THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**RICHARD KOCH (RK)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Dick, where and when were you born? Tell me a little bit about your family background.

RK: I was born in 1918 in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. Pottsville is a small town--small in the sense of twenty-five thousand people--about ninety miles northwest of Philadelphia. My father and his father were both lawyers in Pottsville. My grandfather became a judge and he lived to be ninety-six on a diet of, as my father characterized it, whiskey and lobster and cigars. I look forward to following in his footsteps all the way. [Laughter] When I was about fourteen years old, we moved to the suburbs of Philadelphia; my father had become counsel to a large insurance company based in Philadelphia. I went to Haverford School in Haverford, outside of Philadelphia.

SZ: In Pottsville...you went to public school?

RK: In Pottsville there were only public schools.

SZ: Was there an industry native to Pottsville?

RK: Yes, anthracite coal, which has since just about disappeared, having been superseded by oil in the 1920s. The anthracite business began to dwindle, which is one of the reasons we went to Philadelphia. The lucrative law practice of my father

had begun to dry up with the demise of the anthracite business.

SZ: Was your mother from Pottsville also?

RK: Yes. Her father had been involved in the mining industry. I have a sister named Molly, who is married to a retired Presbyterian minister; they live in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Do you want this kind of....

SZ: Yes. That's near Pottsville?

RK: Lititz is near Lancaster, about fifty miles from Pottsville. I went to Haverford School for three years and then to the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, for two years.

SZ: Pottstown having no geographic relation?

RK: No. Pottstown is about thirty miles from Philadelphia, and the Hill School is a very good private boarding school. When I graduated from there, I went to Princeton.

SZ: You graduated in...?

RK: From Hill, '36, and then I went to Princeton for the usual four years, graduating there with a Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, in philosophy and aesthetics, in 1940. I was active in Princeton theatricals. I was in the Triangle Club, which produced musical shows annually, and was president of the Theatre Intime, which was a student-run extracurricular theatrical organization. We did four to six plays every year; I used to direct some of them and did stage design. I decided I would like to be a movie director and persuaded the faculty--there was no such thing as courses in motion pictures, as there are now in almost every university; there were only two or three on the West Coast [then]....

SZ: There were some on the West Coast.

RK: Oh, yes. I can't remember if it was USC or UCLA which had, even then, a motion picture department. I persuaded Princeton's philosophy and art departments to allow me to make my own major, straddling the two, and wrote my senior thesis, which is required for graduation at Princeton, on the art of the motion picture, analyzing the medium as an art form.

SZ: And you did that within which department?

RK: Both, art and philosophy, aesthetics being in the purview of philosophers.

SZ: That was a very unusual thing to do at the time, and at Princeton in particular.

RK: Very unusual [laughing], and Princeton in particular, because there was no such thing as an official curricular interest in movies.

SZ: Before college, had theater appealed to you? Were you active in it?

RK: No, because the Hill School didn't have any theatrical organization of any kind, but interested in the sense of reading about it and certainly going to movies and going to the theater in Philadelphia...beginning in the middle 1920s; when I was at Haverford School, I used to go quite regularly to the theater in Philadelphia--Broadway shows tried out before they came into town, in Philadelphia, Boston and New Haven ordinarily, so lots of things would try out in Philadelphia before they got to New York.

SZ: But did you act?

RK: No, I was backstage...directing, stage managing, stage design--I did some of that at Princeton. When I graduated, I was offered a fellowship in the graduate school at Princeton to work further on the thesis and to develop it into a book, which I thought might be fun but decided I would rather go to Hollywood and become a movie

director. So I went to Hollywood...and this was in 1940, arriving there simultaneously with the fall of France into the hands of Hitler. With the fall of France, the Hollywood studios expected the foreign market to disintegrate entirely, and thereupon laid off just about half of their production staffs. It was not a very good time to be out there looking for a job.

SZ: Did you go out there cold?

RK: I had some connections, but the most I could get through those was an offer of a job in the mail room at Paramount, so I decided to take up the offer of the philosophy department of a fellowship in the graduate school. So I came back to Princeton and spent a year in the graduate school doing some work, most of which was really going to the movies. There were two theaters in Princeton, movie theaters, and most of them changed their films three times a week, so theoretically you could see six movies a week.

SZ: Were they art houses?

RK: No, they were just regular...they had art films, because Princeton had an audience that was oriented that way, of course, but every kind of movie you can think of. So I did a lot of field work, so to speak. I did considerable work on the thesis, but it never really turned out to be something worth publishing--at least I didn't think so; I'm sure that there were other people of differing opinions, but nobody seemed very interesting in publishing it, so I dropped it. When I completed that year, I came to New York and went to work with some industrial film companies, making training films for the Navy and the Army. I did that as a civilian for a couple of years.

SZ: So you had some skills at that point.

RK: I had a lot of skills, acquired in making training films, which is a very good way to develop that, because working for these industrial film companies you got to do

everything; unions were not particularly a problem. I wrote and directed and produced various types of films, not all military; some of them were industrial. I got to work in every aspect of movie production. Then I got in the Navy, producing training films for the Navy.

SZ: Were you drafted...?

RK: I got a commission as an ensign.

SZ: What was the atmosphere like at that point? You were in New York, right?

RK: Well, the war was going full-swing in 1942, and Pearl Harbor was...'41, December 7th. The atmosphere was very belligerent, to say the least--the Army and Navy were very active on the European front and of course, with Pearl Harbor, the Pacific as well. So I got into a Navy recruiting program, which was called V7, I believe. I forget what the letter or the number stands for, but anyway, this was a program where you were not actually commissioned until you had completed a four-months' training course. It was a very rudimentary training course; it was for people who were specialists and were going to practice their specialty as commissioned officers, so it was just the rudiments of how officers were supposed to behave. This was in the winter at Cornell. I remember how cold it was at five o'clock in the morning [laughter] in January when we were mustered out; it was really a baptism of the fire. I was commissioned as an ensign following that and sent to Washington, where the Navy had just completed construction of a big photo studio, which was called Photo Science Lab; it was on the naval air station at Anacostia, across the river from Washington itself. So I spent four years there, again making movies of all kinds, obviously naval in their orientation, training films, mostly. Sometimes they were photo reports, which were made from footage that was sent back by combat photographers, both in Europe and in the Pacific, assimilating that, editing it and writing scripts for it.

SZ: And where would those be distributed?

RK: Generally, they weren't distributed broadly. They were shown at the White House, the Pentagon, the Defense Department; they were sometimes shown in the theaters, the European and Pacific, depending on their purpose. Generally, they were not publicly distributed. Some of that material, actually, was made into the film Fighting Lady, which you may remember was made by Edward Steichen.

SZ: Did you know him?

RK: He wasn't actually in the unit; he was in a related unit that was based in the Navy Department. I met him a few times, but we didn't have anything to do with each other, really. He mainly worked on aircraft carriers in the fleet, with a crew of combat photographers.

SZ: Was this classified stuff?

RK: Some of it was, yes. Highly. I worked on one toward the end of the war which outlined the strategy to be used in invading Japan should that become necessary. It turned out not to be necessary, so God knows what happened to the film. That, of course, was very highly classified and was to be used in the White House and hardly anywhere else. I used to carry around the scripts and prints....

SZ: So you must have had a security clearance for all that.

RK: Yes. So, the war being over, I got out of the Navy fairly quickly and came back to New York and resumed making industrial films. After several years, it became apparent that the future of industrial films was going to be making television commercials, television having by then become very much a factor. I did that for a couple of years and decided I didn't really want to spend my life doing that, and Hollywood did not seem to offer any particular incentives to go back out there, so I

decided to belatedly take my father's advice and go to law school after all, he having not been very enthusiastic about my film business intentions.

SZ: That must have been a big decision for you, to leave something you obviously loved on some level.

RK: The business at that time, and I guess still, is so capricious.... I forgot to say, in the late 1940s and early '50s I decided to write for Broadway. I worked in collaboration with the composer Milton Babbitt, who has since become quite illustrious; he was illustrious then, but not generally recognized as such [laughter]. He was on the faculty of Princeton; I had known him then, and in Washington during the war. He and I decided to write a musical for Broadway based on the Odyssey. We spent about three years working on this, he doing the music and I the book and collaborating on the lyrics, and this was called "Fabulous Voyage." We auditioned around New York among potential backers and producers, and among other interesting things we contemplated getting Rex Harrison for the lead and Mary Martin would play all of the women involved in Odysseus's return, as well as his wife, Penelope. It was a very good script, a very good score. Then we told people that Rex Harrison would be ideal for the lead....

SZ: They just threw money at you [laughing].

RK: No, they said, "You're crazy. He can't sing." [Laughter] This was before "My Fair Lady." So we had all sorts of frustrations with this, and it was really that more than anything else that led to my decision to go to law school.

SZ: How old were you then?

RK: How old was I? About thirty, I guess.

SZ: So you'd had a good run at it.

RK: Yes, and it didn't really look very promising, and completely capricious--it was then and still is.

SZ: Your father thought it was capricious.

RK: My father thought, correctly, that it was capricious, and I finally agreed with him [laughing]. So I went to Columbia Law School, and very much to my surprise, I did very well academically.

SZ: Why do you say that?

RK: Because I'd been out of school a long time, and out of practice academically, but it turned out very well and I became an editor of the law review and graduated with considerable honors.

SZ: The law appealed to you?

RK: Yes, very much; I enjoyed it. I went to Wall Street, with one of the medium-sized, very good firms, called Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts, where I became an associate lawyer.

SZ: In what specialty?

RK: No specialty. They don't specialize with the young associates there.

SZ: At that point you had no particular interest, or did it not happen that way then in the way it happens now? I would think, for instance, that you would have wanted to be an entertainment lawyer.

RK: I might have now, if I were doing it again, but that didn't happen on Wall Street in those days. There were, of course, entertainment lawyers practicing in New York, and actually, several firms did sort of spot me and ask me to join them, but I reasoned, I think probably accurately, to start off specializing would limit my options in case I really didn't like it, and that I would be much better off downtown in a biggish, high-prestige firm, to be blunt, so that if I decided later on I wanted to be an entertainment lawyer, I could switch without any difficulty, probably. Specializing at the outset, in a small firm, would very much limit flexibility later on if I wanted to go somewhere else. As it turned out, Winthrop, Stimson was at that time general counsel to The Museum of Modern Art, the reason for that being that Stephen Clark, who was President of the Museum in the 1940s, was a member of the family which controlled Singer Sewing Machines. Do you know about this?

SZ: Just tell me, in your own words.

RK: The lawyers for Singer, the manufacturing company, were Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts.

SZ: Therefore.... [Laughter]

RK: Therefore, Mr. Clark had retained Jim Husted, a partner of Winthrop, Stimson, to be the general counsel for the Museum.

SZ: So that relationship went back before you got there, at least ten years.

RK: Oh, yes. It went back...I don't know when it began, but Husted was already a Trustee of the Museum when I got to Winthrop, Stimson, which was in 1954. I got to know Husted slightly; he was an august partner and I was a young--not all that young--but I

was a new associate. He knew something of my interest in the arts, and when museum matters, of whatever kind, were referred through him to Winthrop, Stimson, he began to get me to work on them, although I was doing other things, as everybody was, at the same time.

SZ: What other kinds of things did you do?

RK: I did some real estate, I did some corporate law, I did some litigation--just about anything that was likely to come to such a firm. I worked for lots of other partners and I had a very good time. But what I enjoyed most of all was working on Museum matters, for obvious reasons, and I got to know a lot of people at the Museum--staff and board members.

SZ: What kind of Museum business would come your way in those early days?

RK: Rights to movies, for instance, in the collection. The Family of Man book--there was a lot of trouble with the publisher of the book, and we had to...I'm quite rusty about it now, but there had been a contract entered into. You're familiar with the exhibition and the book?

SZ: Yes.

RK: Monroe Wheeler had decided that the Museum did not want to publish the book, notwithstanding the success of the exhibition.

SZ: For what reason?

RK: He somehow didn't think that it would sell [laughter]. Monroe had rather strange judgment sometimes. A man named Jerry Mason, who had had some success as a small independent publisher, thought that it would sell, and persuaded Monroe and Steichen to allow him to publish the book, subject to Steichen's approval of the

format and text and so forth.

SZ: Because Steichen wanted it published.

RK: Steichen wanted it published, you bet. And the arrangement that Mason worked out with Monroe--I was not involved at that point--was that the Museum would get a share of the profits. After a couple of years, Monroe began to wonder why there weren't any profits, because the book was selling so well. I was invoked by Winthrop, Stimson to look into the thing with Sarah Rubenstein. Have you met Sarah Rubenstein? Is she on your agenda?

SZ: I believe so.

RK: I think she ought to be. She was at that point Assistant Treasurer, and she was involved in all the Museum's finances. So Sarah and I audited Jerry Mason's books, and it was quickly apparent that he was skimming, personally skimming, all of what ought to have been reported as profits, or almost all. So we sued him for an accounting, and he very quickly threw in the towel and paid something like $25,000, which was peanuts, but it was worth it to avoid....

SZ: You mean it was peanuts in terms of what he must have taken?

RK: In terms of what he'd probably taken, and we knew that; but it was to avoid actually going to court and dragging the thing out for two years and so forth. It was worth it. But not only the $25,000 or whatever it was, we worked out a whole new contract, which was very much to the Museum's advantage, instead of to Mason's, and thereafter, everything went quite nicely, financially speaking, until Mason went bankrupt for other reasons and the Museum then abrogated the contract and took over the publication of the book, having always held the copyright. The Museum then became the publisher, which it should have been in the first place, and all of the profits thereafter came to the Museum.

SZ: This was one story Monroe didn't tell me [laughing].

RK: I daresay not. Monroe also used to have a very interesting attitude that what was important about any art book was to keep the unit price down, and the way you kept the unit price down was to order many, many copies in the initial print order. So Monroe would order some 20,000 copies in the first printing, although the book was probably not going to sell more than 700.

SZ: Ever.

RK: Ever [laughing]. But by ordering the 20,000, he kept the unit cost down; therefore, the price to the customer was ridiculously low. The accumulation of dead inventory mounted up and up and up, and ultimately, we wrote off more than one million dollars' worth, just shredded them. Dick Oldenburg was head of [the Department of] Publications at that time, and he discovered all the accumulation that had been warehoused all this time, and he damn-near killed himself, to have to report it to the Board and write it off [laughing]. Monroe was still around, but not active.

SZ: That really illustrates, I think, a difference in philosophy, which reflects the size of the institution, where you found it in its history. Would you say that's right?

RK: Yes.

SZ: Going back to my initial question. I asked you what other kinds of things in these early years and you said the rights to films and The Family of Man. Was there anything else?

RK: Those were the principal things I was involved in at the time. Then came the fire....

SZ: But before the fire, you said this also gave you an opportunity to really get to know

some of the staff people.

RK: Yes. Who? Charlie Keppel, who at that time was the Treasurer; Sarah Rubenstein the Assistant Treasurer, as I said; Monroe; Steichen, somewhat.

SZ: What was he like?

RK: Hmmm, rather difficult. He was pretty old by then. I think it was later that we negotiated with CBS a project to make a film of The Family of Man, and Steichen was involved with that, distantly, in that he wanted to have approval of the script and so forth. It never got off the ground, but I had discussions with him from time to time. He was a little bit senile by then, actually....

SZ: I would have thought that Steichen would have wanted the Museum to publish that book.

RK: I think he did.

SZ: It's interesting that Monroe didn't.

RK: He [Steichen] was very pleased that the Museum finally got the right to publish it.

SZ: Monroe's position in the Museum at that time was...?

RK: Director of Publications and Exhibitions.

SZ: So you felt his power?

RK: I saw it?

SZ: I'm asking if one did.

RK: He was not at all aggressive, and he operated, really, at a very low key. He was not beyond saying no to proposals, but he pretty much did what he wanted to do. The curators and the directors of the curatorial departments were cowed by Alfred Barr, generally speaking, on questions of collections. On questions of exhibitions, they pretty much did what they wanted to do. It was very loose, bureaucratically, at that time, and René d'Harnoncourt, who was Director, was also pretty low key. Budgets for exhibitions and projects for exhibitions, unless something got seriously out of hand, were pretty much determined by the directors of departments. The Trustee committees of each department, which have existed since the middle '60s, exercising a fairly tight control over what exhibitions should be done, what books should be published, what budgets and schedules should be, didn't exist then. Dick Palmer's job and Wilder Green's jobs did not exist then. So nobody, really, was riding much herd. Again, this was in the '50s and the very early '60s. Arthur Drexler, for instance, would want to do an exhibition of architecture and it would be presented to the Board in very loose terms.

SZ: By very loose terms you mean...?

RK: Very vague terms, in terms of budget and so forth. Arthur and Monroe would sort of make up a budget, but nobody took it very seriously, until the show came in about fifty percent higher in cost than the ostensible budget, at which point there would be a certain amount of discomfort, but nobody really patrolled these costs. Monroe would complain vaguely and Arthur would say sorry, he couldn't really do any better, and besides, look at the success of the exhibition. But somehow, the overall finances of the Museum did not result in very heavy deficits, regardless of the very loose slack in bureaucratic control. But that began to change in the middle 1960s--actually, the end of the '50s--and deficits were beginning to loom quite large, though relatively peanuts compared to today.

SZ: Also, I guess the Museum undertook the $25-million campaign; there was significant fundraising going on.

RK: Yes, the thirtieth anniversary campaign, so-called, which began in 1959 and ended with the expansion, the first big expansion--construction of the East Wing and the Garden Wing. Significant increases in staff salaries were also part of that campaign. Was it $25 or $30 million?

SZ: I think it was twenty-five, for the thirtieth. We know what happened later, but that's a long time from now. You really became the person who dealt with the Museum over those few years.

RK: After a while, Husted used to hand everything that came down from the Museum to me.

SZ: And would you go there frequently?

RK: Depending on what was going on. On average, I suppose, once a week.

SZ: So it took up a significant portion of your practice.

RK: Yes.

SZ: There was no inside general counsel at that point?

RK: Not at that time. No museum did. Maybe Washington [the National Gallery of Art] did, but not in New York. Ashton Hawkins came to the Met, I think rather later than that.

SZ: So this is the way they all functioned, and it would usually come through a Trustee?

RK: Yes.

SZ: Was it a service that was volunteered by the law firm, or was it paid for?

RK: It was paid for, but on a token basis, really, a small fraction of what the firm would have billed to an outside for-profit client. So it was really pretty much pro bono, except for the actual cost of my time, I suppose. I wasn't involved in the billing; Husted did that.

