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Oral history interview with Maurine Hiatt
Roberts, 1984 August 29-31

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Maurine Roberts on August 29 & 31, 1984. The interview took place in Portland, OR, and was conducted by Ken Shores for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

DATE: AUGUST 29, 1984

[Tape 1]

KEN SHORES: Let's start with where you were born, Maurine, and your parents...

MAURINE ROBERTS: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri.

KEN SHORES: Ah, do you remember the date? (chuckles)

MAURINE ROBERTS: Date, it would be 1897.

KEN SHORES: 1897.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Does that make me 80?

KEN SHORES: That makes you eighty-seven.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right, I think. Because Art [Arthur K. Roberts, MAURINE ROBERTS's husband--Ed.], was a year older.

KEN SHORES: And your parents were from where?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, my mother was born in Wheeling, West Virginia. Well, they were... Dad was raised on a farm in Kansas.

KEN SHORES: He was born in Kansas?

MAURINE ROBERTS: He was born in Kansas City. And there's a town named Kansas City for the family [probably meant to say Hyatt--Ed.]. Dad found it in even our paper, once when there'd been a storm there ____.

KEN SHORES: What was his name?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Carl Hyatt.

KEN SHORES: Oh, that's why it's Maurine Hyatt Roberts; that's your maiden name.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh. And then. It was kind of on a farm. And he rode horseback back to school every day.

KEN SHORES: Really?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Seven miles.

KEN SHORES: How about your mother? What was her name?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh. Actually what her last name was-- you know, I never paid much attention to this, and I wish I had. Earl, Grace Earl... Earl! That's it.

KEN SHORES: Grace Earl. And she was from Virginia?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, West, born in West Virginia. Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Their parents were still American generation, and not immigrants.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Not that I know of. I think my grandmother had some French in her. If there were any descendents it would be German on Dad's part and French on... But they're pretty far off.

KEN SHORES: When did you move to Washington?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Let's see. First we lived a year in Medford, Oregon. Well, I graduated [from high school--Ed.] in Pittsburg, Kansas. I don't know. Dad and mother met someplace in Fort Scott, Missouri, and were married there. But Dad was always been connected with the coal business.

[Break in taping]

KEN SHORES: So, starting in grade school, your first experience of art was with this wonderful teacher.

MAURINE ROBERTS: With this first grade teacher.

KEN SHORES: Do you remember her name?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, let's see. Her last name (chuckles) was Painter; that was the crazy part of it. I loved her. I corresponded with her until her death; she was older than most of the teachers that were in my school.

KEN SHORES: But other than that, there were just no art in public schools?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Hm mm. But I had drawn all my life. I hated to practice, and when I got the chance, nobody around, I'd get up, and I always laid on the floor and drew pictures. Copy. First copying I did was the heads in the Cosmopolitan magazine, I think it was.

KEN SHORES: Oh really?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I couldn't wait for one to come. (both chuckle) But that was all on my own!

KEN SHORES: During your grade school period?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. So mother didn't know what to do, but she gave me china painting lessons. And I took several awards at the county fair on my...

KEN SHORES: In Kansas?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh, in Kansas. (chuckles) So that was a beginning.

KEN SHORES: What about in high school?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, in high school I did all the drawing and cartoons and things for class annuals.

KEN SHORES: There were art classes in high school?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No.

KEN SHORES: So your really first formal art came in college?

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right.

KEN SHORES: And that was when you moved to Oregon?

MAURINE ROBERTS: [I think so.]

KEN SHORES: And you moved to Medford, you said.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Moved to Medford. I really was just there a year. And I loved to dance. I danced in a movie that was shown at the World's Fair in the... Well, it was on the coast, would have been San Francisco or something?

KEN SHORES: The 1939 World's Fair was in San Francisco.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I danced in [that picture]. Advertising orchards. It was Medford, you see.

KEN SHORES: (chuckles) It wouldn't have been '39, because you were at the gallery by then. Must have been an earlier fair, then.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's me; I never pay attention to dates or anything. I could be all wrong.

KEN SHORES: You were a dancer too then?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes. I'd always had dancing lessons.

KEN SHORES: Ballet?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. Just to dance, you know.

KEN SHORES: Like Isadora Duncan?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I have pictures of that someplace. And that was kind of fun. But I lived there just one year.

KEN SHORES: In Medford, Oregon.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Medford. And then we came to Seattle. And first, my dad was in Alaska, so Mother and I lived with my grandparents. And I attended the University of Washington.

KEN SHORES: Oh! That's when you started [at--Ed.] the University of Washington?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I graduated in 1920, with a degree in art.

KEN SHORES: What kind of art? It was just general art, or...?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yup. I guess it was what? And A.B.? What do you call it?

KEN SHORES: A B.A.?

MAURINE ROBERTS: B.A., um hmm. I guess.

KEN SHORES: Who was at the University of Washington then?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, Helen Culver was head of... Dean Glenn I think was first because he had both music and art.

KEN SHORES: What kinds of classes were offered there?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I went to drawing from casts, you know, which I hated. First you'd have to draw the hand and then something all separate, before you drew one of the whole figure.

KEN SHORES: Oh, separate anatomical fragments, yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Yes, because we had to go to the morgue, and they made us look at these bodies, which they would turn back. (laughs) The girls survived, but one of the boys fainted. (laughter) I remember that, very well.

KEN SHORES: So you had pretty traditional training, then? Drawing, painting.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, then I had training from life drawing. And I was the only girl in the class for a while. They were all architects who were taking it. (chuckles) And that was in the... Wolf was his last name. He was a pretty good artist. Can't think of his...

KEN SHORES: The life drawing class?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, um hmm. So anyway... They weren't going to let me take the class, you see, but I had to have it to graduate. So people came to my bat through Dean Glenn, that I had to take this class whether there were any girls in it or not. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: So you were really one of the first girls to graduate in that kind of degree?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yep, one of the very first.

KEN SHORES: Well, if you graduated in 1920, then, it was, what, 1916 when you started? Four years [for your] course?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I suppose. I went 14 years straight. In the meantime, I used to draw. I'd go to baseball games and sketch people in clothes. Or I'd go to their department and sketch sometimes on Saturday, I'd go to the Bon Marche [Seattle department store--Ed.].

KEN SHORES: Oh, yeah! So your main interest in college was drawing and painting?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Yeah!

KEN SHORES: You were interested in interior design too and costuming?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, but I'd rather have done costume designing.

KEN SHORES: And the theater too?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Then the theater. I'd gone to Mask and Quill.

KEN SHORES: Which was a theater club?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh. And I did the costuming, designed for them, and helped with the staging. And...

KEN SHORES: Were there any crafts at that time at the University of Washington?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. But [Victoria--Ed.] Avakian was teaching clay in the University of Oregon, and she gave a summer school every year. And so many of my friends went, but I just couldn't go. And I was terribly disappointed. Finally we did get some clay in our department then.

KEN SHORES: Who taught that?

MAURINE ROBERTS: [Annette--Ed.] Edens was her name. I can find these things in my old annuals and things. I was going to get some stuff together to remind me.

