did. It was a kind of sequence. When I took over, I was asked to get a senior painting conservator. We didn't have one. At that time we had Anny Aviram. Ruth Morton had retired. And we had Terry Mahon, I forget whether assistant or associate then, who had come in from an internship at NYU. A young woman, Christine Herman, was going to come in on an internship. She was a great conservator, but we didn't have a kind of senior person there. That was a bit of a heavy load to start with though, to have to look for the senior painting conservator, and also we needed a second person in Sculpture because Henry Cohen left. I don't know why. He and I got along fine. I must confess, I was very relieved, because he was part time, and I really wanted to get a fully school trained person in Sculpture so that they would share it with Pat [Houlihan]. I finally hired Albert Albano, who had been a painting conservator in charge of modern art in the great conservation lab at the Philadelphia Museum, working for Marigene Butler, one of my very good friends. I must have interviewed the whole world. We advertised in journals in America and in Europe, and I had boxes everywhere of people's portfolios applying for the job. I was on the phone forever, in the middle of the expansion and everything, and had a terrible engineer, Rudy Fischer, who referred to everything as "refrigerators", so good luck on getting environment. At any rate, I liked Al. He was an uproarious guy. He was a genius with his hands. The staff wasn't too pleased. Staffs have their ways of doing things, and it took Al a while to kind of work his way in, to say the least. But he did such beautiful hands-on work. I think Christine then was hired as an assistant; again, this sensational, beautiful work. She was a graduate of the Winterthur programs. Al was a graduate of the Cooperstown graduate programs, and he had worked with a conservator at the Guggenheim in his early training days, Orrin Riley, and then in Philadelphia, which, in every way, is superb. But then Terry left eventually, and went to set up a private studio. I may be getting a little mixed up as to exactly when Terry left

and when we hired Jim. I think we had Al and Terry and Christine. Al was still there when Jim was hired, because they got along, so it must have been when Terry left. We advertised for an associate position or something like that and had a lot of applications -- not as many, because the whole world had applied for the other job, but Jim Coddington was one of them. I knew him from a little committee that sat when we were getting a grant to have a very special low pressure table to line paintings and works of art developed and designed and made, and I thought he was the most intelligent and most technologically oriented person sitting there. I'm not talking about hands on work or genius as a conservator, but just for the smarts. I didn't think anything of it, other than he was one of the several people from different places, forgot about it, then he applied. And from the Metropolitan Museum, which was a little bit touchy, because the man who headed the lab at the Met was the mortal enemy of most people in the United States, and particularly modern art in no uncertain terms, forever in *The New York Times*. However, I interviewed various people, and I had a very good interview with Jim Coddington, and I had these good memories, and I checked him out and everybody said he was a pussycat, a really nice guy, good sense of humor. And he sent me a little note saying how much he had enjoyed it and he was definitely interested. But I think he had a couple of offers. His interview was good because he also showed me why he didn't treat something, as well as why he did. He had a very good range of work, Winterthur graduate, and had worked privately for some years in Washington for a well known private studio and they did the Phillips Gallery and things like that. But then when I called and offered him the job, he said he needed to think about it for two weeks -- I think two of the worst two weeks of my life -- but then he accepted. He was really nice and really good, and he and Al were just great. Our secretary Bonnie Lee, who was a treasure to have and held us all together, said, "They're like two little kids; they walk around together talking." So I think what I was thinking about was when Al left, as to whether we would then hire another senior person, or promote. And after looking at the people who applied, and thinking about it, and talking to James Snyder, to whom I reported by that time, and to the curators, to Kirk [Varnedoe] and to John [Elderfield] and so forth, we agreed we would promote Jim to the full conservator position from

associate. I felt comfortable with him. You know, you talk to everybody, but you have somebody you kind of toss ideas back and forth, so for that reason, I thought maybe he was a shoe-in. But it seemed they wanted to have a [pause]

SZ: Search committee?

AK: Thank you, search committee. James Snyder was the one who had said search committee. I was very surprised, because I thought they were going to say, what do you think about Jim? But of course, in union rules, you're supposed to have it too.

SZ: Yes, except that that's not a union position, is it?

AK: No, but I think they're supposed to have somebody on the search committee. Anyway, Snyder said let's have a search committee and everybody said, oh well, so this threw it over to after I had retired. I never did know. They did have the search committee and they did interview people, but they ended up with Jim. By that time, James [Snyder] had left also, so John Elderfield was then put in as the person overseeing Conservation after I had left and before they had a department head. Which was a terrific choice, because as things had fallen out and Riva had retired too, he was the curator the most interested in the scholarly side of conservation, and Jim, with his technological know-how -- he was masterminding the infrared reflectography equipment we had by that time, We were really well equipped by that time and very proud of it; you needed his mind to do it for that sort of thing. The computers and so forth -- you could look down through a painting and see the under drawing or a collage or something, and the curators were just agog. Bill Rubin had gotten us the equipment, because, for his *Picasso and Braque* show, he wanted reflectography done on everything, and I said, "Bill, I'm not going to find $60,000 overnight." So he managed to get half of it out of the budget, and then I managed to match with half. So, that was Jim taking over. I was waiting to hear when I got this phone call one morning and Jim was in the airport at Kennedy and he said, "They just told me that I'm it. I wanted to call you right away because I'm about to fly away on a courier trip for

three weeks and go to Amsterdam." I felt good about that. I said, "I knew it would be you." He's a very good administrator. He actually had courses between the time he finished his BA at Reed [College] and then took his graduate work at Winterthur in administration, so he must have had that in the back of his mind. But I think you have to be born to it. He was very good with the staff and he was very pleasant, but he'd get things done, kind of the way he wanted, and that's not given to everyone. Everybody in the department worked well together by that time.

SZ: Was it hard for you to leave after all those years?

AK: Yes and no. It was hard to make the decision. I kept thinking, "Do I have enough money?"

SZ: Why did you make the decision?

AK: I was very tired, in general. My back hurt and I didn't feel terrific, and I had been thinking about it for a long time and the handwriting was on the wall. Mainly, I come from that generation that never thinks you have enough money. Plus, the expansion. I was happy once the decision was made, though, because even my last six months, I had extra vacation and I started just coming in four days, and then I felt good, and I thought, "I have my own life. I don't have to worry any more." It was hard to leave the art and being that close to the art, but I would say that it was the right time in the sense that I had thought about it even a year before and then chickened out. By the time I actually did leave, it was almost as if, for me -- should I have done it a little earlier? But, at least I was sure. I go back now and chat with people. Twenty-eight years is a long time.

SZ: Here is the last question I want to ask you. Did you find, in the end, what you had hoped to, which was a kind of satisfaction that you had gotten from doing your own art, with just working with somebody else's in the ways you did?

AK: Yes. Yes. It was a phenomenal experience to be that close to the art, as I have said before. To see it under the microscope, to see it without glass, to live with it all the time. It was a great feeling after all, after all the expansion and the real difficulties -- I wasn't a great administrator and so forth, but things got better as I went along -- to have built up a lab, to have it considered one of the best scientifically equipped labs of its size in the United States, to have a good budget, to have a good staff, that I had left something, that I had done something and gave a bedrock for the future. As I have said, there are so many works of art that I haven't even talked about, that I worked on, that I know. I would never have known Picasso's work the way I do, in that depth. So, I think, yes, I think it did, and I think it was lucky, difficult as any job is, to find something that fitted in so perfectly.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 2

END INTERVIEW