SZ: And you were liking it.

RK: Yes, a lot better than stock issues for the SEC.

SZ: Oh, I don't know why [laughter].

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SZ: And then came...?

RK: The fire, which I guess was 1958.

SZ: How did you find out about it? It was tax day.

RK: April 15th?

SZ: Yes.

RK: March 15th in those days. It [tax day] used to be March 15th; I don't know when they

changed it. Somebody telephoned the office and told me about it. This was during the day, during the afternoon; I think it happened around lunchtime. I wondered if I could serve any useful purpose by going up. Checked with the partner whom I was actually working for at the time. He didn't think so, so I didn't. The next day, of course, we read all about it in the newspapers. I did go up then. I can't remember who I saw immediately--probably Charlie Keppel and Sarah Rubenstein. We recognized that we had all sorts of legal problems, so I was very much involved in working on those.... (One of them was a serious problem with the Museum's fire insurance company, which had duly paid the Museum's claim for about $250,000 for damages related to the fire. But the company then wanted to subrogate--claim reimbursement--against the contractor whose workmen had caused the fire. The problem arose from the fact that the Museum had somehow neglected to register the contractor as co-insured under the Museum's fire insurance policy, as specified in the fine print of the contract. Since doing so would not have entailed any additional premium the insurance company was none the worse off for that omission, and we were able to persuade them to treat the contractor as if it were in fact a co-insured and therefore insulated from subrogation. Otherwise, because the Museum's negligence had exposed the contractor to subrogation, the Museum might well have been liable over to the contractor for the same amount we had recovered from our insurance--truly a bizarre circular outcome! Under its separate fine-arts insurance policy the Museum recovered the value of the paintings destroyed or damaged by the fire and applied those funds toward the purchase of the great Monet Water Lilies which have been hanging ever since.) The Museum did not have any liability for the man who was killed. Part of the problem had been that the contractors had disconnected a connection in the stairwell of the standpipe. Do you know about this? You know those things that stick out from the side of the building on the sidewalks called Siamese connections because there are two twin pipes? Those are connected with a pipe that goes up through the fire stairs, which you have seen, which have hoses at every floor at the landings. At the top of that pipe is a rooftop water tank, and if there is a fire on the third floor, the people on the premises, or the firemen, whoever gets there first, can take out the hoses there on the landing, open the

valves and have the water from the tank come down through the standpipe, through the hose and out the nozzle. This is first aid, so to speak. The roof tank, however, runs dry very quickly and the Siamese connection at the street is for the fire department's engines to connect the hoses with the standpipe through the Siamese connection and pump water up through the standpipe into that hose on the third floor. However, the contractor had opened the standpipe, so what happened was that water coming down, having been released from the tank on the roof and later being pumped up by the fire engine, flowed out of the standpipe without going through the hose and down the steps, down the stairs and over the floors of the galleries. The man who died, apparently partly from smoke inhalation, actually drowned in that water, because the smoke made him unconscious. He fell into this water all over the floor, which was three or four inches deep, and apparently drowned in the water. But it was determined that the open standpipe, which should have been notified to the fire department, had not been, and that was one of the reasons for negligence in the fire. But it wasn't the Museum, it was the fault of the contractor.

SZ: Did he have negligence insurance?

RK: Yes, actually. Anyway, the Museum had problems also with lenders to the exhibitions that were going on. You know about the Seurat Grande Jatte, which belonged to the Art Institute of Chicago.

SZ: What were some of those problems? It was okay, wasn't it?

RK: It was okay, yes. Everything was okay except the Monet and the Juan Gris, I think, and one other painting. In those days, paintings were stored in the slots between partitions in the galleries. Do you know this?

SZ: They were just slid in.

RK: And then boarded up. In other words, the partition would be two or even three feet thick. Ordinarily, the thickness would be only the width of the stud and a couple of layers of sheetrock, but in those days, because storage facilities, especially for large paintings, were so limited, they built the partitions on the third floor and the second floor, the third in particular, this thick. The end was open and you could store paintings inside the partitions and then board up the end. This was done with temporary exhibitions, for storage. One or two of the paintings that were destroyed or lost had been stored in those partitions during the work which the outside contractor was doing.

SZ: What were they there to do?

RK: I think they were installing a new air conditioning system. The fire started in a gallery on the second floor--maybe the third, I'm not sure. The installation had been completed and painters were working, and they apparently left a burning cigarette on a dropcloth covered with paint. Paint fire was the primary trouble, with heavy smoke.

SZ: I had asked you about the Grand Jatte, whether there was another issue that I don't know about.

RK: No, I don't think so. All the lenders had to be reassured that their works were intact and so forth. A crash program ensued very quickly to reopen the Museum, because the Seurat and Juan Gris exhibitions were very important and had had heavy attendance, and of course there was vast publicity. For every reason, it was desirable to get things fixed and the Museum opened as fast as possible. It was done very fast indeed; I worked on some of the arrangements with, I think, the Fuller Company, to bring in emergency crews.

SZ: You said that through the fire you got to know Blanchette Rockefeller.

RK: This was, of course, not at the fire, but subsequently. I had a number of meetings

regarding the insurance problem with her and with Bill Burden and Charlie Keppel....

SZ: As President, she was actively involved, or at least took an active interest in....

RK: Oh, yes, and in the financial aspects of the insurance settlement.

SZ: From what I understand, that was, for a lot of the people who worked there, a very emotional time.

RK: It certainly was, yes. The thirtieth anniversary drive was not launched until the following fall, in 1959.

SZ: Until things were put back together.

RK: Yes, entirely. They were put back together within a very few weeks. The Museum was reopened very quickly. Then Charlie Keppel, who had been the part-time Treasurer, who was actually a member of Nelson Rockefeller's staff, had been managing most of the Museum's business affairs and had been my primary contact on most of the legal things that I had been working on. He wanted to be liberated from all of this Museum stuff so he could go back working for Nelson, which he thought would be full time and which he thought was where his true career really lay. Nelson had kept him on his payroll but had loaned him to the Museum, as it were, and entirely pro bono. So Charlie began a campaign with Burden and with Blanchette to offer what had been his job plus legal affairs as well to me, via Husted, although I didn't know about this immediately, of course. Husted summoned me and asked if I would be interested in doing this. I thought it would be a lot more fun and probably less work than I had been having downtown on Wall Street. It was indeed more fun, though it was not less work by any means. I thought about it for not very long and considered it with my then wife and she agreed, so I was offered the job, which at that time was called General Counsel and Director of Administration.

SZ: Or Director of Administration, Secretary and Counsel.

RK: No, Secretary...was a little bit later, I guess.

SZ: That was something you really wanted to do.

RK: Oh, yes. I thought it would be great and it was. I enjoyed it immensely.

SZ: Then this would be one of the first museums to have counsel on staff.

RK: Yes, I think so. As I said, I don't remember when Ashton Hawkins came to the Met, but I think it was some years later than this. Steve Weil came to the Whitney somewhat later, having been at Rosenman, Colin, a law firm, and then at the Marlborough Gallery for a while; he then went on staff at the Whitney.

SZ: Dick, you talked about your interest in theater. What about visual arts?

RK: I had had some courses in the visual arts at Princeton and had always been interested. I was not active in the sense that I had never been a painter or anything, but I knew something about it. I knew who Jackson Pollock was and the things he did, and Rembrandt and Picasso. I was certainly very well aware of significant visual artists....

SZ: I want to ask you one more question, then we can stop and we can talk about what I think we should talk about, and then you can give me some ideas, too.... So you came in 1959, on staff.

RK: Yes.

SZ: What I wanted to ask you was how you found the atmosphere in the institution when you first came. How would you describe it?

RK: I'm chagrined to have omitted René d'Harnoncourt in all of this. I was dealing with him more importantly than with Keppel.... It was a combination of René and Blanchette and Bill Burden who invited me following Keppel's proposal. René and I had gotten along quite well. Another thing, I had been active in--which impressed them very much--the remodeling of what is now the Titus I auditorium in 1957 or '58. They had made a niche on the left side for a piano, without informing the buildings department or obtaining a permit to do that. When they reopened the auditorium after having done that and maybe some other construction, the building inspector came around and saw this niche, which did not show in any plans that had been filed with the building department, and he forthwith closed the auditorium [laughing]. Totally. Which created great havoc and hoo-hah because it was in the midst of some very important film series--I don't remember what it was--and very embarrassing to members and lenders and God knows who all. I was invoked to do whatever could be done with the building department to get a permit so it could be reopened quickly. Thanks in part to the real estate department of Winthrop, Stimson, I was able to pull some strings and it reopened, I think, in two days, which was unprecedented, unheard of. This really raised my stock, in the eyes of René, particularly, who had been subject to all sorts of pressure and trouble.

SZ: I was asking about the atmosphere.

RK: The atmosphere. I understand why you should ask that. There was considerable tension between the Young Turks, as René called them....

SZ: That was René's term?

RK: That was his term. The top-level staff, the Young Turks being principally Arthur Drexler, Elizabeth Shaw, whom you know, were the principal ones. They were the

leaders; I'm not sure if there were others involved or not. And Porter McCray and Monroe and Alfred and René...on the other side. The issues, I think, although I came in late here.... I'm not really sure what the issues were, except that I do remember that before I'd actually joined the staff, which was the end of September or October '59, there was what is now called a retreat by all the senior curatorial and administrative staff at Bill Burden's place in Maine, at Northeast Harbor, at which I was astounded and shocked to see the animosity of the Young Turks.

SZ: You were there?

RK: Yes, I was invited to come, as an observer, strictly. Have you heard about this?

SZ: I've heard about it, but you're the first, I believe, first-hand observer.

RK: Really? Porter was there.

SZ: We haven't gotten to that yet.

RK: I see. Porter came in the middle of it; he had been at the Venice Biennale, I think, and he came back from that and [tape interruption].... He came back especially from the Venice Biennale, having been summoned for this, and he was attacked by Liz and Arthur, I think, quite vehemently and bitterly. I didn't understand exactly why, but I guess they simply did not like the way in which his circulating exhibitions were assembled, mounted and everything, without the participation of the curatorial staff, the regular curatorial staff. Porter had his own sort of mini curatorial staff--Waldo Rasmussen..... Porter and Waldo, who was then his assistant, had pretty much a staff of their own; I think Kynaston McShine was a member of it. I forget who else.

SZ: Kynaston was there?

RK: No, not at that time, but later on. I forget who else were there and subject to these

protests, but there were quite a few. The poet who was killed, Frank O'Hara, had been part of Porter's coterie at this point, and others whose names might come to me.

SZ: So essentially it was Arthur who was complaining about not having enough aesthetic control over what Porter was doing?

RK: It was certainly Arthur, and I think it may have been some of the others.... Bill Lieberman, who was at that point in charge of drawings, I think he was one of the complainants, too.

SZ: And then there were William C. Seitz and Peter Selz...in Painting and Sculpture.

RK: Oh, yes, Seitz and Selz. I don't think Seitz was on the staff at that point, but Selz certainly was, and he was very much one of the Young Turks, and he was complaining. There were other issues aired at this retreat, but I can't remember specifically what they were....

SZ: Essentially, I've heard the issue was Porter and the International Program.

RK: The international and national circulating exhibitions programs, I think, were both at issue.

SZ: And the fact that he was operating as an independent entity; that he had sort of set up a parallel museum.

RK: Yes, that was pretty much it.

SZ: But I would sure like to know what the other issues were. So it was a fairly acrimonious retreat?

RK: [Laughing] Yes. I was, as I said, startled.

SZ: You just walked into it.

RK: I had not yet joined the staff; I'd been invited and accepted. I was due to actually go on the payroll a few weeks subsequently.

SZ: That was baptism by fire.

RK: It certainly was.

SZ: Nothing unusual about that [laughing].

RK: A rat's nest....

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**RICHARD KOCH (RK)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**2 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE NEW YORK CITY**
DATE:	**JUNE 18, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: You were just about to pick up on something that came to you from what we talked about last time.

RK: Yes. I can't remember anything specifically that came up at the so-called Maine retreat at Bill Burden's house, other than what we talked about last time: the indignation, so to speak, of the senior curatorial staff at the way in which international and national circulating exhibitions were handled by a relatively unqualified curatorial staff, separately, which worked specifically on those exhibitions under the direction of Porter McCray and Waldo Rasmussen. The circulating exhibition curatorial people did continue to work virtually independently following the complaints at the retreat, as I remember, but there was more coordination with the department heads--particularly Lieberman, Selz, Drexler--after that. Several years later, d'Harnoncourt instituted a system of weekly meetings of what was loosely termed the Program Committee, which involved discussion of future programming proposals by virtually every curatorial and administrative person in the Museum. The meetings took place at ten o'clock in the morning and were attended by over thirty people every week, which was, of course, unduly cumbersome and didn't really accomplish anything except to air grievances and have very loose discussions, but without any decisions on program proposals. It was really pretty much a waste of time, particularly since Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller used to chronically arrive at these meetings about half an

hour after they were supposed to start, and this made everybody who was there very restive and somewhat aggrieved because they had taken time off from their already overloaded schedules to sit there and wait for Alfred and Dorothy.

SZ: Was that typical of them, or did that have to do with what was going on?

RK: No, I think it was typical of them. Alfred was very disorganized, and Dorothy wasn't much better, and they somehow just never managed to get there; I don't think it was done deliberately. But that was really a minor matter. The point was that René and Monroe Wheeler did make the gesture, but it was sort of ineffectual. The program proposals, exhibitions and publications both, were vaguely kicked around at these meetings, but hardly ever had any budget really been considered, and the decisions about the future programming were really made later on by the sponsoring curatorial department in conjunction with Monroe Wheeler, and Sarah Rubenstein on the budget.

SZ: So in a way it was sort of a pro forma thing?

RK: Yes, it really was. I guess it was continued for about two years. At that point, René revised the entire committee structure at the Trustee level, and this made a significant difference. There had previously been a very loosely organized--I'm trying to think now how it had been really set up. There was a Committee on the Collections, and I think there was a Committee on Architecture and Design. There may have been one or two others; I can look back in the annual reports, if I still have them for the earlier years. What developed by the middle 1960s was a significant improvement. Each curatorial department, of which there were six following the separation of Prints and Drawings--they had been one department under Lieberman--each curatorial department had, in effect, a Trustee-headed committee, which consisted of at least a chairman, who was a member of the Board, and two or three other Trustees, often more; some outside experts, art educators and sometimes dealers; and the head of the department. The curatorial staff of the department were

not members of the committee but they were the staff of the committee. Following the inception of this system....

SZ: How was that viewed by the staff, by the way?

RK: I think they were generally in favor of it.

SZ: Because it represented--intrusion is the wrong word--it represented a new step in Trustee involvement in day-to-day operations. But you think it was well-received?

RK: Yes, I think it generally was, because it had many advantages. Each department head therefore had his own proponent, or representative, on the Board. It was very useful to have such a committee from the standpoint of fundraising, because the committee roster usually included some financially supportive members of the Board and outsiders both. If an exhibition or publication was proposed by the director of the department and supported in principle by the committee, the members of the committee were very helpful in raising funds, both among themselves and in finding outside sources of funds. The system still prevails--I think it still does; it certainly did while I was there, and it proved to be increasingly helpful in all directions.

SZ: Was this new system something that you helped d'Harnoncourt come up with?

RK: Yes. In fact, I'm not sure that I didn't propose it.

SZ: I figured that, but I was trying to get you to say that.

RK: I worked on it, certainly, with René.

SZ: Because you saw what?

RK: I saw that there was a sort of general confusion and lack of coordination, and the curatorial reports to the Board, generally, had only been on acquisitions and

collections. There was a time while I was there, I guess in the early 1960s--I don't know how far it went back--where at every Board meeting there would be a report, usually by Alfred Barr, on what was going on with the collections and the acquisitions. Proposed acquisitions or already completed acquisitions would regularly be shown to the Board. Frequently, Alfred would bring to the meeting...if it was going to be focused on Architecture and Design exhibitions, he would bring Drexler, and Alfred and Drexler together would report and present the acquisitions and, to some extent, exhibition proposals, much to the annoyance of Monroe Wheeler, who really should have been doing the exhibition and publication proposals.

SZ: Formally, there was that split...of acquisitions and exhibitions.

RK: Yes. After this reorganization, the Trustee meetings were attended in rotation, really, by curatorial department heads, on their own, and they would report on acquisitions of their department and on exhibition proposals and publication proposals. This worked much better; the Trustees had far more exposure to what was going on departmentally, and once they got used to having these committees, the curatorial department heads pretty much welcomed them. The Trustee chairmen of the committee did not generally intrude too much in curatorial affairs; to the extent that they did, it was still more than compensated for by their availability to consult and to advocate to the Board and to fundraise and so forth, so that by and large I think it was a pretty good system.

SZ: Maybe this is a good time to go back--because I don't think we did this last time--because you in your position at that time had responsibility for a great number of functions and what those were, so that the record will show them.

RK: I was Director of Administration from the outset of my staff involvement, which began in 1959, and Secretary, which did not amount to much other than keeping the records and doing the agendas and minutes of the Board meetings and so forth, and

I was counsel. So I was primarily responsible for legal affairs; either I handled them myself or with--let's see, I guess Miriam Cedarbaum was the first of my associate counsels, or with outside counsel, usually Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts, except in special areas such as real estate, where Winthrop, Stimson was not very strong. So I did all of that, and as Director of Administration I was responsible for building operations, security--office management, so to speak; and with Sarah Rubenstein, the Assistant Treasurer, for budgets and finance. We had a Finance Committee at the Board level; there had initially only been an Investment Committee made up of Trustees and outside consultants. I recognized quite early that there needed to be a separate committee responsible for the overall budgeting and management of the Museum's finances. What had been called the Finance Committee was really only an investment committee. We organized separately a Finance Committee, from which the Investment Committee split off but remained responsible to it; it was a subcommittee, really, of the Finance Committee. Sarah Rubenstein and I and René were primarily responsible at the staff level for the finances and to the Finance Committee, which was in turn of course responsible to the Board. So budgets had to be annually created at the staff level and then presented to the Finance Committee, which in turn presented them to the Board. The Investment Committee functioned pretty much independently under the Finance Committee, and reported, however, itself occasionally to the Board directly. [Telephone interruption] You had asked me what I was responsible for.

SZ: Yes. You had an opportunity to see how the whole thing fit together, and what worked and what didn't.

RK: Yes, very much so.