KEN SHORES: Vic Avakian, from the University of Oregon, was one of the few people at that time working in clay in the Northwest.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. And people just flocked from the University of Washington during the summer to take her classes.

KEN SHORES: And she was a student of Glen Lukens.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right.

KEN SHORES: So she really was one of the pioneers in the Northwest in clay.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, she was. After that, her interests and then so many people's interest in the University of Washington, why we got some clay to work with. But Miss Edens didn't know much about it, and the rest of us... And it had to be fired at the School of Mines.

KEN SHORES: Oh really!

MAURINE ROBERTS: Most of it blew up. I had a few pieces left.

KEN SHORES: The University of Washington School of Mines?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, they did the firing.

KEN SHORES: They had the only kilns available.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, right! They weren't always successful; things would blow up. (both chuckle)

KEN SHORES: What about weaving and jewelry? Did they offer that?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Ohhh, yes, they did some metalwork. With whom I don't know. A little metalwork, nothing particularly.

KEN SHORES: And weaving not so much.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Weaving, no, not at all.

KEN SHORES: So when you graduated in 1920, how long did you stay? Well, you were married about that time, too, then, weren't you?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, because Art was still in the service. He stayed and went to the University of Talouse [France--Ed.] for a year. And then he came back. And he was two years older than I was. So he had to finish and we didn't get married until he finished.

KEN SHORES: So when were you married?

MAURINE ROBERTS: 19, it was 1920, wasn't it? No, that's when I graduated.

KEN SHORES: '22 or '3?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, I think so. Yes, '23 it was.

KEN SHORES: Then how long did you stay in Seattle?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, we were there nine years. Art had a good job.

KEN SHORES: Were you doing anything in the art world while you were in Seattle?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes! I had a little show of my costume drawings that I did after I was married, and were shown at the art museum.

KEN SHORES: Oh!

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I have one or two of those you see. There's one, just turn the corner in the bathroom there. Go look. And there's one in the back bedroom.

KEN SHORES: And you were doing some work then all that time you were married?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Now and then. It was for my own pleasure.

KEN SHORES: Then when did you move to Portland? Was it right before the gallery? I think that must have been around 1936 or '7 when it first started.

MS: I don't know. That's why I thought we could look through the logbooks of the gallery. The dates have never been, for me...

KEN SHORES: Well, we can check those out. When you came to Portland, how did you meet Lydia [Herrick--Ed.] Hodge?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Lydia Hodge was the first person I met in Oregon, outside of my sister-in-law. And she was out in the garden and Wilma [Roberts, sister-in-law--Ed.], driving by, stopped and said, "This is someone I want you to meet." Because she knew about the gallery being built then. And it wasn't quite finished, so she asked me to help with the first auction that they gave to raise money. Artists all over the state, you know, contributed to that.

KEN SHORES: Oh, they did?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, to that auction at the Heathman Hotel. And it was quite a success, raised quite a lot of money.

KEN SHORES: Wasn't the gallery funded by the WPA?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, largely. And gifts, too.

KEN SHORES: And the property was...

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...given to us by the school board, which owned the property, the land.

KEN SHORES: For one dollar, I understand.

MAURINE ROBERTS: For one dollar, yes. I thought it was ten, but maybe it's one.

KEN SHORES: That's still not very much.

MAURINE ROBERTS: (chuckles) Well, we bought it after that. We fully paid for that property. So no one could take it back.

KEN SHORES: So you were there when it first started, before it opened then.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Then, soon after this, it was completed. And I was asked to come out and meet with Lydia and Rhoda and...

KEN SHORES: Rhoda Adams?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Rhoda Adams. And, I don't know-- went with you on your trip to India.

KEN SHORES: Oh, Flip Lawrence and Katie Macnab?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Kay Macnab. And they gave me the once-over, because...

KEN SHORES: Well, they were volunteers too, weren't they?

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...Lydia was a member of an art group at the University of Oregon, and thought clay should be children's hands as a medium, that's her _____...

KEN SHORES: Well, her background is interesting too, isn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, she and her husband both worked in social services before she came out here.

KEN SHORES: Back on the east coast?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh. I think _____.

KEN SHORES: And before that, she was in Paris, wasn't she?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, she went to Paris with her brother [Will Herrick--Ed.]. And their studio was locked during the war and everything stolen after that.

KEN SHORES: He was in leather embossing?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, no. He designed, and the leatherwork was made by Russian women, who have the best eyes of anybody in the world, they say. But he was the instigator of it. There are walls of [it] evidently in a Rockefeller home that are...

KEN SHORES: Oh, it was the Rothschild home.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Rothschild home, are made of that leather.

KEN SHORES: I've heard of that, yeah. And they were all stitched and embossed and painted?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Finally, he sent us a few big pieces of his work and we sold them for quite a bit. I don't know who has them now.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was studying sculpture in Paris.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes.

KEN SHORES: At the Academy?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, that's where she studied her sculpture. And her brother was also an artist. He was out here once. A charming man. Never stayed long, but I did meet him, know him a little bit.

KEN SHORES: Well, then she went to New York and married, is that it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: She was married in New York and they came out here. But he came out here to teach.

KEN SHORES: And he was a geologist. So she was probably at the University of Oregon in the early thirties, before the gallery opened.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Must have been, um hmm. But this happened, you see, through Lydia, and they had an art group there at the time. And Dean Lawrence was interested.

KEN SHORES: At the University of Oregon?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, he was the head of architecture.

KEN SHORES: That's right, yes. And this art group were promoting what?

MAURINE ROBERTS: It backed Lydia up, with the warranted... It _____ some way.

KEN SHORES: So they really were sponsors of this gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And building the building to cover a kiln. The object was to house kilns. But that big kiln, a walk-in kiln, didn't you call it?

KEN SHORES: The big one that was at the gallery, the original one?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes.

KEN SHORES: It was large enough to walk into, yes. I've forgotten who designed the building. Was that Lawrence?

MAURINE ROBERTS: His son. He had a son, that designed it.

KEN SHORES: Oh, that's Flip's husband, Abott Lawrence. So the building was designed and the materials given by gifts and built by the WPA.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, WPA. Where did our loan from Carnegie come in? Later.

KEN SHORES: That must have been later, after the gallery started. Do you remember the first show at the gallery?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. When I met with these three and they gave me the once-over, boy! Because there was no one to be connected with it at the University of Oregon.

KEN SHORES: But here you were University of Washington.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I got by with these three, and that day they asked me if I would do the first exhibit for opening the gallery. It was just finished. I don't remember what year that was.

KEN SHORES: It must have been '37.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, I hadn't been in Portland very long. But Wilma, you see, had played me up to Lydia, and knew I was an art student, which was helpful. So I helped with that auction, which was quite successful.

KEN SHORES: What kinds of things were in the auction?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I have a little after-dinner coffee set.

KEN SHORES: These were all hand-crafted items?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. Well, I don't know; they're in there in the buffet. Here's my buffet back in there. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: Well, some things were not handcrafted; they were just things people donated.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, artists. They had lots of paintings and things like that. Jim [_____]--Ed.] brought a painting, I know, but I don't... It seems like I had a little painting too, that I'd given them.

KEN SHORES: So the money that was raised was to get the gallery open.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, but, you know, the thing that brought the most money was one of those angels I used to make-- [_____] copper or tin. It was auctioned off and brought a good price, over a painting, maybe, I forgot.

KEN SHORES: Oh really.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Aside from those handmade angels, I guess it was there was a pair of them; I can't remember. I think Mrs. Patterson, Ruth's [Hart--Ed.] mother, bought them both. I'm not sure. Or else we had one later at the gallery and she bought it.

KEN SHORES: But the money went into the first exhibition then?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And I did that and I had a very difficult time to find any handmade piece of pottery.

KEN SHORES: What was the first exhibition?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, anything I could dig up that was clay-- made of clay-- or weaving.

KEN SHORES: Oh, clay and weaving show.

MAURINE ROBERTS: We called it Black and White show, because most of the things were rather colorless.

KEN SHORES: Black and White.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, well, no, not exactly. Maybe it wasn't. Maybe that one wasn't called Black and White. There's something wrong about that.

KEN SHORES: But these were items made by local potters, weavers.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. And Art used to go around the country visiting mills, and I would hunt up people. The few people that were weaving seemed to be country people, people that lived in the country that had looms.

KEN SHORES: Oh really!

MAURINE ROBERTS: And in Portland it was the [School of--Ed.] Arts and Crafts. And I had a lot of Victoria... What's her name? She taught there for years.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes. I don't know.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Couple of sisters. What were their names? And then there was a woman that did spinning; we had her there spinning.

KEN SHORES: In the exhibition?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh. And I had accomplished a little weaving. I had some weaving there, and pottery too that I had made in college. But, anyway, it was an opening tea in the afternoon.

KEN SHORES: Was there a good response?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes! But, you know, Mrs. Patterson and Mrs... There were several older women that helped her financially in many ways, outside of the ones that were the artistic ones that would contribute.

KEN SHORES: And were just good supporters.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Were good supporters. Ruth's mother was one of them. And I didn't... Oh! What were we saying?

KEN SHORES: Well, the good response from that opening.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. People would come. We had hardly anything to sell.

I had to go and visit teachers in the public schools to urge to use clay as a medium. "No, it's too dirty and messy." They didn't want to fool with it. They weren't interested in it at all.

KEN SHORES: And to that time they weren't using clay?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, no clay [in work] in the schools at all.

KEN SHORES: And no kilns were around.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. No kilns working for anybody. No one could have anything fired.

KEN SHORES: And of course there was probably no place to buy clay or materials either.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's when we [the gallery--Ed.] bought clays to sell.

KEN SHORES: To the schools?

MAURINE ROBERTS: To the schools. We sold them all the clay they used. And fired for them. And glazed for them.

KEN SHORES: That must have been a slow process, getting them to do that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, you'd get enough in... Then they began coming in from all over the state, children's work. And that was fired, and then we glazed and we packed and sent back. That was a... Gosh! Lydia used to stay up all night.

KEN SHORES: Working on that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Working on that. And Anderson. Was that his name, the first one that was there? First

technician?

KEN SHORES: Was that Lowell Anderson.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Lowell Anderson. Helped with the firing.

KEN SHORES: And he came from back east, didn't he?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes.

KEN SHORES: Well, then it expanded to weaving and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I found more weaving. People in the country who had done some weaving. It was very traditional, outside of... What's her name, that taught at the Arts and Crafts. And hers was very traditional weaving. What's her name?

KEN SHORES: I can't remember. Oh those were the...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And then you remember the two girls that were weaving.

KEN SHORES: That worked at the [Portland--Ed.] Art Museum.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah! What were their names. Gosh, I should remember so well.

KEN SHORES: I remember two sisters.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. One at the museum and the other was at home weaving. She wove that beautiful thing that burned in the...

KEN SHORES: Unitarian Church.

MAURINE ROBERTS: They lived just below the gallery. Oh goodness, should remember those, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Well, the School of Arts and Crafts had been going quite a long time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Everyone there were just doing it for hobby. They saw a teapot in a window, they wanted to make one. And of course Mr. [Walter--Ed.] Deutschman, who taught the class, did most of their work.

KEN SHORES: That was in the metalwork, right.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But there were mostly women that were just doing it for their own use. Hobby.

KEN SHORES: It was a school of techniques of how to do it, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I guess so.

KEN SHORES: Weaving and metalwork, and then later on clay. I don't remember.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. No. They never had any clay work in there.

KEN SHORES: Later on they did, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think Delight [Hamilton, weaver--Ed.] did a few pieces. I don't remember about that.

KEN SHORES: But primarily they were weaving, though, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And they wanted me to come there and teach a class in design. And Lydia stepped on that immediately. "You can't do that. You have to give your time here." So (chuckles)... I remember Art saying, "For the first time in your life, you're letting somebody tell you what to do!"

KEN SHORES: (chuckles)

MAURINE ROBERTS: I said I didn't know whether I believed in Lydia's ideas or just Lydia herself as a person.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a dynamic woman.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh. She just took me over. And no one had ever done that before, to me.

KEN SHORES: She had great vision and charisma. And she was a talented artist in her own right.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I still have-- This one belongs in the permanent collection [of the gallery--Ed.], and I wouldn't leave these out there. [speaking of an object made by Lydia--Ed.]. Till they get going. I've got a red one upstairs.

KEN SHORES: Well, she still continued to do her work while she was at the gallery. She made quite a few pots and sculptures.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think she did, um hmm. We got involved in the Paul Bunyan design for the ____ ____.

KEN SHORES: Wasn't that one of the biggest shows in the early days?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, it was downtown at Meier and Frank's auditorium.

KEN SHORES: It was the Paul Bunyan show. That must have been about 1940-41, I guess.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I just don't know. I [suppose] I could look up some of these things.

KEN SHORES: But that was made of clay? And the show was in clay?

MAURINE ROBERTS: She did the ox, you know.

KEN SHORES: The big blue ox.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Blue ox, and the chap that graduated from Oregon made a, oh, one about this high [gesturing--Ed.] that was a footstool or something. An ox, blue ox. I have a yellow one in the great front [living room--Ed.] in there, that Lydia did.

KEN SHORES: There was more than clay. The show consisted of weaving and claywork.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, what I could find. There was more weaving than claywork. There was just one chap here, and I can't remember his name, that was doing pottery of any kind.

KEN SHORES: Was that Bill Willbanks?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. Bill Willbanks was the first one that tried to make a living selling pottery.

KEN SHORES: That was a little later, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh.

KEN SHORES: Well, the Paul Bunyan show was more than just this state; people were invited outside the state too, weren't they?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I'm sure they were. And we had a little Paul Bunyan-- I don't have them; I don't know who has now-- that we sold. He was just about this high [gestures--Ed.].

KEN SHORES: Oh, the little wooden ones, yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, no wood; I think they were all clay, and glazed.

KEN SHORES: Oh were they? There was a connection with Timberline Lodge [on Mount Hood--Ed.] on this too, wasn't there? I thought there were people connected with the Paul Bunyan Blue Ox Inn.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes they had, but then that's [story--Ed.] been all over our state, you know. Paul Bunyan and the Blue Ox, that's Jim Stevenson's story. The writer?