SZ: Because that was a time when a lot of plans were being made for the future and the huge thirtieth-anniversary drive undertaken.

RK: I participated very much in the thirtieth-anniversary drive, with Helen. Helen Franc

and I wrote the basic brochures and so forth, as she undoubtedly has told you, with René, actually; he did the final editing.

SZ: Did that seem like an enormous undertaking at that time?

RK: Yes. It was, I think, $25 million, and at that time that was a lot, even with a bunch of very well-heeled Trustees. It was René who formulated the goals for the drive, recommending them to the Board, which were divided into physical expansion--the East Wing and the Garden Wing were directly funded with the proceeds from that drive--and endowment, particularly endowment of salary increases, which were long overdue.

SZ: And that came from him?

RK: That came from him, yes. I can't remember how it was divided up, but I think the bulk of the $25 million proceeds from the drive was for the endowment, both of general operations--we were already running chronically, of course, deficits in the annual operation--and endowment of salary increases. Something like $6 or $7 million, I guess, was all that was used for physical expansion. The East Wing, the Garden Wing and the garden itself in its present form were pretty much products of that drive.

SZ: Before we get to that, this seems to be, with all the research I've done, to have been a chronic theme throughout the history of the Museum, which was always....

RK: Deficits [laughing]?

SZ: That's one, but the need for more space. I think that the '64 expansion...had been talked about long before it actually came about. If you can remember, at the Trustee meetings would you say the Trustees were fairly united in supporting this?

RK: Yes. I don't remember any particular controversy about any of these drives.

SZ: It meant, in fact, a burden for them.

RK: Sure, but they were happy to share the burden, generally, and David Rockefeller, particularly, was very gung-ho about physical expansion all the way down the line, and so was Bill Paley, and so was Nelson Rockefeller; so was Mike Cowles. Bill Burden not so much, because he was very loathe to lay out any of his own money if he could possibly avoid it [laughing].

SZ: And he knew what this meant?

RK: Yes, he knew exactly what it meant. So he used to growl and grumble, but all the others were very enthusiastic every time around. You may have heard that there was until just a few weeks ago, I'm informed, a strong move to dig up the garden to a depth of thirty-five feet so as to give the voracious curatorial staff some more gallery space, then put the garden back on top of it once again. Were you aware of this campaign?

SZ: Supposedly in the exact way it is now.

RK: The same configuration. I suppose they could do it if they spent enough money and tried hard enough. Apparently David Rockefeller was a big proponent of this. I cannot see that it would be worth the immense cost and trouble and commotion for, whatever, two or three years at the very least, I would think.

SZ: There was a report in the paper, because I guess Philip Johnson wasn't too wild about the idea.

RK: Philip didn't like the idea, predictably. They hired Alex Cooper to study it; I gather his report was, yes, it was possible, but only at huge cost, and it was finally decided by

the Board not to do it after all, which I think was very sound. I'm surprised it was even entertained.

SZ: This is sort of an off-the-cuff question, but it's an interesting development. You have David Rockefeller really wanting it, and it didn't come out that way.

RK: Yes. Well, even David Rockefeller can't have everything he wants, I guess. I am surprised, because I don't think he would have, on balance, between the pros and the cons, bought the idea even tentatively ten or fifteen years ago. So I don't know what curators got to him. Bill Rubin is no longer the activist, I don't suppose, that he used to be.

SZ: Back to the drive itself, and then we can talk about the building if there is anything else. Was it an unusual campaign...?

RK: I don't know, because I'd never been involved in one before; it came as brand-new to me. It had a schedule of something like three years, I guess--not necessarily to collect all the money, but to at least obtain all the pledges--and thanks to the availability of various foundations with close ties to Board members, such as Rockefeller Brothers Fund and some of the other associated foundations, it did not really seem to be all that difficult to get $25 million. The so-called leadership pledges of the Rockefeller family and some of the other Board members were very effective in getting outsiders to contribute at a pretty generous level. The principle was pretty clear by that time that if an affluent Trustee himself contributes very heavily early in the campaign, he then can go to other potential contributors and say, "I've put up a million dollars of my own money for this, how would you like to match it, or if not match it, at least come up proportionally with a comparable contribution?" It was pretty effective, particularly when Bill Paley and David Rockefeller were doing it. So, as campaigns go, it was fairly easy, because within the allotted three years we had all of the pledges and had already done building plans, and we got into construction quite rapidly.

SZ: What about the choice of architect?

RK: At that time, that was Philip Johnson. No question about it; it was sort of taken for granted, both by him and by the Board. He did, I think, a very good job, and we came in approximately on budget, as much as one ever does. I can't remember--when did we take down the "21" building, 21 West 53rd Street?

SZ: Not until '79, the beginning of that. It might even have been '80.

RK: Yes, that would be right. The next stage was the acquisition of the Whitney building on 54th Street.

SZ: That was for the '64 expansion.

RK: That was '64 or '67.

SZ: No, it was afterwards, but it was all part of it.

RK: After '64, yes. That was another stage of the thirtieth-anniversary expansion.

SZ: It was just a little late.

RK: A little late because we couldn't get the Whitney out. They had no idea where to move. It comes back to me now, I'd forgotten this. René had long ago decided that what he envisioned as the ultimate complex of Museum of Modern Art buildings should include the space which had improvidently been given, virtually, to the Whitney by MoMA, which initially had owned the space, back in the late 1940s to entice the Whitney to move from 8th Street, where its original building still stands between 5th and 6th Avenues, to get the Whitney to move uptown. I don't know who wanted the Whitney to do that, but somebody did; I've never gone into what the actual history of it was. MoMA virtually gave to the Whitney the plot on which it built

the building on 54th Street and then, of course, regretted that it had done so. So René sensed that the Whitney was never of its own volition going to move away from that space and decided that it would be up to us to find them a space and then help them to do the fundraising for construction, which was pretty much what happened. I worked with him on this and we found the space on Madison Avenue at 74th Street, and David Rockefeller anonymously put up the money--he may still be anonymous about this, I don't know--to buy it from an apartment developer who had gone broke before he was able to build his apartments. So David's money was contributed via MoMA to the Whitney and with the money they bought the space and agreed to move as soon as they could raise enough money to build a building there. It took them several years to do that, and then they moved. It was then that we acquired--reacquired--the land and of course now the building on it; we remodeled that following the initial 1964 expansion.

SZ: It was all part of the plan. The functions that were located in that building, it was all anticipated and it was all part of the piece.

RK: We remodeled it at considerable cost and put conservation and all sorts of offices and things in it, and storage--the second floor of the old Whitney building became the painting and sculpture storeroom.

SZ: In your memory, was there a sense at the completion of this process that already it was not enough?

RK: Oh, sure. [Laughter] Actually, at the very outset René's grand scheme had been to build what became, ultimately, the West Wing as part of the rest of the expansion. We couldn't do the West Wing for various reasons; that's when we took down the "21" building--actually, that was part of the 1979-80 expansion. But the West Wing was even in the fundraising brochures of the thirtieth-anniversary drive; I think the grand design including the Whitney building--I guess it didn't overtly include the Whitney building; they were still there--but the West Wing was part of it. We had

acquired back in the early 1950s what was called the Theatre Guild building, which was number 23 West 53rd Street--a big fifty-foot-wide mansion.

SZ: Photography was in there, I think, or something.

RK: Well, a variety of departments and functions came and went, including bookstores and all sorts of stuff. We kept remodeling it, all the way up to the time it was finally taken down in the 1970s. We had owned the building beyond that: number 27, which was given to the Museum by Wallace Harrison, who for some reason owned it. We then traded with the Theatre Guild, which had come upon bad times, the "27" building for the "23" building [laughing], then had to get them out of the "27" building later.

SZ: But that's another story.

RK: That's another story for later on.

SZ: Anything else about the process leading up to the opening in '64? Did people fight for space? Did you have to deal with all that?

RK: Yes, but I can't remember anything very specifically. They were all always fighting for space, understandably; there was never really enough however you looked at it. We kept moving departments around and around. I don't remember anything specifically. I'll get out some of the old schemes before next time, if I can find them. No, I can't think of anything.

SZ: How about the opening itself? I know that was a very gala event.

RK: Yes, it was very much a gala event, and I don't know how many thousands of people came. The ceremonies were in the garden; fortunately, it didn't rain. Mrs. Lyndon Johnson delivered a speech that someone had written for her. I don't remember anything of particular moment, however, but attendance at the Museum, of course,

went way up thereafter, and a lot of old-time members complained that we were getting overcrowded and too big and had lost the intimacy. The elevators were twice as crowded and cumbersome as they had ever been before. The gallery space had certainly been increased two times if not three, and a great deal more was visible. There was an interesting piece of public relations in 1960 to dramatize the need for exhibition space. Alfred Barr did what he hadn't done for a long time: he actually directed an exhibition, which was called A Bid for Space. He filled the entire third floor with works from the collection which were not ordinarily visible because of the lack of space; he hung them in the manner of the Louvre, on top of each other from floor to ceiling, which was absolutely fantastic, and very persuasive. He did it very well, it was very dramatic.

SZ: What was Alfred's position at that time in the early '60s? Where did he fit in what was going on and what your sense of it was?

RK: He was sort of off to one side. He was, among other things, supposed to be devoting most of his time to writing--books on the collections, particularly a book, which was PASIT/MoMA, an acronym for Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art. Well, like all the curators, or like most of them, at least, he was way late, and later and later and later in getting it finished. He worked on it for ten or fifteen years, I guess. Rona Roob was working with him during part of that and can certainly tell you more about it than I can. He was always coming up with excuses. After a while he didn't make excuses, he just didn't get the book out. He was working diligently. He was also exercising power as an eminence gris on collections activities.... He was still active, although...I mean, he was not playing a primary active role in acquisitions.

SZ: He was not.

RK: No. I don't remember that he was. The various curatorial department heads were doing that.

SZ: Well, Selz was there.

RK: Selz, and Drexler of course, and Lieberman. Alfred was more exercising veto powers over their proposals, as I remember it. But, as I said, it was he who was making the primary pitches to the Board about collections acquisitions, until the committee reorganization that I described before. The curatorial directors were all still very much in awe of him and deferred to him and griped about him, but he was not any longer really laboring over acquisition programs.

SZ: What about his relationship with René?

RK: Rather, I would say, somewhat distant. René usually deferred to him; he did not ordinarily feel obliged to consult with him. however. I can't think of any specific occasions. René used to gripe to me privately about his being obstructionist and would devise strategies for getting around him, because Alfred still exercised considerable weight with some of the Board members.

SZ: Such as?

RK: I'm trying to think of specifics, and none comes to mind.

SZ: And René as Director, in terms of his management style?

RK: Very loose. He liked to work one-on-one with everybody, and not necessarily let anybody else know what was going on. This was true, I think, of his relations both with the staff and with the Board. He spent probably a third of his time with individual Board members on various proposals and ideas and so forth, but very little time actually with the Board as a whole, at meetings and the like. He did not particularly take charge of Board meetings, as some directors of institutions want to do, but would generally sit back.

SZ: Did you think that was the right strategy for that situation?

RK: I didn't at that time know enough, hadn't really been exposed to enough alternatives in my experience, to have any particular judgment about it. It seemed to me that that was the way things were and only gradually I began to see that it might have been better had he taken a stronger hand in the management of the institution. He tended, as I said, to remain in the background, almost. Before a proposal was coming to the Board he would virtually coach some of the curatorial department heads and the like on presenting it, but they would be the presenters, not he, which in many ways was good for them.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2

RK: So, what else?

SZ: I thought next I'd ask you to tell me the story of the Stein Collection.

RK: That came a lot later.

SZ: It was a few years later, yes.

RK: Bates Lowry.... What?

SZ: Unless there's something in line with what we were just talking about that's sitting with you.

RK: No, nothing that comes to mind. Bates Lowry appointed himself Director of Painting and Sculpture. He didn't appoint himself Director of the Museum, of course, but even before he took office as Director of the Museum, he took over Painting and Sculpture, which had been temporarily under Bill Lieberman, I guess--Rubin was still

only a visiting curator or exhibition director; I can't remember the precise sequence. Shortly after he became Director, Bates announced to me that we were going to acquire the Stein Collection, (which had been offered to the Museum by a man in California who had indirectly inherited some sixty important works from his Aunt Gertrude Stein and her siblings. I believe the asking price was some $7.5 million, maybe more. Bates said that David Rockefeller, upon being alerted by Bates, had said that he would arrange financing of the purchase. Bates asked me to handle negotiations and to take care of the nuts and bolts of the transaction, with Bill Lieberman on the curatorial side. I think we began by offering $5 million, then bargained back and forth for several days, finally coming to agreement on $6 million for the entire collection, which was a terrific bargain even then. David enlisted Nelson, Bill Paley, Jock Whitney and André Meyer to each put up $1 million, while he committed himself for a double share. The arrangement among them, as a syndicate, was that they were individually acquiring the works--they were not purchased by the Museum)....

SZ: It was not the Museum buying the collection.

RK: It was not the Museum, no. It was me [laughing], as a matter of fact, as agent for the five members of the syndicate. They gave me checks for $6 million, which I took to the bank and opened an account for Richard Koch as agent, with a balance of $6 million, which felt pretty good. I wondered how I could get to Brazil [laughing]. It was I who gave a check for $6 million to the lawyer for the seller, whose name I can't remember. It was agreed in a contract that I worked out with counsel for David Rockefeller--the Rockefeller office had resident lawyers.

SZ: Lockwood, I know.

RK: John Lockwood.... John was resident, really, although he was a partner at Millbank, Tweed, and he had a number of lawyers there at his office at Room 5600, and with one of them--Bob Orr--I worked out the contractual arrangement among the

syndicate, so-called, whereby the works would be allocated by a system of drawing lots. One afternoon, once the works were all on hand and had been vetted by Lieberman, actually, who knew a great deal about the curatorial value of these works and their relative importance, Lieberman and Eugene Thaw together more or less assigned priorities among these works. And did they assign monetary values? Yes, they did. I think they had to, for purposes of keeping score when drawing lots, because they had to maintain an equitable relationship among the six shares of the syndicate, David Rockefeller having two.... It was understood among the syndicate members that in consideration of their being allowed to participate in this purchase and get what turned out to be enormous bargains, each of them, that they would give to the Museum for its collection or they would give or bequeath one, at least, of the works that they purchased. So that was understood and agreed to. I guess it must have been Lieberman who tagged the one the Museum should get in each case. André Meyer was not very happy about this, as it turned out.

SZ: Because?

RK: I can't remember why. It was perfectly clear what was going on, but he really groused about it. Later on, they wanted to borrow it--it was a Picasso, or a Cézanne, I don't remember now. The others were all more than willing, and indeed, I think each gave or bequeathed many more than the one that had been designated at the outset. So we had this lot drawing. It wasn't so much a lot drawing, except at the very outset, to see who went first; and then in rotation, each participant selected one picture, and then the next person would select a picture and you'd go around and around and around.

SZ: Where was this all done?

RK: It was done in the storeroom of the painting and sculpture collection in the old Whitney building, which by then had been remodeled.

SZ: Who was there? Just the buyers?

RK: No. There were the buyers and Bates and me and the accountant from Paley's office, Paley's personal accountant, who did all the recordkeeping--Sid Harl. Paley himself was sick with the flu or something so he sent the beauteous Babe Paley as his proxy. She didn't really know what she was doing, but she had been well coached....

SZ: And she did all right.

RK: She certainly did [laughing]. Paley got a pretty good selection indeed. Lieberman was there, as I said; I think Eugene Thaw was there, too. So then Lieberman did the exhibition, called Four Americans in Paris, which was very successful.

SZ: Since I took this out of sequence a little, let's go back on a couple things.... The transition between d'Harnoncourt's reign and the beginning of a fairly interesting period.

RK: It certainly was. [Laughter]

SZ: I guess I'm fishing, in a way. I want you to just start talking about whatever occurs to you. What I understand from a lot of people, it was a very emotional parting, and then, of course, his death.

RK: It was. René retired at sixty-five pretty much on the dot, as he had announced some years before he intended to do. This was a not insignificant fact, that his retirement and Monroe Wheeler's and Alfred Barr's all more or less coincided.

SZ: Not insignificant in what way?

RK: Because it left an immense vacuum. These were the three principle managers, plus

me, but I was off to one side on the organization chart--if there had ever been one [laughing].... It had been apparent, to me at least, about three years before, that there was going to be this yawning vacuum unless steps were not take to do some real searching and recruiting. I had bothered René about it and I had bothered David Rockefeller, who was Chairman at the time--he was back and forth, with various presidencies and chairmanships and so forth, chronically--via Dick Dana, who was David's liaison man and factotum, and Rick Solomon, who succeeded Dana, that it really behooved the Museum to begin working on this looming problem. Nothing, really, was done.

SZ: Neither of them had picked an heir-apparent?

RK: No.

SZ: Was that unusual, not to do that?

RK: No, I think it is unusual to do that. They should certainly have been working on it. Well, Alfred simply considered, I guess, that Dorothy Miller would sort of take over from him, but she was not up to that really in the same sense at all. Monroe Wheeler had, in fact, contrary to what I just said, been very conscious of his pending retirement and had taken considerable pains to find and hire a replacement on the Publications side of his jurisdiction; not so, however, on Exhibitions. I think it was not until Wilder Green and then Dick Palmer that anybody had the job of really coordinating the Exhibition Program. They both did it a great deal better than Monroe did, and Palmer still does.

SZ: And the Publications part of it?

RK: The Publications part of it, Monroe did hire a succession of potential successors;

Mike Gladstone was one. I think there was another, whose name I can't remember at the moment, under Monroe; and then when Bates came in, he fired the then-incumbent, Gladstone having already left, and installed a friend of his.... Grey Williams followed Gladstone, and Bates fired him summarily and installed Bob Carter. I guess that's how it went.

SZ: What you're saying is that Monroe really couldn't find somebody, that he didn't have somebody whom he really trained.

RK: Yes. I guess the first one he hired was Mike Gladstone, and Gladstone, as far as I could see, was doing all right. He was pretty much on his own; Monroe didn't pay too much attention, except one day he came in and told me he was going to let Gladstone go, and the reasons were never apparent to me. He just said he didn't think Gladstone was up to the job, and that was it.

SZ: You had responsibility for that; it was under your aegis, was it not?

RK: No, not really. You mean Publications?

SZ: No, not Publications. I guess I'm thinking of the bookstore.