KEN SHORES: Yes. Wasn't there a woman that did glass for that show, too? Or maybe not.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't remember any glass. I'm sure there was no glass in it.

KEN SHORES: In those early days, like during that time, who were some of the, the potters and the weavers. It's hard to know dates, I know. But there were people, like Tom Hardy [sculptor--Ed.], who came into the picture about then didn't he?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, with, umm... What's her name? She teaches at the Arts and Crafts.

KEN SHORES: Laurie Herrick?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I think she may have done weaving some.

KEN SHORES: As a weaver, yes. And Kay Macnab is an early potter. She was doing some sculpture and things in clay, wasn't she? Those little ducks and things like that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Maybe so. She was art major anyway. And [maybe] Lydia, she was married and then all this started. Rhoda was in the art museum; she never went to the university.

KEN SHORES: Rhoda Adams?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah.

KEN SHORES: Well, it was about this time that the Carnegie grants came into being, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: It's what I believe. You'd be going on pennies, to keep the gallery going. And I don't think we had... Just begun to get memberships at that time.

KEN SHORES: Oh, that's when memberships started?

MAURINE ROBERTS: It was through Dean Lawrence, at the University of Oregon, that we got the grant, the Carnegie Grant.

KEN SHORES: Oh, there were two of those, weren't there?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. That was for four years.

KEN SHORES: Oh!

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I forgot what was the grant, how much was it, but we managed to save enough out it, run it for two years.

KEN SHORES: Who was brought in for the grant? Dorothy Liebes workshop was one.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Dorothy Liebes workshop. Umm...

KEN SHORES: And that was held at the art museum?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. And I had to find all the looms and materials for that class to work with. We didn't have room for it at the gallery.

KEN SHORES: It was like a three- or four-week class, wasn't it? It was quite a long class.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, I think it was.

KEN SHORES: It was a big class, to have Dorothy Liebes do it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. I took it.

KEN SHORES: She was a great influence.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes! Definitely!

KEN SHORES: What would you say her great influence was? Color?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, color. And what I had dug up; I dug up lots of color. And we had stuff dyed for the class to use, and all that sort of thing. And I took care of that, all that.

KEN SHORES: Looking at her early things, she was one of the first to use lurax thread, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. I don't think we had it at that class.

KEN SHORES: But those bright chartreuses and oranges...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, and the last piece I made, I called it "Dago," because I had lived in Midway where the mines were. And they were Italian and wore bright colors. So (chuckles) I gave her this piece, color, that was my Dago piece. It was orange and red and everything else, you know. She liked it. We just did little things. Sometimes we'd exchange looms, you know, weave on different looms the way they were threaded.

KEN SHORES: Well, that was a revolution in color, though, wasn't it? To have somebody like Liebes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, oh boy!

KEN SHORES: Before that, the colors were...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, you know, there is at the gallery all the things she used to say to us. "Now girls," she would start out every morning. (I don't know whether they've got it [in the gallery records--Ed.] I think, someplace. I thought it should be probably in the library, if we ever get one.)

KEN SHORES: She was the one that said, "The back of my weaving is nobody's business."

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. Absolutely. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: Well, that was great to have her here in Portland. It changed a lot of people's lives.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Wonderful! Yes! Because a lot of these people came to class, you see, that had been just doing it on their own, for a hobby.

KEN SHORES: And without any direction of color or design and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: [Devereaux?], is that name right?

KEN SHORES: Devereaux?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Devereaux, she was a weaver in one of them. But, if we had the logbook, I think there's a group of them standing together and they'd be named: that was a tea.

KEN SHORES: There was a... Hamilton, wasn't she?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, Delight.

KEN SHORES: Delight Hamilton, Rhoda Adams...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, Delight came along and helped me dig up the weavers and... Rhoda didn't do any of that, up there. Her husband... Charlie? They were a great help to us financially, always. That's the way we got along. Charlie?

KEN SHORES: Charlie and Rhoda Adams. They were great benefactors of the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, they were. I read one place we were penniless and went to him and he loaned us \$5000.

KEN SHORES: That was a lot of money in those days.

Well, then the next year was an Arthur Baggs workshop.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I went away that summer. I took French leave. I was tired and thought I was doing too much. I was gone all that summer.

KEN SHORES: I remember Tom Hardy talking about taking the class. And that, again, was revolutionary for clay, I guess, because he had so much technology to offer.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I'm sure it was.

KEN SHORES: Baggs was called the granddaddy of the potters, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He was? Did he study with Glen Lukens?

KEN SHORES: No, he was even pre-Glen Lukens, I think. I'm not sure. Ohio State [University--Ed.], or somewhere back east.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, Hal [Rieger--Ed.] went to Ohio State, didn't he?

KEN SHORES: I think he may have worked with Baggs. Well, both those workshops were then really very...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we had four workshops. We saved enough money.

KEN SHORES: Oh, what were the other two?

MAURINE ROBERTS: And this was designed for teachers, and they were given credit for it, on their degree or

whatever they had. They could have an advanced credit. I got an advanced one toward a masters, but I had no intention of ever following through with it.

KEN SHORES: What were the other two workshops? I don't remember hearing of them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, those people from California, a man and a wife.

KEN SHORES: Potters?

MAURINE ROBERTS: They did everything. That was more metalwork, jewelry. They did a lot of beautiful jewelry. I'm trying to think... They were a couple, a married couple-- Oh gee. Well, I'm sure there were four of them [workshops--Ed.]. It's the only one I ever got mixed up in-- Oh, the one who, color, he lives in San Francisco now.

KEN SHORES: Rudolf Schaeffer?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Marian Hartwell, that doesn't sound right.

KEN SHORES: Well, there was a Marian Hartwell, a colorist.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, well, that was the last workshop.

KEN SHORES: Oh, really! She was very important.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Very good. I took the class too, but... Who was it? He had all these... They were done on paper, a lot of it. I put them together into a scrapbook, and they were to be developed, used to weave or [pot] or something, inspire you to do those.

KEN SHORES: Oh, they were designs in color, on paper for execution in weaving.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And those were all mounted in a scrapbook, I remember. And people could come in and use that for weaving. Well, we urged people to come and select one, to do a weaving from that cartoon. Or, whatever they wanted to do. And that was an interesting project. And she wrote later then, not too many years ago, and wanted to know if we had this material. Well, we did, and sent it to her. She wanted it.

KEN SHORES: Well, now, these were all held at the Portland Art Museum, weren't they. So the gallery always had a close relationship with the museum.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, and a good relationship.

KEN SHORES: From the very beginning.

MAURINE ROBERTS: From the very beginning, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: I know Rachael Griffin was one of the supporters.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, right. She did so much writing.

KEN SHORES: She was curator there. And working for education too.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, uh huh.

KEN SHORES: So many events, I know, over the years were held at the museum that were benefits for the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, those were the [ones], and then that big one we held at night, where you were all week demonstrating.

KEN SHORES: Oh, the Fire, Clay and Grog exhibition.

MAURINE ROBERTS: We did all the decorating and there was [this] butterflies. Rhoda and I made butterflies, [funny].

KEN SHORES: Fire, Clay and Grog, yes. Back in the early sixties.

Well, then after those two workshops in the middle forties-- or whenever they were-- middle or late forties.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, they covered four years.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, so it must have been towards the late forties then. All the while, the gallery was showing exhibitions.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes.

KEN SHORES: And they changed how often? Was it monthly, or...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Monthly. Not oftener than that; you couldn't get enough.

KEN SHORES: So it was at least ten shows a year.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And we began to think about having memberships to help out; they helped out, but...

KEN SHORES: Those early memberships were, as I recall, like one dollar, weren't they? Or two dollars?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think so, for teachers, anyway, because our idea of the... The reason we got the Carnegie grant was to help teachers, because there were no teachers who wanted to, or prepared to teach art in the public schools here.

KEN SHORES: So, this was all really as an educational venture.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, it's purely was educational; that's why we got the grant, and have never been taxed.

KEN SHORES: As a nonprofit organization? Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Well, it really was a nonprofit organization, because the galleries never made money; it's always...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it does now.

KEN SHORES: Well, they're making ends meet, yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, they've a good-sized staff, which we never had. My gosh, when I think what we did.

KEN SHORES: Mostly all by volunteer work.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. All of it. Lydia never took a penny of it.

KEN SHORES: Very few people had much to do with it as a paid person; it was almost all volunteer at that time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's right.

[Tape 2]

KEN SHORES: So, the exhibitions continued on, perhaps ten a year? But then there were new people coming through, outside of Oregon, as well as in Oregon. One of the most important young sculptors at that time was Tom Hardy.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. He walked in, just as you did. He graduated before you did. How much older is he than you are?

KEN SHORES: Oh, a few years; I'm not sure.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. He was quite handsome, with a red, bright red shirt. And his mother and father were with him, and they didn't want him to be an artist. And it was Lydia who convinced his parents that that should be his field, because she recognized his ability. And then we gave him a show.

KEN SHORES: And that was clay, wasn't it, in the beginning?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Mostly clay. And animals and horses that seemed to me (chuckles) they were running right in the front door and out the back, they were so alive. Well, he grew up on that ranch.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, let's see, the art museum bought a piece, I think, didn't they at that time?

KEN SHORES: Must have been.

MAURINE ROBERTS: People became interested. And his show really sold, as I remember.

KEN SHORES: It was really supportive of him, then, encouraged him to go on.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, yes, it did! Lydia did. And the show did, and his mother and father gave in, I guess, seeing that's what he should do.

KEN SHORES: Then he slowly turned to metal, didn't he?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yep, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Because I think in 19, what, '54 or '5, he had that big article in Life magazine, "Life Visits Oregon Sculptor." It was a big article. That was his real starting point, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it's strange, I can't remember that.

KEN SHORES: He was still living on the farm then. Well, he continued to have shows after that first one.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, yes; he had several shows.

KEN SHORES: And it went all the way up until rather recently, that he's had exhibitions here. Until a few years ago.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, not since I've been away.

KEN SHORES: No, I don't think, no.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Uh huh, but he's showing everywhere.

KEN SHORES: So he was really one of the first supported by the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we built a little house down the hill for [our] craftsmen to work in. And Tom was the first one to use that.

KEN SHORES: That little studio?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Down at the foot of the hill. And since then, there's always been someone who lived down there, I think.

KEN SHORES: Yes, that was enlarged upon later, and built into a pottery studio. Now it's an annual competition for artists-in-residence.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, right, um hmm. The [right] of artists to continue his own work. That was a grant to fund for the gallery. We paid you a pittance, I think, and you were to work out your own ideas.

KEN SHORES: In the back of the gallery, yes, not the little studio down the hill.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, I don't think it was there then.

KEN SHORES: It was there, but it was just called the plaster-house. And it was a storage area, but Tom had used it originally, and then it closed up; then reopened, I think, in the middle sixties, in a larger studio for artists-in-residence. Well, Tom was one of the first, then, to be sponsored by the gallery and really one of the most important early people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think so.

KEN SHORES: Then shortly after that were people like Jack [Lenor--Ed.] Larsen.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. Jack Larsen. We discovered him at the University of Washington. Lydia and Mrs. Church and I made a trip to Seattle, and they wanted to see the art department at the university. And his things were on the wall, and I asked if I couldn't bring some of them back and show in our gallery, because he was using all kinds of material even then. And I did; he let me do that. And since then he was...

KEN SHORES: Was that almost a full show, then, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: And in a sense, that was the first show Jack Larsen had outside of his graduate show at the

university.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes. He hadn't really developed any of these, only on paper.

KEN SHORES: And that must have been around 1950 or so, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, I suppose, fifties. Does that go back far enough? Right around there.

KEN SHORES: About 1950, '52, and that's about the same time that Peter Voulkos came on the scene.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Peter Voulkos was the second one, um hmm. Well, he was at Archie Bray Foundation in Montana, so we knew about him and his work. I think we had a few pieces of his to show before... Well, we had a show for him more than once, I think. One was the Paul Bunyan.

KEN SHORES: Was he in that too?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, he was.

KEN SHORES: But one of his first shows was at the gallery, though, as I understand it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, his very first show. Jack's first show, his first show, and your first show, wasn't it?

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: So we can name firsts among those three.

KEN SHORES: Well, there were many others too: Tom Hardy's first show.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And of course when Hal came along, we gave him a show.

KEN SHORES: Now he was there about that time too, Hal Riegger.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, because I have a picture of him with, with Jack and... I don't think you were in the picture.

KEN SHORES: He was the technician for several years at the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, that's why he came, to be technician, but also allowed to have time for himself.

KEN SHORES: And he was one of the first important clay people; has written several books on clay, raku, and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Not then.

KEN SHORES: No, not then, but later. And isn't that about the time Betty Feves came on the scene?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Betty. Oh goodness. Did you know about Betty?

KEN SHORES: She had actually her first show there, too, wasn't it? Or one of her most important shows.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I can't know when it fitted in. We also had a show for... Who's the person we had a show that was teaching out at Reed, a woman?

KEN SHORES: Marrienne Gold?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Could be.

KEN SHORES: Sculptor. Fred Littman's wife.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes! That's right.

KEN SHORES: Fred Littman had shown some work there too. Clay work.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, I can't remember that he did.

KEN SHORES: But that whole fifties was very interesting people who were coming in. Rex Mason, from San Francisco.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. He was just driving through casually and came in to see the gallery, but he had his car full of pots and things, and we said, "Well, bring one in!" you know, and we showed them. He was very pleased.

KEN SHORES: And J. B. Blunk? The one that did the Bizan ware from California, those wonderful Japanese-style pieces. Blunk?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I remember his paintings. I don't remember his sculpture.

KEN SHORES: You know, I remember a show about that time, very important. He since went into wood, but he was doing... But there are ever so many people. Archie Bray show, wasn't there?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, not as an Archie Bray show. But who else had been working at Archie Bray besides...

KEN SHORES: Well, there was Rudy Autio.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, Rudy. He had his show. The first very large pieces we had to sell were his pieces.