RK: No, never the bookstore. The bookstore was always under Publications.... There never was and probably never will be a really carefully articulated, precise organization chart, a plumbing diagram, so to speak. Publications and Exhibitions always have--always did while I was there--report to the Director.

SZ: In terms of finishing this discussion of heirs-apparent, and René had not really....

RK: Had not focused on it at all. I mean, he recognized that somebody was going to [succeed him]. But a Trustee search committee was constituted, consisting of, I believe, Philip Johnson--I'm not sure why--Eliza Parkinson and, I think, Blanchette

Rockefeller. Somehow or other--I was not involved in this--they came up with the proposal of Bates Lowry, who was then at Brown University.... He had come into prominence primarily as a fundraiser for whatever the organization was that he and another art historian had founded to raise money to remedy the results of the catastrophic flood in Florence in about 1965.

SZ: CRIA. It was called CRIA. 1967.

RK: You see, you certainly know more than I do [laughing]. Committee for the Rescue....

SZ: ...of Italian Art.

RK: Italian Art, naturally. [Laughter] Who was his colleague, do you remember? Some other sort of prominent art historian. He had raised an awful lot of money for the disaster relief, and Bates had been writing to the Times and the like; nobody had ever heard of him before, but he had become pretty much a public figure in the art world.... Anyway, Bates got the nod, and I think he took over very shortly after René's retirement....

SZ: It was Millard Miess, who, with Bates, founded CRIA.

RK: That's right. Bates took over very fast, because René was retiring very soon. I think the announcement of his appointment by the Board preceded René's retirement only by about six months. So Bates had to move to New York and René retired in June or thereabouts, shortly after his sixty-fifth birthday, with all sorts of wonderful intentions about doing exhibition organizing, particularly international things, after he took off a summer to relax on Long Island. You know about the rest of it. Bates moved in and announced even before he took office that he needed a place to live in New York and expected the Museum to provide one, because Brown did.... So I was delegated

to find and buy for Bates an apartment.

SZ: This had obviously not been done before.

RK: No. René had his own apartment, on Central Park West, for a hundred years. I cannot really fault Bates for wanting an apartment, but it came as a surprise. So we found him an apartment, and it was then announced that this was not entirely satisfactory, so a certain amount of remodeling would have to be done [laughing]. So a considerable amount of remodeling was done, with Bates's wife, whose name I mercifully forget, very much involved with it. Bates then came aboard. The next thing was that he needed much more office space.

SZ: He'd already insisted on being head of P&S at the same time.

RK: Yes, at the same time.

SZ: How did that sit with everybody?

RK: Not too well, by any means, because that was obviously the most important curatorial department, and it was certainly going to be to the detriment of all the other curatorial departments. I don't remember what reaction there was on the part of the Board of Trustees, but I can't imagine that they were very pleased about it; on the other hand, nobody did anything to stop it, and there was no other immediately visible candidate, except Lieberman, on the staff. I don't think Rubin had yet begun to be active, even as a visiting curator. I guess Lieberman assumed the job after Bates left....

SZ: One would assume that he was somewhat aggrieved to start with.

RK: Oh, yes, sure he was.

SZ: How did the Trustees feel about these other demands that Lowry was making? Obviously, they went along with him, but was there a sense...?

RK: I don't remember any particular grousing about it, at least not to me; maybe among themselves. For a while he behaved, I thought, rather like mad King Ludwig of Bavaria. He wanted carpeting in all the corridors of the fifth-floor offices, and got it; he wanted partitions taken down so that offices could be expanded; he wanted his own personal staff to come in--his secretary from Brown, whose name was Carol [Brownell], and a woman named Irene Gordon, who was basically an editor, I guess, as his personal assistant for doing all sorts of things, and several others. He had a little suite of offices at the corner of the fifth floor of the East Wing--I forget what that is now--just under the then-Trustees Room.... I think what was the Trustees Room then is now the Archives; with walls and partitions and so forth you would certainly not recognize it, but the Archives are in there. So Bates wanted his personal staff, which he got, and he wanted a whole telephone system installed, a red telephone, so that he would have direct lines from his office to me and to curatorial department heads and so forth, so he wouldn't have to dial [laughing]; when he wanted to talk to one of us, he would just push a button. Immediately, the phone would ring in our office and we were supposed to drop everything, pick up and say, "Yes, Bates." He wanted a weekly meeting with me, for instance; every Thursday morning at ten o'clock he wanted me to have me report to him what had happened during the week, which is on its face not necessarily bad, except he apparently didn't want to have any dealings with me at any other time, except to send me memoranda and say, "Take care of this, please." There was--not only with me but with most of the other staff--there was absolutely no camaraderie or give-and-take or personal association, except to have him make a demand and expect an immediate response. You perceive that I was not fond of him, which is putting it mildly [laughing].

SZ: I was just going to ask you that question. Apparently you weren't alone. [Laughter]

RK: I think it was after only about seven months that the news got around in a flash that Paley had fired Bates, just out of hand, so this of course made no end of commotion, both in the Museum and outside--Grace Glueck obviously doting on the news.

SZ: Was that a surprise to you, or did you know that there was a movement afoot?

RK: It was not a surprise to me that he was dismissed, partly because I had been regularly invited to lunch by Arthur Tourtellot, who was Paley's liaison. Have you encountered Arthur Tourtellot in any sense? He was a remarkable man, had been very active, very high up, in one of the big public relations firms--I think it was Clyde Newsome; they had represented CBS, and Paley had hired Arthur to be his personal assistant and liaison and speech writer and all sorts of things like that, so Arthur was very close to the Museum and to me. He attended Board meetings with Paley, for instance, and he and I had lunch every two or three weeks and he was constantly picking my brains about Bates and the inner workings of the Museum. From his insistence on pursuing this not particularly pleasant subject, I quickly intuited that he was reporting to Paley about it. Paley was certainly not likely to be happy about it; Paley was president at the time, and David was Chairman again. So it did not come entirely as a surprise, because lots of the other senior staff were obviously not happy with Bates. Somehow his conduct at Board meetings did not seem to arouse much sympathy on the part of the Board, who were not entirely poker-faced. So Paley, as it turned out later, had on his own motion talked with David Rockefeller, who had agreed, and with all the former senior members of the Board who had held president or vice president or vice-chairmen titles, and on the basis of their agreement Paley forthwith canned Bates summarily. The one Trustee he did not consult with was Ralph Colin. Ralph had been for many, many years a member of the Board and was, I believe, at this time a vice president, was a lawyer at Rosenman, Colin, a big law firm that was, among other things, the counsel to CBS, and he was personal counsel to Paley. The story is pretty well-recorded, as you doubtless know. Ralph protested to Paley and to the Board at the next meeting that Paley had not gone through

proper channels; the Board nevertheless ratified Paley's action and Ralph was summoned to Paley's office several days later and told that neither Ralph nor Rosenman, Colin was going to have anything to do with Paley or CBS in the future. So Rosenman, Colin lost the CBS account thereupon, and Colin protested to Paley that he would have thought that after the many years of friendship, Paley would not have been so perfunctory with him, and Paley thereupon said--it was Colin himself who reported this--"Ralph, you were never my friend, only my lawyer" [laughing].

SZ: End of story.

RK: End of story. I think this is in the Paley biography.

SZ: But you know that. He said that to you?

RK: Oh, yes. Ralph told it to everybody, to my amazement. Rosenman, Colin has, needless to say, survived the blow and is bigger and fatter than ever.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**RICHARD KOCH (RK)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**2 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE NEW YORK CITY**
DATE:	**JUNE 25, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: Dick, I thought we'd start with a discussion of how, after Bates was let go, the decision was made to have the three of you--Walter Bareiss, Wilder Green and yourself--run the Museum and what that all brought about.

RK: How the decision was made, I don't know, because I was not privy to the making of the decision. Several days after Bates's departure, Walter Bareiss came bustling into my office and said, "Let's get organized." I said, "What?" He said, "Wilder Green and you and I are going to run the Museum until there's a new Director." I said, "Oh." He said, "Yes. I've just come from Paley, and that's the way he wants us to do it." So we became a kind of informal troika. Wilder was mainly involved in curatorial matters and I in noncuratorial. Bareiss was very heavily engaged in European business affairs. I think he lived in Munich at the time, and in Venice and in New York and in Connecticut, and he was constantly jumping back and forth from one city to the other. I don't remember exactly what his business was at the time; he seemed to be involved in a number of enterprises. He was at the Museum not very often, actually. He would come in and spend a few days; he didn't really have an office. Then he would go off to Munich or Venice or somewhere. Wilder and I had a very agreeable, pleasant relationship with him and with each other.

SZ: So Bareiss was really the connection to the Board.

RK: Yes, and at Board meetings he would do the primary reporting, in the role of the Director. Wilder and I would brief him when he was there on what had happened since his last visit, and he would do whatever we asked him to do, but he did not play a very active role, actually.

SZ: What was he like?

RK: He was a very brash, bustling sort of man. I guess he was in his mid fifties perhaps at the time. He was very dynamic and energetic, direct. He was a collector, I think mainly of prints, and had been for a long time. He had been a member of the Board for quite a while, though I don't really remember when he came on; I don't think he was there when I arrived. He had been active, in fact possibly the chairman of one of the curatorial committees, of drawings or prints, I think, and had also been a member of the Committee on Painting and Sculpture. I don't remember that he had any direct involvement in curatorial operations.

SZ: So why did Paley pick him?

RK: I don't know. I never knew. I was not aware of any particular relationship that they had earlier; certainly during the period of the troika Walter was frequently seeing Paley and Tourtellot, who was the liaison man I mentioned last time.

SZ: What about Wilder? Why Wilder, and what was he like?

RK: Why Wilder? Well, he had been Director of Exhibitions, I guess. It's coming back to me slowly. I don't remember--did he take over during Monroe's declining regime? Do you know? It doesn't matter really. But he became Director of Exhibitions and had fairly cordial relations with the various curatorial departments, mainly, obviously, in the exhibition area. Before that he had been in the Architecture and Design department, I guess as Associate Director with Drexler. Also, Wilder was an architect

professionally; interestingly, Drexler was not. Drexler, in fact, had never gone to college, or if he had gone, he had not finished, let alone never studying architecture formally. Wilder had designed a lot of exhibitions and had come more and more to specialize and spend his time while he was in the department as an exhibition designer, at which he was very good I thought. I think most of the curatorial departments were happy to have him do their shows. I don't recall that we had any other exhibition designers at that time.... Wilder and Arthur Drexler seemed to get along pretty well. As I said, Wilder had moved over from the architecture department to become Director of Exhibitions, as which he was responsible for coordinating and scheduling and for some extent budgeting the entire exhibition program, and he was quite good at it. We got along very well.

SZ: How did you do it, the three of you? You said that Walter Bareiss wasn't around that much....

RK: He wasn't around that much. Wilder and I had adjacent offices, and we were constantly in touch with each other. I supervised all of the noncuratorial areas, I guess, and he the curatorial side. Collections activities, acquisitions and things like that somehow took care of themselves within the curatorial departments individually, between the curatorial staff and by this time we had all these Trustee committees, which were functioning fairly well. Everything really seemed to get along quite smoothly. I don't remember who was on the search committee for a new Director. Bareiss may have been a member of it; he probably was. At that time John Hightower was still in charge of the New York State Council of the Arts, as Executive Director. He had done quite a good job there, and Nelson Rockefeller was Governor, and they had, apparently, a very cordial relationship. They got the budget for the State Council up from an initial $3 million a year at the outset when it began in 1965 to $18 million, I think before John left. I don't remember how long the interregnum was before John came on board. Do you know?

SZ: About a year.

RK: Yes, that's my dim recollection. So John was appointed...and the governor had strongly recommended and backed him. The Governor [Nelson Rockefeller] at that time was still very much interested in the affairs of the Museum; he was not at all active, certainly, because he was up in Albany, and with his marital affairs and the like.... I forget when he began to have aspirations for the White House; that came fairly later, at least so far as its visibility is concerned. He was very interested in the Museum and was in pretty close contact with his brother David, of course.

SZ: I was going to ask how having Nelson's interest in the Museum going way back in its connection with his mother....

RK: Yes, way back, to the 1930s.

SZ: ...how during this time we're talking about, you would describe the balance. David was Chairman at this time.

RK: Probably.

SZ: Because Paley was President in 1968, and then in '72 he became Chairman and David stepped down.

RK: Blanchette became President first and then Chairman? I'm not sure.

SZ: Yes, then back and forth.

RK: They all went back and forth.

SZ: But there was this time when Paley became Chairman and Blanchette became President. But in terms of the two brothers, whether it was as strong with David then, or....

RK: You mean the relations between them?

SZ: Yes, in terms of their interest in and their dedication to the institution.

RK: David was far more active, Nelson by this time having been up to his neck in politics. David, of course, was up to his neck in the Chase Bank and in the affairs of the various Rockefeller foundations, particularly the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. David was very active in fundraising for the Museum particularly, and only occasionally in its internal affairs. I think I said that in Paley's biography, when he fired Bates he had first touched base with David particularly, and with Nelson, and the various previous occupants of the chairmanship and the presidency, I guess--Bill Burden and Mike Cowles I think. Paley was conscious always of David looking over his shoulder I think and generally deferred to him. David and Nelson, I have no idea how much contact they had with each other. I remember once, somewhat later, that Nelson had promised to bequeath to the Museum some twenty-five masterworks from his collection, and at some point he wanted to be released.

SZ: Twenty-four.

RK: Twenty-four? He wanted to be released from this promise with respect to some of his works, I think in order to possibly sell some because he needed cash, remarkably. This was a source of considerable dismay to--I guess this was back in d'Harnoncourt's day--to David when it was brought to his attention. David leaned on Nelson with considerable force I gather. This was all done through the various factotums; David's was Rick Salomon and Nelson's was Mary Kresky and various lawyers at Millbank, Tweed at the 5600 office.... I don't mean John Lockwood, but his successor, Donald O'Brien. Anyway, Nelson decided not to get out of it, and they came to the collection in due course, with some lend-backs to Happy Rockefeller, if I'm not mistaken. David took a very dim view, and at least at one meeting at which I was present spoke of Nelson in rather invidious terms [laughing], to say the least....

But when there was a capital campaign going on, David generally persuaded Nelson to match whatever he, David, had pledged. He also leaned on Paley similarly to match his pledges and was generally quite successful. In fact, we at the staff level were somewhat dismayed that he hadn't gone further with Paley, first by pledging himself maybe $5 million rather than $2 million, because Paley was damned if he was going to go any higher than David did. Bill Burden, of course, went kicking and screaming when anybody asked him for even $25,000. I remember we had trouble collecting a $25,000 annual contribution from Burden at one point, or indeed, several points. Jock Whitney was always generous to a fault and would do whatever he was asked. He was a lovely man. We got sidetracked, but.... Where were we?

SZ: We were moving into the Hightower era, but let me ask you this. For the time that the three of you were doing it, were you coming under the kind of pressure that Hightower later came under in terms of what was happening in the outside political sphere? Because it was a very active time.

RK: You mean the staff union and so forth?

SZ: Well, I know the union came up as a result, but there were all kinds of pressures coming up from outside, from minority artists and all that, and....

RK: Oh, 1968 and all that, sure.

SZ: ...how much of that you handled, or was it just kind of left for...?

RK: Of course. I'd forgotten, mercifully.... In 1968, of course, all the uproar had begun at Columbia. We had a certain amount of protests at the lack of minority artists in the collection and in exhibitions, and not enough women artists certainly, and no artists on the Board of Trustees and no women curatorial department heads, except Riva Castleman may have been there by then, I'm not sure. This mounted, I guess, from '68 to 1970 or thereabouts, when there began to be dumpings of animal entrails on

the lobby floor. I forget what precisely was the point of that, what was supposed to be proven by it; the connections were not always clear in some of these activities. Kynaston McShine was denounced as a mere token.... A committee was organized, in response to this, of Board members and curatorial people, an ad hoc committee chaired by Paley's son-in-law, Jeff Byers, that was known as the Byers Committee. The committee had any number of meetings at which everybody agreed that there should probably be more minorities, especially blacks. It's pretty stupid to call women a minority when they're fifty-two percent of the population.

SZ: Oh, but you know.... [Laughter]

RK: Okay, there should be more minorities and women artists in the collection.

SZ: That's the lawyer in you talking.

RK: Can't help it, I'm sorry. Nobody particularly disagreed about that. It was very solemn and pious and in good will, but nothing really particularly seemed to be done in any concrete manner. I don't think anyone particularly proposed things, except, yes, we really should be more sensitive in the future to such works. Romare Bearden, I think, was pointed to as someone who had been sadly neglected by the Museum. I don't remember anyone else who was brought up as a major figure who had been spurned or snubbed. The Byers Committee made a noncommittal report, which was probably fifty or sixty pages long, and then evaporated. Certainly consciousness was heightened or raised throughout the Museum, but I don't remember that there were any specific results of the whole affair. Hightower came in in the course of this, if I'm not mistaken.

SZ: There was one other thing, I think, that was done during that period and it's been referred to an aide-mémoire that Bareiss had done. I think that Mildred Constantine told me that she had worked on it. It was just an assessment of what was going on, what needed to change at the Museum. Do you remember that at all?

RK: Was this the report of the Bareiss committee? I remember the phrase aide-mémoire being bandied about.

SZ: "To establish priorities in light of current demands and conditions. Make the collections more visible." There were a number of issues like that. So that was a separate thing, but going on concurrently, I assume.

RK: You mean without reference to all this minority stuff.

SZ: I don't know.

RK: It was? I don't remember. You spoke of making the collections more visible, and everybody was constantly talking about that.

SZ: "Mount temporary shows of contemporary art and historical surveys and, when possible, finance them individually." Different things have been said about it, but the thing that sticks in my mind that I heard was that in the end it basically confirmed that the direction that the Museum was moving in was the correct one and that it should just keep doing that.

RK: I think that was pretty much the general conclusion.

SZ: And why was it undertaken?

RK: This may have been a separate project. There was considerable back-and-forth among the staff, particularly, and the Board, too, whether or not there had been sufficient attention paid to the contemporary scene, the current scene--literally, day to day--in exhibitions and collections and acquisitions and the like. I simply remember that there was constant argument about it, and this may have interlocked to some extent with the Byers Committee, which was focusing much more on the

minority business. But I do remember that there was general agreement finally that we should just keep on doing what we had been doing. There had also been proposals that we should have branch museums all over the region, at what would obviously have been at great expense and an enormous amount of trouble. The Whitney has managed to do it, mainly by getting heavy corporate sponsorship, and I guess they find it's worth the trouble; it's certainly nice in the Grand Central neighborhood to drop in and see what's doing at the Philip Morris building.