KEN SHORES: And then of course there were all those people from the University of Washington, like [Robert--Ed.] Sperry. And earlier people, whom I didn't know; there was a Northwest Designer Crafts group that was active.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, they prompted our first show of... Oh, what do you call them?

KEN SHORES: Was it the Northwest Designer Crafts?

MAURINE ROBERTS: But we had... Oh dear, I wish I had my stuff, notes together, with the... They're upstairs and I just don't know where they are.

KEN SHORES: But there were ever so many people from the Washington area. Howard Kottler was later, of course.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Still mad at him. Is he still there?

KEN SHORES: I think so, yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I thought that's as far as he'd ever get.

KEN SHORES: Oh, the Spencers. Ralph and Lorene.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, they had their show. But they never worked at the gallery.

KEN SHORES: During that time, though, there were other things going on, too, besides the exhibitions. Benefits...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, our annual. The first annual, you see.

KEN SHORES: That was one of the first in the Northwest, or...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Very first. And for several years it continued to be the only one.

KEN SHORES: It was before the Henry Gallery [University of Washington--Ed.] annual then. So work was sent in from...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Three states: Washington, Oregon, and...

KEN SHORES: Montana?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Montana, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Those were very successful annuals, weren't they? And there were awards given?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. One piece was Tom's [Hardy--Ed.], I think, a sheep or lamb or something. The art museum bought it. I've seen it in their children's collection. Oh! No! The way they got it was the architects bought the piece and gave it to the museum.

KEN SHORES: The American Association of Architects.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Well, how was the money raised for the awards?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Just gifts.

KEN SHORES: Individuals would sponsor?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Now if we had those catalogs. I have the whole set of them. Were there eight or nine?

KEN SHORES: I think there were maybe nine.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think there were nine. But by that time, Washington decided to have annuals.

KEN SHORES: The Henry Gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And so did they in Spokane. I can't remember that chap's name. Then's when we withdrew, quit having them.

KEN SHORES: Then there was a series of invitationals. Wasn't there a ceramic sculpture invitational?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. And they came from everywhere.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, important people: Archipenko. [Archipenko was a guest teacher at the University of Washington--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yep. Well, the Archipenko [sculpture--Ed.] belonged to the art museum.

KEN SHORES: Well, there was a clay Archipenko that he sent. But the sculpture show, I recall, there were people from everywhere, from all over the United States.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, there was. Very costly, some of it, pieces being heavy and shipping. How we used to work at that stuff.

KEN SHORES: But even in those days, clay wasn't really being shown anywhere in the United States very much. So, the gallery was really a pioneer in that effort.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes! Children sent in work I can't remember from how many-- I wouldn't say the Northwest, it'd be just around the State of Oregon, I think-- to be fired.

KEN SHORES: Well, it continues to still be one of the most important craft galleries, I think, in the country. But at that time, one of the very few.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's right.

KEN SHORES: There really wasn't much in Seattle until the Henry Gallery started-- with LaMar Harrington being so interested in crafts.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And they started showing them annually.

KEN SHORES: Started their annual [Northwest Crafts Annual--Ed.], yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I guess it's still every summer, isn't it? Go over to the lake. [The Northwest Crafts Annual at the Henry Gallery is now incorporated in the Bellevue Arts and Crafts Fair; Harrington has been associated with both projects--Ed.].

KEN SHORES: I don't think they have the annual anymore, but Bellevue Fair still is held.

It was interesting the California people that started showing at the gallery too, in the fifties and sixties.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we never were turned down. If I recognized somebody and thought we'd like to use them, I know I always wrote-- I didn't write them [literally--Ed.]; Art would have them typed for me. And they were invited to show.

KEN SHORES: What was your criteria for judging work? How would you determine whether it was good or bad.

MAURINE ROBERTS: You didn't judge an invitational shows, except that one from California.

KEN SHORES: But when you look at somebody's work, what made you decide it was good or bad?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Ken, the minute I see someone's work, I can see that they are creative people. And if it's something that they've just made, you know, I would turn that down. I could always, I think you could always [see--Ed.] the artist in the piece he makes; I've always felt that way. That it's a hand-made piece.

KEN SHORES: Yes, right. So you had your own criteria for judging then. Whether just the spirit was in the piece?

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. You can see it every time, at least I thought I could.

[Section deleted in which MAURINE ROBERTS becomes confused about subject of conversation--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: I just think someday, if we could both go to the gallery, where those logbooks are, and turn the pages, our dates and all would be better.

KEN SHORES: Yes, it would be there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: You know me; I don't remember dates, figures. When we first started selling, it was for the benefit of the artists, and we took a very... Twenty-five percent, I think. Or was it that much?

KEN SHORES: I heard in the beginning it was even less.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think it was.

KEN SHORES: Fifteen, maybe.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, which was the only money we had to go on. Hardly could pay for light and heat or anything. [And we were] always money, from the Adams, and Mrs. Patterson, _____ and a friend of Lydia's back east. Uh huh. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: Well, all of that has been forgotten, I'm afraid. Very few people realize what...

MAURINE ROBERTS: They don't realize what we did on nothing. And I always took my dishes; everything I had, eventually, if we entertained or anything, was from home. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: But it became known for its beautiful presentations at openings, and the tables were decorated. You did most of the tables.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I did all the tables until I left, um hmm. They're very good now here. Connie does some of them and...

KEN SHORES: Oh. But you always incorporated artists's work on the tables, and sculpture, using handmade pots, cloths.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. And they were shown often downtown in the bank window. And also the Oregonian window, big window, was often given over to a little exhibition from the gallery. With what's-her-name was there at the Oregonian that time. Well, we knew both the one at the... Oregon Journal, the Oregonian, the art, art writers. And they were always very good about getting us publicity, through the paper.

KEN SHORES: Always very supportive.

MAURINE ROBERTS: One of the important things that helped put us over were these people from the Oregonian and the...

KEN SHORES: The Oregon Journal?

MAURINE ROBERTS: The Oregon Journal. What was her name?

KEN SHORES: Oh, there was Beth Fagan at the Oregonian and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it'd be before her.

KEN SHORES: Kay Bollom.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Kay was the main one.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, she was wonderful.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and so was the one at the... She was a funny little person. Got married to a man who was... Wonder what happened to him? She died, I remember.

KEN SHORES: It was Max Buhman's wife. Louise Arron.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's it. She was especially good, and gave us very good, lengthy reviews.

KEN SHORES: She was a very astute reporter in the arts, I thought.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But Lydia's last words to me were, "Keep the press talking." And we did a good job in those days.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Better than later on.

KEN SHORES: The gallery was always in the newspapers.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, every time you get a mention.

KEN SHORES: The crew of volunteers were very loyal. And good people, some talented people with them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, that's right.

But I didn't finish about taking these cartoons from Hartwell's class and developing something. Because there were pieces of jewelry that... What was his name? Two of them made jewelry. Worked out, over there by Oregon City.

KEN SHORES: Oh, yeah, I've forgotten their names too.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Walker?

KEN SHORES: Walker. I think it was [Cliff and _____--KEN SHORES] Walker.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. Did some jewelry. And Kay Larsen did drapes for the gallery. We had drapes in the gallery once, that were from those cartoons. And two different sets. Did you use some of them once? Who lived across the street? I don't know.