SZ: Do you do that?

RK: Yes, when I happen to be there and have a little time to kill. I've never seen any of the others. They have one in Stamford, I think, and one downtown which I've never seen. And sure, that's a very good thing to do, but it certainly costs a lot of money and time and trouble, and whether it's worth that, who knows. If you can get Philip Morris to pay for it, and Equitable--they have one up at the Equitable building, too, which is very nice; I stop in whenever I'm passing by, but there are never many people in either of those two--hardly any, as a matter of fact.

SZ: It struck me in one of the annual reports from this time--I think this phrase out of there--"the Museum as a social force" was the actual phrase that was used. I guess taking the Children's Art Carnival, and there were a couple of other projects--maybe one that the Junior Council undertook. What I'm really fishing for is this sense of here's an institution that in one way or another is really being pushed by social forces from without and how you felt that and what you felt the response was, and did it ultimately make much difference?

RK: I don't know. My own personal feeling was that museums were not supposed to be a social force, they were aesthetic in their primary mission. I would have been perfectly content to let the social side of the thing come along as it would, without any laboring or being pulled by the Museum. There were a lot of people, of course, who thought it should yell out into society with all sort of affirmative-action kinds of programs. I

wasn't against it, except to the extent that it distracted from what the primary mission was. The Junior Council did organize various things, and of course there was the Children's Art Carnival and the school. They were good works, sure, but it did not seem to me to be what was basically the Museum's business. Hightower was very, very gung-ho about all sorts of extracurricular enterprises.

SZ: Was that clear when he was hired? Was that one of the reasons he was hired?

RK: No, I don't think so. I don't think he had tended to steer the State Council in its grants and so forth in that direction particularly. He was a populist, however, quite definitely. By the way, is he on your agenda?

SZ: I hope so.

RK: I haven't heard anything about him for a long time, have you?

SZ: No.

RK: The last I heard was that he was organizing a maritime museum in one of the suburban towns in Connecticut, on the coast--Westport, perhaps, or Norwalk. But that was several years ago, and I haven't heard anything about it since. What now?

SZ: So he was hired, and that relieved you of....

RK: ...relieved me of what had become, pretty much.... Wilder and I and Bareiss, all, of course, went back to our regular duties. I remained in charge of the administrative side. Hightower pretty much preempted what had been, and quite properly, Wilder's purview in the curatorial side. Then the staff association came, and I can't remember exactly what triggered that, except that there was a management study done by a firm of management consultants, Cresap, McCormick and Paget.... Obviously you've heard already about that. How did that come about? I don't remember whether this

antedated Hightower's advent or not, and it may have been instituted by Bareiss, actually. Do you know?

SZ: I know it was 1970-71.

RK: So it's all pretty much muddled together. Cresap, McCormick was a firm, very big and reputable, of management consultants who specialized in sending a team of more-or-less professionals into organizations, nonprofit and business alike, and government, to study their systems and personnel staffing and to make recommendations toward promoting efficiency and clarity and reasonably good will and amenities, and economics.

SZ: There was a deficit, right?

RK: There was always a deficit. There was a deficit and there was a need for an overhauling of the salary structure--that was, I think, acknowledged by everybody--and there was a need to possibly streamline the operations. There had never been, and as far as I know there still is not, an organizational chart in the classical hierarchical plumbing diagram sense. I had suggested it once or twice to René. He just laughed. He said there was no possibility of doing anything that would be the least bit in accordance of reality. He said you'd have so many crossed wires and so forth, it wouldn't make any sense. I came to agree with him after I thought about it for a while. I made several attempts at it, from time to time, but could never satisfy myself that they were particularly sensible. Cresap tried it, too.

SZ: I was going to say, this was another attempt, in a way.

RK: Exactly. They did a big study, with a number of reports on different areas of operation.

SZ: Did they go and interview various staff people?

RK: Yes.

SZ: How did that go over?

RK: I think the curatorial staff, at least, had a pretty much tongue-in-cheek attitude toward it. They went along with it because they had to, but I don't think they took it very seriously. They certainly interviewed me and Wilder, I remember, and Waldo and the other noncuratorial people. And they were very interested in Publications; I remember they ponderously came up with a fifty-page report, a study of the Publications department's operations and economics, and concluded that what was really needed was more books like The Family of Man. Well, sure [laughing]!

SZ: You already knew that.

RK: We already knew that; there was nothing more self-evident than that, and to pay this outside, expensive consulting firm tens of thousands of dollars for that kind of advice was really pretty fatuous. What they did come up with, which caused all sorts of commotion of course, was a study of the salary structure, which was indeed deficient in many ways. It was not particularly systematic; it had grown up over the years, and so many people had titles which they had simply grown into, and curatorial people particularly had titles which they had been given rather than getting a salary increase. Some of the curatorial directors would say to their middle-level staff, "I'm sorry, I can't get you an extra thousand dollars, five thousand dollars, whatever, but how would you like to be an associate curator instead of an assistant curator?" This had been happening all over the place for a long, long time, and there were titles that had nothing to do with the salaries or with the seniority or with the professional qualifications from one department to another, indeed, even within the departments to some extent. So there were these discrepancies and incongruities all over the place, and Cresap quite sensibly proposed that these be harmonized, or rationalized at least. Of course the monetary cost of doing that was going to be considerable, to

adjust all the things. We and they also did studies comparing salaries at the Metropolitan and the Whitney--the Metropolitan was better, the Whitney was worse, than MoMA--and the Guggenheim, which was worse. And of course it wasn't very long before copies of this highly-sensitive and explosive document fell into the hands of most of the staff.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 2

RK: And I suppose it was that that really sparked the organization of the staff association, that together with the fact that the Personnel Director--which was my responsibility, because she reported to me--had dragged her feet on the production of a new personnel manual, which was supposed to be regularly revised every year or two to keep it up-to-date with evolving personnel practices and policies. For reasons which I don't remember, this had not been done lately, or certainly not lately enough, and that was a source of some indignation, although I don't know why it would have bothered anybody particularly, but they made an issue of it.

SZ: Also, wasn't it announced or it might have even happened that there were twelve employees who were dismissed because of budgetary reasons.... And that was just a thing that they grabbed onto?

RK: Yes. That was of course the final spark. I remember they tried to dramatize the plight of the "Museum 12," one of whom was the comptroller, who was not exactly a lowly figure and had been let go for reasons of personal inefficiency rather than anything to do with social injustice. That was the case with a number of the others, too, although I don't remember now who they were. But the staff association then really did organize itself and retained a labor lawyer named Michael Horowitz, a real firebrand who subsequently became a big shot in the Office of Management and Budget in Washington. Why are you laughing?

SZ: I'm laughing because somebody told me he's now sort of totally flip-flopped.

RK: That's what I was about to say [laughter]. A year or two ago, when the Government, as usual, was running out of money because a budget hadn't been adopted and they couldn't write any checks at the first of October or something, at the beginning of the fiscal year they had no budget and they had to close government offices because they couldn't pay people, it was Michael Horowitz who made the announcement. Anyway, he was at that time a very dramatic, firebrand labor lawyer. I guess it was he who devised the war cry "the Museum 12." The staff association made all sorts of demands, although I don't think they had yet affiliated with Local 65. They were entirely self-contained and independent. They wanted artists on the Board of Trustees; they wanted salary increases, immense amounts; they wanted the senior curators to be members of the union, notwithstanding their supervisory responsibilities, and under labor law supervisors who have hiring and firing responsibilities over their subordinates may not be members of the union that the subordinates belong to.

SZ: But that's what they wanted.

RK: That's what they wanted. Some of the curators who were department directors and senior curators wanted to be in the union, others did not, but management's position was that this won't go. I believe as it now stands, associate curators and curators and department directors are all excluded from the union. I think it is fairly well settled, and I'm not aware of any further friction about it.

SZ: I think I read the argument was that that was a divisive thing among professional people who were supposed to be working together.

RK: Sure. No, I understood the rationale; it's not unreasonable, but it just overlooked the

factor of hiring and firing responsibilities, which were inconsistent with everybody being in the same union. So the Board of Trustees was not about to invite artists to join the Board; was not about to provide another x-hundred thousand dollars a year for salary increases immediately but was certainly not opposed to including minority artists in exhibitions and in the collections, to the extent that work of appropriate quality became available. So that never really was particularly an issue. So we had a strike, I guess, which was pretty foolish kind of behavior, on the sidewalk and in the lobby, and it lasted...can't remember now, or the basis on which it was settled. There were two strikes.

SZ: There were two strikes. The first one [in 1971], Hightower was there for.

RK: And the second one [in 1973]?

SZ: The Director was Dick.

RK: Oldenburg? Yes, I remember now.

SZ: But the one with Hightower, a lot came out of that.

RK: Tell me [laughing].

SZ: No, I'm asking you.

RK: I don't remember.

SZ: Let me ask you this then.... There were a number of Trustees who had been associated with the institution for a very long time, and here you have this institution that sort of grew up in a very particular kind of way, and I'm wondering what the feeling was, because the organization of a union within and then subsequent strikes really signalled, I would guess, a very different part of its history. How that was

accepted, or not.

RK: The Trustees, generally speaking, were not favorably disposed toward the union, particularly when it hit the sidewalk and was running up and down outside with inflammatory picket signs and so forth. They were not necessarily black reactionaries, but they were certainly not very favorably disposed. Some of them considered, as they always had, that it was such a privilege to work at the Museum that people should not really be paid any salaries at all; others were much more reasonable. I guess it was sort of traumatized. I'm blanking out on the thing; I have very little recollection of specifics, although I was involved in the middle of it.

SZ: What was your role? In negotiations?

RK: Yes, very much so.

SZ: You had outside counsel, too?

RK: Yes. We got special labor counsel. Winthrop, Stimson's primary labor lawyer, it quickly became apparent, was not the sort of personality to get along with the staff association at all. He was used to blue-collar contexts and was simply not in any sense sympatico or acceptable to the bargaining committee on the other side.

SZ: Who is that?

RK: His name is Ed Scully. So we talked with several firms which specialized in labor law which had been recommended by Bill Paley, perhaps, and the Rockefellers and so forth. We went to Proskauer, Rose, Goetz & Mendelsohn and talked with Ed Silver, who was a senior partner, who, incidentally, has been belatedly taken on by the City of New York to handle its labor negotiations. There was one of those editorial notes at the bottom of the column in the Times last week, commending the city for finally getting a professional to handle it, and it turned out to be Ed Silver. Ed Silver had an

associate, who has since become a partner--Bob Batterman--whom he assigned, under his occasional supervision, to handle the Museum, which Bob did. He and I handled the negotiations, with Hightower occasionally intervening. I believe Bob is still handling the Museum's labor relations, and he's very, very good; he's good both at the blue-collar level and at the professional level, and he has very good relations with the union's lawyers, even with Horowitz, as a matter of fact, in the early days. Once we got Bob, things began to go quite smoothly, relatively.

SZ: You had never done anything like this before.

RK: I had worked in labor relations, to some extent, with Scully when I was at Winthrop, Stimson, so I knew quite a bit about the mechanics of it and so forth, and about the law. Hightower didn't know anything about it and was constantly shooting off his mouth in, at or away from negotiating meetings and embarrassing the situation no little from time to time. The first strike I think went on, what, five weeks or something like that? Two weeks, August 20-September 3, 1971.

SZ: That's right.

RK: As I said, I don't remember the settlement, except that we obviously did make salary adjustments. There was certainly no yielding on the issue of who was going to be on the Board of Trustees. Are you aware of whatever else may have come out of it? I don't think there was very much, actually.

SZ: No.

RK: The second strike [October 9-November 29, 1973] was even longer; I think it was seven weeks, which was long enough, or almost long enough, for the strikers to get unemployment insurance benefits.

SZ: Almost long enough [laughing].

RK: Was it?

SZ: No. Dick was there, and there was a whole other set of issues. Maybe we can start with that one next time.

RK: I don't remember what the issues in that one were. What do you have on that?

SZ: I think that one of the things that happened during that whole thing also was there was this whole argument about who ought to arbitrate it.

RK: Mediation.

SZ: Yes, mediation. Forgive the terminology.

RK: There's a difference. Arbitrators make a judgment and that's it; it's up to them to decide. Mediation is simply a greasing-of-the-wheels procedure, whereby a mediator, who is appointed either by the state or the federal government, sits between the parties, so to speak, and carries back and forth their various proposals and responses. We had a wonderful man named Saul Kreitman, who has since died.... I'm not sure whether he was state or federal, because we took the position that the Museum was engaged in interstate commerce and therefore fell under federal labor law jurisdiction, so Saul must have been from the federal service. Anyway, I think he was involved in both strikes. He was an elderly man, very bland and very sage in his Solomonic manner, who would schedule the negotiating sessions and would be present at negotiating sessions and would send both parties out of the room and then go back and forth between them, and was very valuable and instrumental in settling both strikes I think. Did you say there was conflict about who it would be, the mediator?

SZ: Here are the actual words, so I don't get it wrong. The union asked for nonbinding

fact-finding, and Dick Oldenburg said that he would go with the National Labor Relations Board, their third-party ruling, but that he wasn't going to do that. That became an issue between the parties.

RK: The nonbinding term rings a bell, and I think it was not that; I think they asked for binding arbitration. That they certainly talked about at various times, and that is obviously very different from nonbinding fact-finding, which consists of really just a lot of noisemaking. Who told you nonbinding fact-finding, if I may?

SZ: I read it in some papers I found in the Archives.

RK: Really?

SZ: I didn't make it up.

RK: [Laughing] I wasn't suggesting otherwise. I thought maybe someone you had talked to had said it.

SZ: No, this is research. We'll do more of that next time. What finally happened to Hightower, as you remember it? We could end with that.

RK: I shouldn't say offhand, but at the moment my recollection is that he was one afternoon summoned to Black Rock [CBS headquarters] and told by Paley that he was through. He lasted about twice as long as Bates Lowry, i.e., about a year and a half.

SZ: That's right.

RK: The first I knew of it, he came into my office about four o'clock in the afternoon and said he had been fired by Paley, and whether he knew the reason or not, certainly I never did. Neither did anyone else that I knew of. It seemed to me that he had not

been doing too bad a job. What were the reasons for Paley's and the Board dissatisfaction, I don't know. He and I had gotten along reasonably well. He was not the greatest manager in the world. He on one occasion had fired--he tried to fire me once, come to think of it, I can't remember why; I told him I would not resign, wasn't dreaming of it, and he dropped it. I think he wanted to bring in somebody from the State Council...to replace me. He did fire out from under me, without consultation or anything, Joe Chapman, who had been in charge of security, reporting to me, and who in fact I had promoted to operating administrator, which meant he was supposed to handle the day-to-day nitty-gritty of building operations, office management and security. He'd been working under me for a couple of years, I guess, before Hightower came, and one day Chapman came into my office, ashen, and said he had just been fired by Hightower. I said I didn't know anything about it, which I hadn't. Ditto Sarah Rubenstein, the Assistant Treasurer, who was not under me but sort of alongside me, he fired the same day, again without any word to me in advance. I was pretty teed-off about all of this stuff, but we got over that and ordinarily got along pretty well. He was impulsive and, I thought, somewhat bubble-headed; he had a lot of charm, sometimes; he was certainly not much of an administrator on the curatorial side, or the noncuratorial--I don't think he had the respect of the curatorial staff, and Paley may simply have decided he was not up too the job as he thought it ought to be done.

END TAPE 3, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RICHARD KOCH (RK)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **2 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE**
NEW YORK CITY

DATE: **JULY 9, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: Following up on our session last time, what I found in the records--and I think some were Hightower's papers, but then there were other things--that the whole Kent State event precipitated Hightower's departure, in that he closed the Museum for a day without consulting the Board or Paley....

RK: I do remember that he closed the Museum, quite arbitrarily and without any advance warning. I think there was a general closing of a number of institutions for one day following the shooting of four Kent State students by the National Guard of Ohio. Hightower just summarily decided to follow suit and did, and Paley, among others, was extremely annoyed that this had been done without any consultation with the Board. Whether that was actually the occasion of his firing, I never heard. It seems slightly trivial relative to...I think Paley was pretty unhappy with Hightower anyway by then, and he was prone to making statements to the press that were very offhand and indiscreet and attributing them to the Museum, although they were simply expressions of his personal views rather than official Museum policy. So I think the cumulative effect of all of this on Paley was probably the reason for the discharge, which I think was at the end of '71....

SZ: Dick, you must have been privy to a lot of this. I guess there was growing dissatisfaction with Hightower that you perceived. Was there any thought being given

at that time to who would replace him and where he would come from?

RK: Not that I was aware of. You mean while he was still there?

SZ: Yes.

RK: No, not that I knew of. Oldenburg was hired, I think, before Hightower came. Yes, because Bareiss, Wilder Green and I--the Operating Committee, so-called--it was concurrent with Bates Lowry's departure. Bob Carter, who was Lowry's designee as Director of Publications, Carter left as precipitously as Lowry did, virtually, and we had to find a new Director of Publications. So Bareiss, Wilder and I--specifically, Wilder and I--started to look around and do some recruiting. After a little while, we found two prime candidates. One was Dick Oldenburg, who had a big editorial post at MacMillan, I think. The other was Paul Gottlieb, who was at that time leaving American Heritage.... They were both very interested in the job, and Wilder and I, then bringing in Bareiss, considered them to be equally frontrunners. They saw some of the Trustees, I suppose, but I don't remember which ones or what the effects of that were. Anyway, we decided that Oldenburg was, of the two, perhaps was a little more likely--or was it perhaps that Gottlieb turned out to be unavailable? I don't remember. Oldenburg got the job and started very early, very soon, and performed very well.... Lowry was canned, then the Operating Committee was there for about a year, Oldenburg was there for the last six months of that year, and there was never, that I remember, ever any formal search committee for a replacement. But after about six months, Paley summoned the main department heads to his office one afternoon and announced that...Dick Oldenburg...would be Acting Director until a search committee had been organized and made a recommendation. I don't remember who was on this search committee, but they sort of floundered around for a few months and then came back with the recommendation that Oldenburg, as Acting Director, be made permanent Director, which was approved by the Board. And that was the end of that. Oldenburg then became permanent Director....

SZ: I was going to ask you if you were aware of other people within the Museum wanting this position, because one thing I've heard a lot is that Arthur Drexler really was jockeying for position and that there was a lot of dissension caused by that.