[Section deleted; MAURINE ROBERTS tried unsuccessfully to remember an incident--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: If you think of some of the highlights of the gallery, what would you think would be the most memorable to you.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, of course, my memory always centers, all of it, around Lydia.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a woman of vision.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And I remember a time... I would be very mean about things and she would cry.

KEN SHORES: But yet, you're close friends, though, got along well.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes. As I said, I don't whether I just believed in her or believed in the cause. Because it seemed to me the cause at first was so slowly developed. But we had a children's show, too. Remember?

KEN SHORES: Oh, I heard about that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, it was quite nice, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Different kinds of crafts?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, just clay. From the public schools. I think...

KEN SHORES: The children's show must have happened several times. Weren't there school shows, or teacher and student shows?

MAURINE ROBERTS: There was teachers and students, yes. I know I always went to visit them and see. I think one was Ruth Hart. Was Rachael [Griffin--Ed.] teaching or not?

KEN SHORES: Rachael taught earlier, yes, and Ruth Halvorsen.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't think we had her. Ruth didn't teach; she was head of art.

KEN SHORES: That's right.

MAURINE ROBERTS: She was very cooperative in assist, in backing up...

KEN SHORES: She was director of public schools, wasn't she.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. Well, art in public schools. And Evelyn was always her assistant.

KEN SHORES: Evelyn Arnold.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Arnold. Because when Ruth retired, she took over.

KEN SHORES: They were art supervisors for the Portland Public Schools.

[Break in taping]

KEN SHORES: What about the American Crafts Council? What was the connection with the gallery, if any?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Of course, I don't say this. I didn't want to say this.

KEN SHORES: What?

MAURINE ROBERTS: What I'm about to say.

KEN SHORES: Well, why? Shouldn't it be taped?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. This is none of our business.

KEN SHORES: Well, I know Lydia and Mrs. [Vanderbilt--Ed.] Webb were in a sense rivals.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah.

KEN SHORES: They both were starting...

MAURINE ROBERTS: She got her ideas from us, Lydia thought. I don't always believe that, but she had money, and we didn't. We'd beg, steal or borrow a penny, I've always said.

KEN SHORES: Well, she had a great fortune from which to work, and Lydia was working on a shoestring, so to speak.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Right, a shoestring! Boy!

KEN SHORES: But there was a connection later. I noticed there was much correspondence between them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes. But...

KEN SHORES: Well, what was it called? The American Way? American Crafts Council had something called the American Way; the gallery would send work to America House. I think some work was sent, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I just remember we sent wooden stuff, and we never got it back in the beginning. My little wood carver we had for salad sets and things.

KEN SHORES: Oh, what was his name? Stromberg?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Bill Stromberg. He'd broken his back climbing a tree, or in the forest, and opened a little shop in his garage. Oh, someone brought a piece into a teacher, and she brought it to show to us. Well, immediately, we saw the good design in it; that was the one with the hidden lip you could hang on the edge of your bowl.

KEN SHORES: Oh, these were knives and, or forks and spoons.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Beautiful wood, and beautifully carved. Because he'd learned to carve and use his knives-- he had knives, and I have one of them-- as a boy in... Well, hmm, was he German? Sounds Scandinavian, I think.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, I think he was Scandinavian.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But he knew how to carve well. So after he broke his back, I think he had someone help in making his garage into a little workshop for him. And I went to see Bill. I took this spoon that the teacher had brought in, and talked with him. I drew a lot of the pictures of the different kinds of spoons that we'd be interested in. Then he made forks and beautiful salad sets.

KEN SHORES: Oh, I remember; they were beautiful. So, you sent a set back to New York?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, and it never was returned. Somebody stole it.

KEN SHORES: Oh! It was for an exhibition?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yep. Well, he was a great part of our picture at the time. And I was the only one that had contact him, because he just lived over here a little ways. He was a sweet man.

KEN SHORES: Well, there were a number of crafts people like that affiliated with the gallery. I remember there was one woman who did placemats, exclusively for the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes. And those little baby bibs, and things for... They lived out of Portland, though, I think. I can't remember the names.

KEN SHORES: Well, there were so many people that came through the gallery. I suppose they're into the thousands, [reasonably]. Then the whole California group in the sixties, like Henry Takemoto, Paul Soldner and John Mason. So many people, when there weren't places to show in California, were showing up here.

MAURINE ROBERTS: You know, gee whiz, I wish I had our catalogs for our shows. I started clearing out upstairs but I haven't gotten very far.

KEN SHORES: The whole impetus of the gallery, though, in a sense from what you said earlier, was educational...?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Educational.

KEN SHORES: And then to help the artists?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. And see to it that we were nontaxed took quite a bit of doing.

KEN SHORES: Well, it really was important, because there was so little money involved.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, but they were after us several times, and we were always scared to death. Because we were selling things, then.

KEN SHORES: Selling, but there was no profit actually; it all went back in.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No! No profit. We couldn't exist on the little profit we made from it.

KEN SHORES: Most of the money that came to the gallery was from donations.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Like Adams, and Patterson. I remember Art even parting with fifty dollars (chuckles) when we needed it so badly.

KEN SHORES: Well, many people were generous; that's true.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yeah, that believed in us.

KEN SHORES: Then there was a real connection with the public schools and University of Oregon.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. I never did meet the dean there, though.

[Break in taping]

MAURINE ROBERTS: _____ and I can tell whether it's a creative piece, and if you feel it, you feel the hands of the potter, that's the way I've gone about selecting things.

KEN SHORES: Or the weaver, or the jeweler.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, not so much. Well, not the weaver, but the potter. There's just something about it that I always seem to feel. And I can always see in any piece. In weaving if they were really creative about it: color and design. I've always been able to do that.

KEN SHORES: How does one have this talent?

MAURINE ROBERTS: It's just part of their _____. How do you have a talent for music or anything?

KEN SHORES: Well, do you think part of it's learned? I mean, as far as the artist goes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: It's there, and as you grow older, it naturally develops, if you're given the opportunity.

KEN SHORES: Do you think schools are important for the artist?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, for beginning, I do. Definitely.

KEN SHORES: They need to work with somebody, or people that have, successful people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's why our Carnegie grant was to teach teachers, not just anybody. But we could [not--Ed.] get teachers enough to take it, take the class. That bothered what's-her-name very much. You know. Ruth Halvorsen.

KEN SHORES: There just weren't that many interested people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, there were not. And it amazes me today to think of the things that we sell to someone who had never picked it out in the beginning. (chuckles) And I'll always remember-- Oh, what was her name, [former] important name here in the city?-- It was his daughter that came in and she said, "Well, who wants to put roses in ceramic things. It should always be glass."

KEN SHORES: Bert Brown Barker?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, Bert Brown Barker.

KEN SHORES: He was a great benefactor to the ____.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, he was, very nice. I think we called him our godfather. But his daughter didn't buy anything, and she could well have afforded to.

KEN SHORES: Well, it was hard for people in the beginning to think of handmade objects as special.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I suppose, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Don't you think that because of the Depression and everybody had to make things by hand, that when that was over with, everybody wanted machine-made things, because that was what indicated wealth. And handmade things were sort of things for poor people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I think maybe that's right. Just bring that... [referring to wheel chair--Ed.]