RK: I think Arthur was, now that you remind me. Arthur was very heavy in his politicking. I'd forgotten about it. I was not involved in it, but I watched it from the sidelines to some extent, as did Wilder Green. I think Wilder would have liked it, but nobody seriously considered him; Drexler sort of preempted him.

SZ: You mean Wilder always would have liked it.

RK: I'm sure he would have liked to be Director, yes, but I don't think he was seriously considered as a contender. Rubin, doubtless, would have liked it, but I was not aware of his really doing any serious politicking. Drexler did.

SZ: What does that mean?

RK: He was persuading various of the Board, various Trustees, to carry the torch for him. Philip Johnson and Eliza Parkinson, I think, particularly; I think he was simply trying to enlist their support. But so far as I know, it never really got off the ground. I don't think he was seriously considered; I think he was generally admired curatorially by a lot of the Board.

SZ: He was admired curatorially.

RK: Yes. I don't think any of them had a high regard for him as an administrator. The directorship, really, under d'Harnoncourt and ever since broke into three full-time jobs--still is. One is relations with the Board, one is running the Museum and one is relations with the outside world. René used to go crazy trying to cover all these three bases, and Bates just disregarded all of them except...well, he really disregarded all of them [laughing]. Hightower was more concerned with relations with the outside

world than anything else. Dick Oldenburg, in my observation, is driven crazy just as René was, because you simply cannot delegate any of the three without just riding herd on it all the time. Drexler really did not have the potential for any of the three, in my judgment, and I think the Board pretty much thought so, too. He was indeed a brilliant Director of Architecture and Design, with some wonderful exhibitions, but he rarely met his budgets or his deadlines. Anyway, Dick was anointed, I think rather to his dismay in many respects. That's my private suspicion. We've never talked about it, but he certainly did from time to time express to me his dismay at having all this stuff dumped on him all the time, but that doesn't mean he was ready to resign.

SZ: It's interesting, because it seems that in some way this parallels the development of the institution in general, that with René, he was also a curator--he has that element which Dick doesn't have, and how that's affected all three of those issues that you enumerated.

RK: That is a fourth one, really, but he [René] only did that occasionally in later years.

SZ: But he certainly had that background, and he had the understanding of it.

RK: Oh yes.

SZ: Because a number of people who have talked to me have talked about the shift in the Museum in becoming, really, an institution, away from this feeling of family and that it's a business. One of the things I was going to ask about was the institution of pension, which came about while you were there, and of course we have the union, we have all that stuff. It moved along with the times. I'm hoping you'll say something about that [laughter].

RK: Your perception is right. I wholly agree, that it's become a business in every significant sense except moneymaking. It certainly has to earn money, but it's not a profitmaking business, and not likely to be, ever. René was very intensely interested

in curatorial activities, both in the installation of various exhibitions which he personally did, much to the detriment of some of his other responsibilities. The Picasso sculpture exhibition occupied him for probably nine months or so in which he did very little else except in the most perfunctory way. I did a lot of those things for him, I well remember. By the same token, he had the respect of the other curatorial directors, except for the episode that we talked about the other day of the Young Turks, who felt that the Museum's curatorial policies should be modified. I never really did understand, or if I did I don't remember, what it was specifically they really wanted.

SZ: I was going to say, one thing we didn't talk about last time, and I think it's an extension of that, was one of the last things René did. He left in motion the establishment of the [International] Study Center, which really ran afoul of the various curatorial departments because there was that same pull to keep what's yours and not to....

RK: That's true. His idea--his vision, really--was to organize the archives and storerooms and records and reproductions, photographs and all the rest of it under a single institutional aegis, but still having everything physically spread among the various curatorial departments. There were many pluses and minuses about that. I think his sense of the situation, which was certainly right, was that this made a marvelous fundraising device in itself, and it did, it was. Millions of dollars of capital funds were raised on the rubric of the International Study Center of The Museum of Modern Art. Bates Lowry thought this should be one grand separate wing of the Museum, with separate staff and everything else. René's idea, really, had not been that it would be sort much a separate geographical space, but rather that it would be The Museum of Modern Art as an international study center, and that the functions would encompass the entire Museum. He did not want to take John Szarkowski's photography archives and storage cabinets and all the rest of that into the Whitney wing; he would rather leave them there but simply make them more accessible to scholars. Well, this is actually the way it has developed, I think. Bates wanted to really put the whole thing

under one roof and have Anne Hansen, his chosen person from Yale, come and take charge of it, with a separate staff and everything, and all the archives accumulated in there together. This, fortunately, did not get very far before Bates himself departed. Hightower was not that much interested in it, neither was Oldenburg, so it has pretty much settled down to the idea René had had in the first place. The words "International Study Center of The Museum of Modern Art" are on the wall of the Whitney wing--I suppose still--but that didn't really signify what was housed there. Mrs. Parkinson was always very concerned about it; I don't think she ever really did quite understand what René had in mind, because it was named for Lillie P. Bliss, who was her aunt, and she had, therefore, a very personal advocacy interest in it. I remember some of the letters fell off the wall at some point, and she was up in arms about it. I guess on the wall it says the Lillie P. Bliss International Study Center, which is the reason for her being so incensed. Anyway, it was okay to name it for Lillie P. Bliss. She never had anything, so far as I recall, anything much to do with studying--she was a collector and a donor--but René had a very keen sense of how significant donors could be found for fundraising for various areas of the Museum. Bates also wanted to publish a scholarly journal similar to the College Art Association journal...the Art Bulletin? It's a quarterly, scholarly [publication]. Bates thought the Museum should do something similar, and he hired a couple of people to take over that. They also left when he did. That would have lost another couple of hundred thousand dollars a year.

SZ: You saw that coming?

RK: That it would have lost money? Oh, sure, that goes without saying. Such journals categorically are money-losers, aren't they?

SZ: And that that would outweigh whatever cachet it might impart?

RK: I didn't think the Museum needed any additional cachet [laughing].

SZ: But he did.

RK: Sure, he did. Scholarly cachet, sure. I was not one to judge whether it needed scholarly cachet or not. I didn't think so. Anyway, by that time I didn't want anything that Bates was a proponent of to take place if it could possibly be averted. Where were we?

SZ: I'm going to ask you one more question, and then I'm going to go back, because there's a bunch of stuff that we left out, '60s stuff. Did you think at the time that Dick's appointment was a reasonable one or looked like the right thing?

RK: Oh, yes. I didn't think he was absolutely necessarily the ideal person, but I didn't have anybody else in mind or in sight or anything like that, and certainly the Museum needed a Director. Because of his interest in art publishing and his own background as a graphic designer, way back, which was not necessarily a serious consideration, but he was certainly sympatico toward the curatorial aspects. No, I thought he was a good choice.

SZ: Was there any thought given to the fact that his brother....

RK: Claes? That he was a prominent artist?

SZ: Yes. This is something that I read at some point, an article written by an agitator.

RK: There were lots of those.

SZ: In those days. Sort of saying that it was an unholy alliance because of that and what was that going to do.

RK: Well, it didn't do anything.

SZ: No, but nobody even thought of that?

RK: I don't remember anybody seriously raising that as a question. I think we had already had a one-man show of Claes in 1969 not all that long before. Claes was very prominent, of course, and there was full disclosure, obviously, of the relationship, but I don't remember anybody suggesting that Claes was going to in any way influence the policies of the Museum.

SZ: Or that the Museum would enhance his career even further.

RK: It wasn't really a possibility, practically, because he had already had the one-man show and the great, big book. Are you familiar with the catalogue of that exhibition?

SZ: That was Alicia Legg's, as I recall.

RK: It may have been. With its limp plastic covers and completely unshelvable format. Did Drexler have to do with the design of that? It was his aesthetic.

SZ: It was his department.

RK: Yes. Well, that was Drexler's idiosyncracy. Typical, to do it in completely unmanageable form.

SZ: Here are some other things that I've been thinking about and maybe we can start with. I don't know what it'll bring up, but there were several in the last couple of years, in the '60s, there were several very important gifts that were made or promised. There was the Janis Collection, then there were Nelson Rockefeller's promised gifts and there was the Eugène Atget collection and the Mies Archive, so I don't know if there are any good stories having to do with any of those.

RK: I remember the Atget, which was a purchase from Berenice Abbott, which had been

arranged by John Szarkowski for perhaps $100,000...I don't remember. I had several phone conversations with Miss Abbott, who was holed up in Maine, and I guess I drew the bill of sale. I think payment was in four installments for her tax purposes, as I recall. Szarkowski got Shirley Burden to put up all the money, without any difficulty. Do you know about Shirley Burden? He's the brother of Bill Burden, who is--I think he's still around--himself a photographer of no great consequence, although there is probably some of his work in vanity-press-type books. But he was for many years a fan of the Museum's photography department, and a supporter of it. He had inherited as much money as his brother Bill had, which was a lot, coming from Vanderbilts and Burdens and so forth, but he was rather more freely inclined to dispose of it philanthropically than Brother Bill was [laughing]. I think Shirley was maybe on the photography committee for many years, along with Beaumont Newhall and Dave McAlpin from Princeton, and Szarkowski was very, very good at managing the committee. That was another of the virtues of the curatorial department committee system; it brought close to the departments, in their affairs, the members of the committee, who had previously been sort of floating around in limbo, and guaranteed access of the department director to the committees, many of whom, if the director had any sense, were very well-heeled, potential donors, others of whom were or are experts from outside in the particular field.

SZ: Is that why there were so many of these important gifts?

RK: That's a factor, sure. It certainly was here. Shirley Burden was really quite close to the department and was also very well-off and interested in the type of work that Atget did, so I think John just picked up the phone and said, "Shirley, we can have this whole collection for a hundred grand, are you game for it?" I may be abbreviating it; you should be talking to Szarkowski about it, now that he's retired. What were the others you mentioned?

SZ: Janis.

RK: The Janis Collection was negotiated, I think, by Rubin, with Sidney Janis, and it had immense market value as well as immense curatorial value, obviously, aesthetic value and historical value. So we had to space it out to get the maximum tax benefit for Sidney Janis, over twenty years. We did a deed of gift whereby he did a partial gift of one-twentieth of the collection every year and was thereby entitled to a tax deduction...we were not involved in the appraisal of it, but one-twentieth of the value was still well over $1 million without a doubt. Of course, the value kept rising, the value of the entire collection, because the successive twentieths equally rose. My only involvement was in working out the deed of gift and every year making a new one and sending it to Sidney's lawyer, who got Sidney to sign it and send it back. He would follow through on the tax part of it. That was all there was to it. What was the next one?

SZ: Nelson Rockefeller, the future gifts. I think there were twenty-four of them?

RK: I think there were, yes. He had made those promises from time to time of individual works. This pretty much went way back. Alfred used to talk Nelson into buying this Picasso or that Matisse for $10,000 or something in the 1930s.

SZ: That was Alfred's way, right? I understand he did that with a number of people.

RK: Yes. He did quite deliberately, with not just Nelson, with Miss Bliss and Philip Johnson. Philip, of course, had pretty much a curatorial mind of his own, but Alfred would alert him to things that Philip may not have seen and say, "Philip, I think you ought to be interested in this, would you like to buy it for the Museum?" And Philip would say, "No, I want it myself." So Philip would buy it for himself and promise it to the Museum, frequently with not any formality or documentation. Philip would later on, at Alfred's insistence, acknowledge that Alfred had alerted him to this and promised it to the Museum. Nelson had made these promises; Alfred was uneasy about Nelson--rightly, as it turned out--and sometime, I guess in the 1960s, or was it earlier?, Alfred deliberately--I think it was in the '50s--staged an exhibition of works of

art given or promised. Do you remember when that was?

SZ: No, but I'll find it [1959].

RK: Well, I'm sure you'll find it [laughing]. This consisted of a number of works which had been given outright, which already belonged to the Museum; other works, fractions of which had been given; works in which remainder interests had been given--are you familiar with that? In other words, I give you this now, to take effect only after my death; I keep it in the meantime. That is no longer valid under the tax code; you can still do it, but you can't get a tax deduction for the value, the actuarial value, of the remainder interest.

SZ: But you could at that time.

RK: You did at that time, and that was a very good incentive; we got a lot of things that way. Also in this exhibition were works of art which simply had been blithely promised without any legal connection. Well, the theory was, which I think was valid under New York law at least, that a philanthropic gift on which the donee relies, such as exhibiting and announcing to the benefit of the donor, is an enforceable promise, period, which can be enforced against the estate of the promisor. So that was the underlying purpose of this exhibition, to button up these promises....

SZ: Specifically aimed at Nelson Rockefeller?

RK: No, there were others, I'm sure, but Nelson's was certainly among them, and because they were the least-documented of any. Later on, I think I mentioned that Nelson began to make some noise about selling some of these pictures, and not for the benefit of the Museum. He needed cash for his Presidential campaign or something. We got wind of this and were, needless to say, very concerned. Some of the pictures in question were very important, and we enlisted David Rockefeller to lean on Nelson. David was very, very disgusted with Nelson [laughing] and did not

hesitate to lean on him, and that was the end of that. On Nelson's death, some of the pictures still remained with Happy, not that she has any ownership interest, but simply as a courtesy, as to which there is possibly some question of the IRS claiming that the Museum did not have full possession, therefore there should not have been a full tax deduction.... We squelched that by simply saying that the Museum has the right at any time to take them, she's simply storing them on our behalf, blah, blah, and they went away.

SZ: I guess the announcement of the future gifts in 1969--that was the culmination of that exhibition--that made it legal or it made it formal?

RK: It was legal before.

SZ: Because he had said it?

RK: Yes. In my view, at least, it was legal before and we had announced it before from time to time. This was simply an effort to make it even more legal, if you like, and to make it absolutely clear to the outside world and to Nelson and to his estate, and to the other donors for that matter, that we took these promises very seriously and were relying upon them, and that there should be no question about what happens to them ultimately.

END TAPE 4, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2

RK: I think you mentioned another?

SZ: The last one I have here is the Mies.

RK: The Mies Archive?

SZ: Yes.

RK: I don't remember much about that.... You mean the Mies estate?

SZ: Yes.

RK: Ludwig Glaeser, then Associate Curator of Architecture under Drexler, was in close contact with the Mies heirs, who I think were in Chicago, and he and Drexler had some disagreement about it, but I don't remember what it was. It may have been the establishment in a specific space of the Mies materials and formally calling it the Mies Archive, but I don't know what else it might have been. Ludwig, I guess, got financing from Phyllis Lambert, who was a sister of the Bronfman clan..., and they established this area in the basement of the Garden Wing, which was called the Mies Archive. I don't remember anything other than that, except that Drexler was not very happy about it, probably because he didn't like Ludwig dealing directly with Phyllis Lambert.

SZ: That was also part of this whole thing, that Ludwig might have had aspirations to be director of the department had Arthur gone on to be Director of the Museum?

RK: I wasn't aware. No, I wouldn't have been surprised; in fact, I would have expected him to want to be director of the department had Arthur been elsewhere.

SZ: I guess that's it. There's the Steichen Archive, which got set up in '68 also.

RK: That was mainly to provide activity for Grace Mayer.

SZ: She's still doing it. She told me the joke is that she outlasted John [Szarkowski]. [Laughter]

RK: Yes. I'm sure she relishes that, still being there. God, I can't imagine how old she is by now.

SZ: Very.

RK: [Laughing] Well, there's no question of that.

SZ: Before I move on to other things, the only other--and this is maybe another one of those internecine kinds of things that you may be able to shed some light on--is the whole power struggle in the Department of Painting and Sculpture and the way it was restructured and how that affected life at the Museum.

RK: I can't shed much light. It was Walter Bareiss, I think, who superintended that. I guess this was during or just after the period of the Operating Committee. I remember that Bates--or was it under Hightower?

SZ: When it was reorganized it was under Hightower, in '71. But for a couple of years before there was all this sort of jockeying and changes of titles, for a couple of years.

RK: I have no particular input on any of that. I stayed as far away from it as possible.

SZ: Well, then, I thought I'd ask you about the whole birth or development of the modern institution and the way employee benefits, the pension plan--how the pension plan got instituted, if you remember.

RK: I remember that we did it.

SZ: Do you remember why?

RK: Yes. Sarah Rubenstein was the chief motivator of that, doubtless because she foresaw her own retirement, which turned out to be sooner than she expected, when

Hightower fired her summarily. [Laughter]

SZ: She'd been there a while, right?

RK: Yes, since the 1940s.

SZ: Did you get to know her very well?

RK: Oh, yes, we worked together very closely. She was not a very pleasant person; I could stand her, but a lot of the staff could not. She was particularly unpleasant at budget times, when we had budget meetings, she and I with the various department heads--the preliminary rounds--and she behaved as if she were running the Museum, challenging everything that was proposed by any department head, ostensibly on the basis of financial problems, which of course was sort of the only area where she had any jurisdiction at all, but she nevertheless felt free to criticize and comment on anything else. She was very unpopular.

SZ: Who brought her in?

RK: I think she had been there as a sort of secretary to begin with, in the Treasurer's office in the 1940s. Then Charlie Keppel, whom I think I mentioned, made her Assistant Treasurer, although she may have held the title before his advent, I don't know; I wasn't there. Keppel...was on the personal staff of Nelson Rockefeller, who in the early 1950s, when he was pulling out of any active role at the Museum but seeing that there were increasing financial pressures, simply loaned Charlie Keppel to the Museum as Treasurer, unpaid by the Museum--he was paid by Nelson--to sort of keep an eye on things and let Nelson know how things were going and also to take an active role in managing the Museum's finances. Keppel, in turn, made Sarah Rubenstein Assistant Treasurer, or confirmed her as such--I don't know exactly what the chronology was--and she remained in that title until Hightower fired her. She ran the whole financial, day-to-day affairs, as Comptroller and Treasurer as well.

SZ: Under you.

RK: No, under Keppel. Keppel did not report to me. Finance was separate from administration in these days. I didn't want her under me, nor finance either. I obviously had a lot of interaction with it, but.... Sarah, anyway, it was who in the mid 1960s said, "Hey, we're all gonna retire one of these days and we don't really have a proper pension plan." And we didn't. I can't even remember what sort of token plan there was, but it was awful. So we enlisted a firm of actuaries who were in fact in Washington--I don't remember why we went to Washington--who, in consultation with the Personnel Director and Sarah and me, devised a pension plan, which is a fairly ordinary one for a nonprofit institution. We already had a TIAA plan..., Teachers' Insurance and Annuity Association. It is now, I think, the biggest insurance company in the United States, I just read the other day, with $95 billion in assets. It provides pension and other insurance benefits for employees of nonprofit institutions of all kinds. Employees of the Museum could and can still, I'm sure, designate a certain amount of their salaries to go, tax-free, to TIAA for their account, and this accumulates without any tax impact until they retire or until they want to withdraw it. One of the advantages is that you can accumulate this while you're at the Museum and if you go to the Metropolitan, you just continue the same thing, and if you go then to a university, you still continue to accumulate in the TIAA account. There are Internal Revenue Service limits on how much of your salary you can designate for this without paying tax on it, but you can accumulate several hundred thousand dollars in the course of maybe twenty years, then upon retirement begin to draw an annuity from it. The Museum's plan supplements that, and the benefits, which are wholly paid for by the Museum--unlike the TIAA, which the Museum does not, or did not in my day at least, contribute to. The Museum pays all the benefits, and they are calculated on the basis of your number of years of service and the final average salary of your last five years, up to thirty-five years of service, as I recall. So this can work out to a modest, but certainly respectable pension; it was, at least when we were working on it, comparable to that of other nonprofit institutions.

SZ: The Trustees--was there discussion about this?

RK: There is--there was--a Trustee Personnel Committee--a personnel committee made up of Trustees--similar to the curatorial Trustee committees. The pension plan, once basically formulated with the actuaries, the Personnel Director and Sarah and me, was then presented to the Trustee Personnel Committee, which asked appropriate questions of us and the actuaries. Then, I think, it went to the Finance Committee and then, finally, to the Board of Trustees, and it was formally adopted by them.

SZ: I guess what I was asking was whether there was any resistance to the idea of providing pensions.

RK: No. I would remember it. Of course, we did not put on the Trustee Personnel Committee any Trustee whom we thought likely to resist [laughing]; it was pretty much staffed with the most benign....

SZ: Actually, there were several--Monroe Wheeler was coming up for retirement, Alfred was coming up for retirement, and René.

RK: True. I remember that the plan was adopted before their retirement, wasn't it. Yes. So that was one of the principle incentives for getting it established. It comes back to me now that it wasn't just....

SZ: Sarah.

RK: Oh, no, by no means. No, there was strong sentiment for getting a pension plan adopted, because it was suddenly apparent that these absolutely key people who had devoted their lives to the Museum were about to be sent out into the street virtually penniless. So, yes, of course.

SZ: Maybe the last thing today, to sort of get us up to that time, we could talk a little bit about the whole financial situation, because I assume that from the time the building reopened in '64, the completion of that campaign and the building was done, there began to grow financial pressures.

RK: Financial problems, sure. As always, the operation of the new buildings proved to be more expensive than we had anticipated. As always, the need for additional endowment for salaries and the like kept rising. It was perfectly clear that we were going to have to start another campaign really right away. Further, we still had to develop and remodel the old Whitney building into the North Wing, which cost a few million.... I don't remember what the development situation was. There was at least one year when we actually had a surplus, maybe $75,000, but I don't remember when that occurred.

SZ: That may have been the year after the building opened.

RK: It may have been, because we had heavy admissions then, of course, and I think a bulge in membership. Earned revenue continued to go up all along, but not nearly as fast as expenses did. There's just so much you can expect to earn with this kind of operation. The Museum was overcrowded with visitors; the staff kept getting larger; the needs of security and so forth in the expanded galleries were greater; the curatorial appetites for changing exhibitions going up all the time. The prospect of continuing and increasing deficits was perfectly clear right along, so we began getting ready for the fiftieth-anniversary drive.

SZ: Actually, in-between there was another capital fund drive.

RK: That's right, of about $12 million.

SZ: I have $21 million.

RK: I guess it was. It got up to that, yes.

SZ: Under Walter Thayer.

RK: That was what--in the early '70s?

SZ: Yes.

RK: I don't remember what the specific purposes, if any, of that were. This was after the remodeling of the Whitney building, so I don't think it was linked to any construction, just endowment.

SZ: The deficits just kept growing.

RK: I guess it was just for endowment, and I think it was a not particularly public drive; it was mostly among the insiders.

SZ: At the same time, I think, [there were] the beginnings of corporate support?

RK: Yes. Well, there had always been corporate members, but never with any great attention paid to them. Jack Limpert, I guess, was brought in to be in charge of membership and development, and he was very gung ho, and rightly, about the possibility of significant corporate annual support as well as corporate sponsorship of specific projects, exhibitions and so forth--"Courtesy of Philip Morris," that kind of thing. Jack organized a business committee comprised of high-level corporate executives, mainly in New York but some of them national, which was a very good idea because he worked it out so that they and their companies got various kinds of special privileges in terms of admission and so forth. One of the privileges, which was never affirmatively stated, was association with each other. He made sure that this committee was very exclusive and only the really highest-level CEOs of the Fortune 500 companies were invited to join it; I don't think it had more than about twenty members. They had meetings--lunches usually, periodically, about six times a

year, which they all apparently enjoyed very much as a sort of club among themselves. Jack was the only staff member, I think, who dealt with them. Curatorial department heads were occasionally invited to come and make presentations, pitches. They proved to be fruitful ground for significant support of specific exhibitions, but their companies also contributed a lot of money just to the general operating fund. I guess this is still continuing; I hope it is, because it was a very good idea. Jack departed a very long time ago. It was one of the best things he ever did, I think.

SZ: That's how Summergarden began, which is still operating.

RK: Yes. Mobil sponsored that, and the head of Mobil was on this committee.

SZ: Who was that? That was Herb Schmertz?

RK: Schmertz, yes.

SZ: Had enough for today?

RK: Yes, I think. Have you? [Laughter]

END TAPE 4, SIDE 2

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **RICHARD KOCH (RK)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **2 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE**
NEW YORK CITY

DATE: **JULY 23, 1991**

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SZ: I wanted to start by asking you to tell me a little bit about the history of the late '70s expansion, because I know there had been some discussion, or certainly thought on your part, for a number of years about some of the difficulties that the Museum was encountering in terms of space. I know it goes way back because Ethel Shein told me that when she came there was a model that you showed her, and this was in the '60s. Do you recall that?

RK: Yes. Sometime in the late '60s or early '70s it became increasingly apparent--it had always been apparent--that the curatorial appetite for additional gallery space would never be wholly appeased. As collections expanded in all the departmental media [tape interruption] and the temporary exhibition program increased, accelerated, expanded, and as attendance increased, the circulation of the audience became increasingly awkward, with two elevators on the gallery floors and limited stairways--no escalators--it became imperative that we increase significantly the gallery space, even considered the possibility of leaving 53rd Street altogether and building a whole new building somewhere else. One suggestion was the site of the old Madison Square Garden on 50th Street and Eighth Avenue, which has now become the Worldwide Plaza [laughter] after many years as a parking lot. But late in the '60s, I guess, or early in the '70s, Tom Lowry--an architect who had been working with the Museum since the early '60s when he was with Philip Johnson's office and who then

came more or less independently on our staff, as I recall, working on the Whitney expansion--and I conceived the idea of expanding the Museum to the west, possibly including the Dorset Hotel site and coupling this expansion with a commercial development utilizing the air rights, which were appurtenant to the Museum's land holdings, which were already very extensive and in terms of zoning virtually undeveloped entirely. We floated this initially in terms of the possibility of acquiring the Dorset Hotel and tearing it down and replacing it with a commercial tower. We negotiated with the Dorset's owners, the Bing family, for some time, to no avail. It was unavailable, at least at a price that made any sense as we analyzed it. But we had already the Theatre Guild building--the old Theatre Guild building, at 23 and 27 West 53rd Street, which gave us a start, and the Girard family owned the next two or three, all the way down to number 39, if I'm not mistaken. But that was seen not to be available either, so we pretty much dropped the whole idea for a while, until about 1972, when David Rockefeller sent over a man named Richard Weinstein, who had been working at one of the Rockefeller foundations....

SZ: So the model that Ethel remembers seeing soon after she came to work, that was a model of what? What it would have been like if you had taken the Dorset?

RK: I don't remember that specific model. There were a number of models progressively as we went along; I'm not sure which one this was.

SZ: This idea of leaving this building and building a whole new building, was that something that was thrown out? Was that considered in any...?

RK: The City Planning Commission, I think, actually, invited the Museum to consider it. Who initiated that I don't remember. We may have been in touch with them about the move of the Whitney to Madison and 73rd Street and had talked to them. Don Elliott was chairman of the Planning Commission during part of this period; he later became closely associated with the expansion project as lead lawyer, really, an outside lawyer.... The Planning Commission had suggested that we consider the

Madison Square Garden site, which was for sale, actually, after the Garden was torn down and moved to Penn Station, which was a disaster. Anyway, some of this air rights project we had taken to Philip Johnson and he had done some work on it, and that may have resulted in the model that Ethel remembered.

SZ: Now that was a fairly unique idea at that time, wasn't it?

RK: Yes. I don't think that any institution had attempted it or even thought of it at that point. Tom Lowry and I had pretty much cooked up the whole thing and we did a lot of the arithmetic and proved to ourselves that, given the Dorset site and the property we already held at the west, a very substantial commercial tower with a residential and office or combination could be built, and if all the numbers worked that could produce a very substantial amount of revenue for the Museum in addition to providing lots and lots of additional space for the Museum. But the Dorset was not available, and without the Dorset it didn't seem likely that it was to work. David Rockefeller and some of the leading Trustees were well aware of this, at that point, abortive scheme and had encouraged it to some extent. David mentioned it to Richard Weinstein, an architect by training who had been a consultant to one of the Rockefeller foundations on some out-of-New-York developments that they were interested in, and sent Weinstein to me so that I could fill him in on it and we could discuss some of the general possibilities that had occurred. Weinstein was very enthusiastic about it and brought in Don Elliott, with whom he had been associated--Weinstein had worked with the Planning Commission, too, as a matter of fact--and suggested that the three of us collaborate on cooking up a new version of the old scheme involving the acquisition--never mind the Dorset--of the Girard buildings further down the block. The Girard family owned numbers 25 through 39 West 53rd Street--brownstones.... The Girards are a family of three brothers whose father, many, many years ago, had sensed that side-street midtown Manhattan was going to be a very good investment and had acquired during his lifetime and then had left to his sons most of the buildings on both sides of the streets--the brownstones, which included I don't know how many on the south side but from the Donnell Library west,

at least three or four of the brownstones, and on the north side a goodly number on both sides of number 41, which is owned by the Dorset, which interrupted, unfortunately, the potential for expansion. Beyond that number 41, the ownership is now mostly if not entirely in the Museum of American Folk Art, which has for a long time been working on various schemes to build a new building there.

SZ: You said Weinstein, Elliott and yourself—what happened to Tom Lowry in this?

RK: He had made his contribution, really, in making the suggestion at that time. I'm not sure whether he was really working with us or not; I think he was on internal office remodeling and things like that, but there was not particular role for him to fill at this point. Given the Girard properties, which we thought we could possibly acquire, we saw the possibility of building a condominium residential tower on top of expanded galleries for the Museum and other museum facilities backstage. Elliott came up with the very interesting idea that we devise a way for what would otherwise be the real estate taxes payable by the condominium tower to go to the Museum rather than to the City, the justification for that being that the City had never and still does not make any financial contribution whatsoever to The Museum of Modern Art, as it always has and still does, in a somewhat limited amount, to about thirty or so cultural institutions, including the Metropolitan and the Brooklyn Museum and the New York Public Library, but not to MoMA. We thought that we could persuade the City that it was time for the City to do something; it would not be anything out-of-pocket to them for the City to waive the real estate taxes, but it would be a theoretical benefit foregone (in that the Museum's air rights--the real estate involved--had been totally tax-exempt for many years--since the 1930s). The City was not inhospitable when we approached Marty Segal and Mayor Beame.... Marty Segal at that point was Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, I think. The Mayor was very compliant with anything that Marty proposed to him; it appeared they were very close. That proved to be fairly acceptable. There remained, however, the mechanics of how to go about doing this.

SZ: Did their acceptance indicate the legality of the idea?

RK: No. The way to do it legally without putting the tax money into the City and then getting it out again, which was questionable, in future--and it certainly would not be working now, even if it had to begin with--the way to do it was devised by Elliott and his estimable sidekick Gene Harper, who was with him at Webster and Sheffield. Ironically, the two of them have just presided over the dissolution of Webster and Sheffield, which is very sad. Gene was a specialist in municipal bonds, an arcane subject which does not sound very interesting. But what they contrived was state legislation creating an entity called the Trust for Cultural Resources, which is technically and legally an agency of the state which is empowered by the legislation to hold property, to borrow money, to give security for borrowing money, to collect taxes and to apply taxes collected to the maintenance of cultural institutions as defined very intricately so that not every cultural institution in the state could claim to be supported by the Trust for Cultural Resources, but only those defined in the statutes. There were two statutes; one was general and one was specific, applicable to museums in cities of more than five million population or something like that, holding more than four acres of real estate, having annual attendance in excess of one million and so forth.

SZ: Bingo. [Laughter]

RK: By the time Gene got through describing The Museum of Modern Art in what appeared to be absolutely general terms, there was no institution anywhere in the world other than MoMA which would qualify for this, let alone in New York State.

SZ: Did that make you nervous?

RK: No. That's the way these things are done by skilled lawyers. So the legislation was drafted, really, by Gene and Don Elliott and was introduced in the...State Assembly by Mark Alan Siegel, who was the assemblyman from the Museum's district, and

Senator Roy Goodman, who was the senator for the Museum's district.

SZ: What I meant by that question was were you anticipating any kind of opposition, public opposition, public relations problems?

RK: Sure. One was in the legislature, when a rabble rouser from the Bronx whose name I forget attacked the whole thing as an attempt by the Rockefellers to unload on the public obligations, problems, which rightfully belong to private institutions, and the Rockefeller family specifically should damn well do this and not deprive the City of tax revenues.... [Tape interruption] We had to do substantial lobbying, as a matter of fact, I now remember, but in spite of his attack, the legislation did go through. I have no recollection of what the margin of majority was....

SZ: We're talking about the State Assembly, right?

RK: Yes.

SZ: It had reversed itself, because at first, [in] committee, not the full vote, it had been against it, and then there was this whole point that after two days of intensive lobbying it turned around.

RK: That's right.

SZ: Tell me more about that.

RK: I don't remember. The initial vote had been adverse; whether that was the committee or the full body, I'm not sure. But yes, I do remember that we mounted an intensive lobbying campaign; I think it was in the last day or two of the legislative meeting of that year, and we got it turned around. (Nelson Rockefeller was highly effective.) I think you remember better than I do.

SZ: I'm just here to help you remember.

RK: Thank you very much. Then there was opposition from the Hotel Dorset owner, who had inherited the hotel from his father or uncles or something; Bing and Bing was at one time a very prominent real estate family in New York. Dr. Bing, whom I have never met, lives in California, I think in Palo Alto; I'm not sure what kind of doctor he is. Anyway, he had an active interest in the Dorset and took a very dim view of it being overshadowed by the tower, as he saw it. He really had no other grounds of complaint that I remember, but as a neighbor he had the right to object. In community board hearings and so forth which took place along the line later on, and he also, because he was against the whole project, attacked the legislation later on in court, arguing that it was unconstitutional because it conferred special privileges and so forth on private institutions. The third heavy opposition also came later, led by, oddly enough, Ada Louise Huxtable....

SZ: And you say "oddly enough" because...?

RK: Because she had always been very sympatico toward the Museum. She's an architectural critic, and we were astounded that she very vocally...as a matter of fact, she reversed herself. She was on the editorial board of the Times, and I think when we announced this project, she wrote an editorial approving of it about a year later, and she welcomed it, as I recall, as an innovative idea that would be a great benefit to the public. Later on, she turned around and attacked it, because we were going to destroy, she said, precious brownstone heritage of New York City, which was really a lot of crap because the brownstones in question were of no particular value and there are hundreds of equally significant ones all over the city still. She was particularly concerned with the "23-25" building, which was the old mansion,...the Beaux Arts building, which had originally been built by the Rosen family, saying that was an architectural treasure that should at all costs be preserved. She was aided and abetted in this by the irascible architectural historian who did the Jefferson Market remodeling quite effectively--Giorgio Cavalieri. You know Giorgio? Well, he

was a pain in the ass for a long time; he came to all the community board meetings.

SZ: Wasn't there also the issue of the fact that the side street was a low-density street, was one of the few midtown streets that still had some light?

RK: Yes.... That objection went to the tower, of course, and also it was argued that the tower would overshadow the garden of the Museum and totally deprive it of light and just plain hang over it oppressively, which, of course, was not the case at all. I don't think anybody in the garden, unless he's really looking for the tower, is even aware of it, anymore than he is of Canada House or, for that matter, the Dorset. Actually, the most oppressive extraneous factor in the garden is the Dorset's sign painted on the wall of the Dorset, which I've always thought should be sandblasted off it some night [laughing] when Dr. Bing is not looking. We had to meet all these arguments at the community board hearings, which we had to have because we were seeking variances from the zoning envelope, particularly in the rear of the West Wing, which put us closer to the Dorset Hotel windows than Dr. Bing approved of. The Trust was also authorized to issue bonds, and the bonds could be tax-exempt: they were in effect municipal bonds, and therefore exempt from federal income tax. This was important because it allowed for what is called arbitrage, because if the Trust bonds were tax-exempt, they could pay interest of, say, six percent, whereas if the interest had been taxable, it would have had to be eight or nine percent. The Trust issued two issues of bonds progressively as the cost of the expansion increased; I think $30 million was the first and $20 million the second--I'm not sure about the figures. The bonds were secured by part of the Museum's endowment fund, which was invested in U.S. Treasury bonds. The Treasury bonds paid interest at the level of perhaps eight or nine percent, while the Trust's bonds paid interest at the level of six [percent] approximately; accordingly, the Museum profited by the differential, which is called arbitrage and is a very pleasant thing to have going for you for a thirty-year period. So this was a marvelous contrivance. Funds advanced by the Museum to the Trust

are to be applied by the Trust toward the debt service on its tax-exempt bonds, and the Museum is to be repaid out of the tax-equivalency payments collected by the Trust from the owners of the condos. Because of a separate provision of State legislation, however (Section 421a of the Real Property Tax Law), these payments will reach their full potential only some twelve years after completion of the building. So that the Trust probably still is not reaping the full benefit of the tax provision, but very shortly it should be, and that will be used to pay off the money which the Museum has advanced to the Trust; at that point, the Museum should really begin reaping the full economic benefit of the scheme, about the year 2000, and by then I think the Museum's deficit, if the Museum curators would stop spending money like crazy, should be pretty well in balance. So that is the general structure of the expansion scheme.

SZ: Let's go back. Let's maybe start with architecture and the selection of the architect.

RK: Yes. Philip Johnson had long considered that he was the Museum's in-house architect, even though Ed Barnes had been added to the Board and Gordon Bunshaft had been on the Board for a long time...and Wally Harrison of course. Wally had never done any architectural work for the Museum, however, nor had Bunshaft; nor had Ed Barnes, actually. But Philip had. He designed the Garden Wing, the East Wing, the "21" building--which was torn down in the course of this expansion--and had worked on the Whitney remodeling, and he had every reason to expect to be consulted on this. Donald Marron was made chairman of the Building Committee--the Trustee committee--which was to supervise the fulfillment of this whole project.

SZ: Do you know why he was selected for this?

RK: No, except that he was very ambitious and I think he volunteered to Blanchette Rockefeller and Bill Paley to do this, and to Walter Thayer, a partner of Jock Whitney's, who was sort of an éminence gris in the background--I'm not sure what

was really going on here. Marron had no particular qualifications except that he was energetic, apparently, and ambitious. I gathered that Marron took it upon himself--he had never met Philip Johnson, actually--to telephone Philip one afternoon and introduce himself as chairman of the newly organized Building Committee and to say that the committee had decided that they were going to find an outside architect for this very large expansion project. Well, Philip, understandably and predictably, hit the roof and raised all sorts of hell, including threats to revoke all of his promises of gifts of works of art to the Museum and to resign from the Board and everything else. Blanchette and Eliza Parkinson and Paley calmed him down somewhat, although it was some years before he got over being all this miffed....

SZ: Why do you believe that they decided to choose an outside architect? Do you know why?

RK: There had always been criticism of Philip's work--not by everybody, certainly, but there had been criticism that his projects always went over the budget--in my view, all architects go over their budgets; I've never known one that didn't--and that he was sometimes more interested in showing off his eccentricities, witness his Chippendale top on the AT&T building and things like that, rather than providing the client with a functional building. I don't know of any other reasons, and even these were not really made explicit that I recall. But a search committee was organized. I forget who was on that; I think it was Marron, of course, Parkinson and [Blanchette] Rockefeller. Celeste Bartos at this point became active, she having become a very major donor to the Museum and having an architect for a husband--an architect manqué; he hadn't practiced for many years. She got herself on the committee, both the Building Committee, I think, and the search committee. I forget who else was on the search committee.

SZ: Were those meetings that you attended?

RK: Yes. I'm not sure I attended the search committee. I did attend the Building

Committee. Yes, I guess I did attend the search committee, because we all went out on a private airplane to Columbus, Indiana, to see the buildings that Irwin Miller...had commissioned for that small town. J. Irwin Miller was on the Board of the Museum for quite a while. He was a very successful businessman who controlled a company called Cummins Diesel Engines, which is based in a small town called Columbus, Indiana. Mr. Miller was an aficionado of modern architecture, not in the sense of modern history, but contemporary architecture, and he had provided the town of Columbus with a number of public buildings, each designed by a different contemporary architect of considerable distinction, so that the town itself had become sort of a museum of contemporary architecture. This was his very expensive hobby, which he could afford; the town benefited very substantially, not only by having very good public buildings, but by not having to pay for them; this included schools and firehouses and city halls and everything else you can think of. I guess Mr. Miller was on the committee, too, and invited the committee and Elliott and Weinstein and me to fly out in the company's airplane, I guess, to Columbus one day and look at all the buildings. We were by that time very much interested in César Pelli, who had not built all that many buildings but had just become dean of Yale School of Architecture. He had built a building in Columbus....

END TAPE 5, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 2

SZ: Why was Pelli high on the list at that point?

RK: I don't remember who had proposed him, actually, but we had seen photographs of a lot of his work and had talked to people who were familiar with it. I cannot now remember who else was high on the list other than a firm in Philadelphia whose name I can't remember at the moment.

SZ: Tell me if these strike a bell. I. M. Pei was one.

RK: Yes.

SZ: Mitchell, Giurgola.

RK: That was the one in Philadelphia.

SZ: And Roche, Dinkeloo. Maybe they're from the beginning, from your first go-round.

RK: What do you mean? I don't remember that we actually had a pitch from Roche, Dinkeloo. We did from I. M. Pei, a partner, Henry Cobb, who subsequently married Eliza Parkinson; he came to a meeting of the committee and made a very good pitch.

SZ: That's an interesting piece of information....

RK: Mitchell, Giurgola, specifically; Mitchell's his partner.

SZ: And Roche, Dinkeloo doesn't ring a bell for you.

RK: I know who they are, of course, but I don't remember their making a presentation; maybe they did and I just wasn't there. Mitchell, Giurgola had a building at Columbus; I don't remember whether Roche, Dinkeloo did or whether I. M. Pei did, but we knew their work, of course. I think everybody, once we were out there and saw the Pelli building and talked with him--he made a presentation too--everybody except Celeste Bartos was very favorably inclined toward Pelli, who at that time was associated with the firm of Gruen, which had an office here in New York as well as in Los Angeles. In order to select Pelli, we had to accept the association with Gruen, so that Gruen would become the architect of record and would provide most of the actual backup, the drafting and so forth. Gruen's only work in New York of any significance was the Queens Center, that big, blue monstrosity that you see from the Long Island Expressway, which has Macy's and one or two other stores in it. Celeste

Bartos and Armand, her husband, went out and looked at the Queens Center inside and did not think highly of it at all. She made quite a scene about the necessity of having Gruen associated with Pelli if we gave the nod to Pelli, but we did so anyway, and Pelli got the job. He not too long after that severed the association with Gruen and opened his own office in New Haven, which meant there was a lot of traveling back and forth to New Haven on our part and on his between New Haven and New York. I think on balance it was better than having to continue with Gruen, which was really a second-class firm. Philip Johnson did indirectly express a favorable opinion of Pelli, but I think did not participate in any of the selection process. Did he say anything about it to you? No. Pelli is a very, very bright, astute, intelligent, to say the least, and highly capable and I think highly skilled and imaginative architect; I think he's absolutely first-rate in all respects. We got along very, very well. He understood all the programmatic needs and responded to them, I thought, marvelously. In addition to all of that, a charming man and really a pleasure to deal with, for anybody. He absolutely bewitched the Board, I think, when he began to appear before them.

SZ: Were the various schemes that you looked at in making the selection, were they vastly different?

RK: I don't recall very well. They were certainly different from the mixed-use complex that we had in mind. I don't think any of them had anything like it. No, I don't remember anything even approaching the complexity.

SZ: Since you just talked about understanding the programmatic needs, how did that whole process work and who was involved in it?

RK: I think Tom Lowry came into it to some extent at this point, and Arthur Drexler came into it--so far as gallery space arrangements, what would be on what floor and so forth, Arthur participated in that quite effectively. But Weinstein and I pretty much worked it out with the various departments. Weinstein was very good at that.

SZ: Was that a difficult procedure?

RK: Evidently there was going to be so much space--gallery space, that is; all kinds of space except office space we projected as being almost super-abundant, so there was not too much friction about that. There was a lot of difficulty, however, about the office locations because at the same time building the West Wing and the tower and again remodeling the Whitney building, the North Wing. We also undertook to reconfigure, reallocate, all the office spaces on the top of the 11 building and the basement of the Garden Wing and the top of the East Wing, the fifth and sixth floors--everything was just pushed around actually. There we found we were certainly far from having the space that we needed. There was not going to be enough space for anybody is what I'm trying to say.... It certainly projected a big improvement over what was the case before, but people had to settle for what we could allot.

SZ: Okay. Arlen Realty. How did Arlen first come into the picture, tell me that.

RK: Oh my God, Arlen! Arlen had just completed, very successfully, the Olympic Tower. Arlen was a big, gung-ho--not all that big, but very gung-ho and evidently imaginative and high-quality commercial developer, headed by a man named Arthur Cohen...who was a very bright wheeler-dealer. They had built Olympic Tower at 52nd and Fifth Avenue as a combination building with stores at the base, and restaurants, offices above that and above that, fancy condominium apartments all the way up to the fifty-fifth floor or something like that. Some of the apartments have swimming pools and all sorts of.... [laughing]. That had inspired Donald Trump to do likewise at 57th and Fifth and I guess Elliott and Weinstein had eyed the Olympic Tower thing and thought that that might be a good model and Arlen might be a good developer for the tower part of the Museum. So we had talked to Arlen at considerable length and Arlen had pretty much signed on as purchaser of the air rights, a flat-out purchase; the Museum did not want to have any equity interest in the commercial part, but we obviously wanted to realize, in addition to the tax money, some money up front as much as possible to apply to the immediate costs of the expansion. I don't remember

how much Arlen proposed, but I do remember how much we asked of them. I do remember that the...actual selling price of the Olympic Tower apartments was in the neighborhood of $250 or $300 a square foot and that we had used something less than that to be conservative in our projections of how much the Museum could realize from the air rights. Some of the members of the Board, particularly Paley, thought we were being outrageously optimistic. The real estate market was just beginning to come back. Such apartments now sell in the neighborhood of $800 a square foot. Lincoln Center sold the air rights in a somewhat similar deal to a commercial developer for condominium apartments for $55 million. The Museum wound up getting from Charles Shaw $17 million for the air rights.

SZ: Not so long ago.

RK: Not so long ago [laughing].... However, the rumor is that the developer of the tower at Lincoln Center has gone broke, so that remains to be seen. Anyway, Lincoln Center got its $55 million, as did the Museum get its $17 million. I think negotiations with Arlen were in the neighborhood of $10 million, but I just don't remember. You may have come upon it.

SZ: You were part of those negotiations?

RK: No, because Ed Saxe, who appeared along the line here, took over that side of it, and it was mutually agreed that I would no longer participate in that.

SZ: It was my understanding also that the disagreement [with Arlen] was over how the two parties would share in what was presumed now to be an improved picture, where profits would be up.

RK: That we would have a share in the profits with Arlen?

SZ: Yes.

RK: Really? I don't remember.

SZ: How the improved profits would be shared with the Museum. But that doesn't ring a bell?

RK: I'm not denying it, I just don't remember it.... Certainly we wanted a share in an upside profit that might be realized by Arlen, but I don't remember what happened about that.

SZ: In the meantime, Arlen was having its own difficulties.

RK: Arlen was having its own difficulties, although they were going ahead, as it later turned out, without our knowledge or authority, in giving options and things to members of the Gucci family, for instance, on a significant amount of space, including, I think, the top three floors to the Guccis, who later sued Arlen and the Museum for backing out of the deal. The Museum had nothing to do with it, and I don't know the outcome, actually. But Arlen was falling apart and at this point Saxe was handling that whole side of it, dealing with Shaw, and I don't know how he went about evicting Arlen and bringing on Shaw without any participatory interest except the flat $17 million, which at that point we all thought was a pretty good deal.

SZ: And the selection of Charles Shaw, that was Saxe also?

RK: Shaw was a Chicago developer associated with a New York developer whose name I forget..., a building developer...De Matteis.

SZ: Going back a little bit, talking about certain problems [that] were anticipated, but then actually living through them--for instance, what were the community board meetings like? Was opposition expressed? And then the City Planning Commission--I guess I'm really asking you what your reaction, yours personally and then the Museum's,

too, to some of the expressed criticisms of the project as a whole and then, as it went along, how those kinds of things were viewed. That this was taking money from the poor and supporting an institution that didn't need it....

RK: There was, of course, all of that, and criticism that the Rockefellers were not shouldering the expansion costs--not only the Rockefellers, of course, but all of the rich Trustees, or allegedly rich Trustees; the deprivation of light on 53rd Street; the midblock tower, which was not the first time it had happened, of course. We've already touched on all of these criticisms; they continued to be made throughout the community board hearings, of which we had quite a few, as I recall. The members of the Board were generally fairly sympatico, as I remember; I don't remember the votes, but I don't think they were significantly unfavorable. I don't remember that we modified any of our plans in response to any of these criticisms, except we might have, in order to gain the maximum amount of gallery space, we had proposed to build at the rear, opposite the Dorset, on the lower floors of the West Wing all the way out to the building line; the normal requirement of zoning is that you provide a yard, so to speak, above the first floor, and after raising hell, we modified that above the first floor and did not build as far back as we had hoped to. To do that, we would have had to get variances via the community board from the Planning Commission and from the Board of Standards and Appeals, and in response to this opposition, we did not go as far as we otherwise would have liked to for the maximum gallery space. I don't remember that we diminished the height of the tower or anything like that. Canada House--no, I don't think we did anything to Canada House, but I had urged we build an additional story on top of the Garden Wing, a replacement of the Founders Room, but by then Saxe was in control of the budget and he argued that there wasn't enough money to do it. I had urged that we raise some extra money and do it, because the loss of the Founders Room, which was at that point slated to become the Library--which was slightly strange, I thought--was not to be sneezed at, and now the kind of event or party that would have taken place in the Founders

Rooms has to be done with great difficulty in the members restaurant, which is a very big drag indeed. So, what else?

SZ: I guess what you're saying is that from your point of view, on balance, given even some of the facts that lay within these various criticisms, that this was a good idea. I shouldn't put words in your mouth....

RK: Well, we managed to persuade the community board and the Planning Commission, pretty much everybody, that on balance it was a very good plan. We were convinced of it then and we're still convinced of it, actually, so I think it's worked out marvelously. Mr. Shaw was unhappy for a while because Donald Trump beat him to the market with Trump Tower, just six months ahead of Shaw's marketing attempt, and I think Trump sold out very quickly and it took Shaw considerably longer, although I have heard that he sold out entirely after a while and that the tower is really quite successful. At all events, the Museum will be getting the taxes, and even if the tower had gone belly up for nonpayment of taxes, then the Museum would have owned the tower outright at no cost, via the Trust, of course.

SZ: So now you just mentioned that when Ed Saxe came, some of what you were doing was given to him?

RK: That was ostensibly Saxe coming in to relieve me of administrative problems, day-to-day security and all the rest of it, building operations, so that I could devote full time to the expansion project, which I had still up to then, subject to Marron, of course, charge of at the Museum staff level. So for some time, Oldenburg and Blanchette Rockefeller had been telling me that I needed some more staff working with me, more help, and I was working too hard, which was true, and that I should get take on somebody else to relieve me of some of it. So Paley recommended to Oldenburg that Saxe, who was a retired CBS middle-level employee, might be available, on a limited-term basis, to take over the Museum management side while I worked on the expansion. Marron seconded that, and that was the way Saxe came in. I began to

wonder, however. Shortly after he arrived, I was supposed to go on vacation to the Cannes Film Festival and a couple of weeks after that in France. Before I left, I gave him a briefing on the day-to-day affairs that I expected him to handle in my absence. He seemed to pay no interest in it particularly, but he questioned me very pointedly about all sorts of aspects of the expansion program. When I got back, I found that he had done very little about the management side and had introduced himself very much into the expansion program. He had also, in the midst of negotiations with the staff association, during which, as usual, we were pleading poverty, he had doubled the size of his office and bought a whole lot of fancy new furniture, the office next to him having been vacated by I forget whom. He tore down the partition between the two and ordered a very large quantity of very expensive office furniture and began sending me memos asking me to take care of things that had come in to him as a management matter. It would come to me with a cover memo from Saxe: "Please handle this," end of memo. So this was not a very comfortable situation, to say the least, and Oldenburg--I questioned him about it--said that he really had nothing to do with it, that Marron and Paley had ordered that Saxe was to get involved in the building program and that I was really to stay in charge of the general management. This culminated when at Christmas of whatever year this was, Oldenburg was going to St. Barts for ten days and he left behind a memo to the staff formally announcing that Saxe was taking over the building program from me.

SZ: That's how you found out?

RK: That's how I found out [laughing], after he had left. Ethel came into my office the next morning and said, "I think you might want to see this before it goes out." I looked at it and I said, "I certainly do." I telephoned him in St. Barts and he said, yes, he was sorry he hadn't had time to show it to me before he left; he'd been sweating over it, it turned out, for months. But Paley and Blanchette Rockefeller had decreed that this is the way it was to be, so I suggested some modifications in the language which I don't remember now. So the memo went out and Saxe at that point was riding high. I retired; I don't remember how much longer after that, but that was the principal

reason for it, and there was actually no backup from Oldenburg at all, and I was not going to sit around and take this... It was gratifying that Saxe was fired not long after I left.

SZ: I'm just wondering whether that was all as much Saxe's manipulation or was Trustee-driven...?

RK: I don't know really. I think it was Saxe's manipulation more than anything else. I don't think the Trustees had any affirmative desire to get rid of me; there was no evidence of that at any point.

SZ: And he was in fact not close with Paley.

RK: Saxe?

SZ: Yes.

RK: I don't know. He had apparently made friends with Paley back in England during the Second World War, where Paley was briefly and apparently Saxe was, too, and Saxe had come to work for CBS after the war. The only thing I know about him there is that, well, I heard some nasty remarks about him from friends of mine at CBS. The only thing that I know he definitely was said to have done was a facilities building on the West Side at 56th Street and Tenth Avenue--he remodeled that; it used to be a milk distribution center or something.

SZ: Considering the way it ended, would you do it all over again?

RK: Do what over again?

SZ: The whole thing.

RK: Oh, yes. I certainly enjoyed it much more than a Wall Street law practice, and all things considered, very much.

SZ: When you retired, did you really retire?

RK: No. I set myself up as a consultant to nonprofit institutions on real estate expansion and so forth, and I did a stint with Lincoln Center, which led to the building that is just now being completed, behind the Juilliard building, now called the Rose building. I did the feasibility study that started that off, which had been sort of in the works for a long, long time, since the inception of Lincoln Center in the 1950s; it was intended that there be dormitories for Juilliard and the School of American Ballet, and that particular site, which was on the site of the Brandeis High School annex, would be made available to Lincoln Center by the City in due course. Well, it became necessary to accelerate due course, because it seemed that it wouldn't happen without some pressure from Lincoln Center. So that's worked out quite well. I worked on that for, I guess, four years. I did some other small, not very significant consulting jobs, and then I eased off on it.

SZ: Now I assume you're busy smoking cigars, drinking whiskey and eating lobster.

RK: Following in my grandfather's footsteps.... [Laughter]

END TAPE 5, SIDE 2

END INTERVIEW