[Break in taping]

KEN SHORES: Well, we were talking about the importance of what makes a good piece. And you were saying the dedication. It seems that's true, and it's always been true.

MAURINE ROBERTS: To look at a piece, you know it's good.

KEN SHORES: And good work will stand out.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I remember saying, right after I juried the one time-- and the only time, I'd never do it again, was in Seattle. And I said, "Here is everything. You take a good look and you should be [able to--Ed.] see what was bad and which was good." It's always so obvious to me when I see a table full of pottery; I can pick out the best ones, and the others don't interest me at all. They didn't like that too well. I know that. But I didn't care.

KEN SHORES: That was at the Henry Gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, Henry? I think so.

KEN SHORES: Well, it's not necessarily by the style of the piece, either; it's how it's made, the whole execution.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, the design of it, I think, includes it all, doesn't it? If it's good design and if it's designed for a purpose. If you're going to make a pitcher for just ornament, it can be different than you use a pitcher for using, pouring.

KEN SHORES: Right. The appropriateness of the material in the form.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, um hmm. I don't know; it's hard to explain the way I've always felt about things, but... I always stuck to it, when people didn't agree with me.

KEN SHORES: Well, I think the gallery, because of you and Lydia and other people, had a quality about it that was high standards.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think quality, and Lydia also depended a lot on Rhoda and on Kay.

KEN SHORES: Well, let's see. I came there in 1957 and Lydia was still there. I think she was only there about a year or year and a half, while I was there. She was at home for about a year or year and a half, then directed the gallery from there. But we used to call every day at her house, and she was still directing the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I know.

KEN SHORES: I've forgotten when Lydia died. It was in 1960, I think was it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, don't ever ask me a date.

KEN SHORES: I'm sure that was it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Life just goes on for me, but...

KEN SHORES: Then you really were in charge of the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I became very dedicated, just as dedicated as Lydia was, in a way.

KEN SHORES: Yes, yes. Because you were really the one in charge after Lydia's death.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, and no one else would do exhibitions, though I always got good help on it. And I never spent a penny, hardly, on putting them up. Marlene [Gabel--Ed.] now pays somebody to set up a show in the... Which to me is ridiculous; I just think they ought to set up their own show. There must be enough there that are capable of doing that. Certainly Virginia Campbell could do it. Because she helped me all those years.

KEN SHORES: Well, it was quite a crew when you were installing shows.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes!

KEN SHORES: It was a real production.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Why sure!

KEN SHORES: It got done though.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And if I needed a man, I always got one without paying him anything. They say our friend across the street is very ill.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, I heard, Ray Sheehan [a volunteer--KEN SHORES]. Well, the gallery space was very small in those early days, too, with about a third the space that they have today. Yet those great shows happened in that small space.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, they did. Unbelievably. A few times we had to use the sales gallery, or part of it.

KEN SHORES: Well, the sales gallery was the whole exhibition gallery in the beginning, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I guess it was, wasn't it?

KEN SHORES: Yes. Everything had to come out, all those pedestals and counters, for each show.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's right. I'd forgotten that. We added the big deck, hopefully to show outdoor work on. Was that our first enlarging the thing?

KEN SHORES: Yeah, the back...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we made the big room more usable.

KEN SHORES: The back room was a workshop; got rid of all of that and made it into a gallery. Remember it was a workshop with sinks and filter press and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: You mean, when you were working there?

KEN SHORES: Yeah. And then, I moved into the smaller space, where the old kiln was.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. A big room. The glazing and everything was done in there. And that was made into a gallery, and I guess the little oak room gallery was there then.

KEN SHORES: That was a part of it, yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But we didn't have offices. All we had was one little two by four office, in the beginning. And we always ate our lunch in the furnace room, we called it. (chuckles) Card table in front of that old furnace. For years! The kitchen wasn't very adequate.

KEN SHORES: No, it was tiny.

MAURINE ROBERTS: So we've grown by enlarging one, two, about three times. Wouldn't it be?

KEN SHORES: Oh, at least three times, yes.

[Tape 3]

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...benefits.

KEN SHORES: To exist, you had to hold benefits?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. [A lot.] Well, what were they? Well, supper parties, barbecue party, and silver teas, and... What else did they pay to see? I think for the opening and some exhibitions we charged a little bit, in the evening, for the preview.

KEN SHORES: Oh, one of the big benefits was at the museum, the Fire, Clay and Grog.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. We charged for that, I'm sure. Besides charging for drinks, because we had drinks at the bar that night. It seems to me I designed something for a bar.

KEN SHORES: And it was in conjunction with the Syracuse clay show [Syracuse National Clay Exhibition--Ed.] that was traveling, at the museum. And there were crafts people, working.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Weren't you working?

KEN SHORES: I think so.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Sure, I'm sure you were. Our best. And Rhoda and I had charge of that.

KEN SHORES: Roy Setziol was carving wood.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, we wanted a woodcarver and finally found one. For years we'd been [_____, hunting?]. On jurying those shows, our annuals, we always managed to pay to have guest from someplace, like John Risley [clay sculptor--Ed.] was one.

KEN SHORES: As a juror.

MAURINE ROBERTS: As a juror. We always had enough. Someone important in the east. John I remember so well.

KEN SHORES: I remember Paul Soldner was there once.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, he was there. I didn't like him.

KEN SHORES: Pete Voukos juried a show once, along with Vic Avakian and... I think it was a three-person jury one time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't think so. Well, there might be three people. I don't know. Maybe Rachael was once.

KEN SHORES: Rachael Griffin?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. If we had, had all the [gallery records--Ed.] together then we'd know.

KEN SHORES: But it did bring lots of people from out of town, from around the country, here to jury. It made it more of a national entity.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Should remember more of them. See the last [one--Ed.] was a woman, I think. Oh! We juried in our gallery, the show that went back east. What was that?

KEN SHORES: Oh, that was Craftsmen USA '66. And it was shown in the Museum of of Contemporary Crafts, in New York.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. But we handled it all through the gallery.

KEN SHORES: And those were the days when we juried by pieces, and not by slides. And all the work would

come in.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, there was a woman juror on that.

KEN SHORES: Toshiko Takaezu [potter--Ed.].

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. I always sat in with the jury.

KEN SHORES: Well, this gave, gave the gallery a lot of distinction, I think, for bringing these people into the community.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, I do too, definitely. [I must have missed it.]

KEN SHORES: And winning the awards is important, coveted.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. The art museum had the privilege, before the show opened, to select a piece that they would buy. And I'm sure they gave most of them to us.

KEN SHORES: They have a big collection.

MAURINE ROBERTS: They had a big collection, I know. And there are times, I think, when they bought more than one piece. And, or maybe they bought one and in some way acquired others. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: But architects and interior designers really used the gallery a lot, didn't they?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, that's right. Reed College did a lot for us, because of the Hamiltons. We used to use their room for lectures, I remember. We held some lectures, and I can remember two that were in their lecture room over at Reed, because we couldn't accomodate enough seats, hundred people. (That probably was before you were there.) That came through the Hamiltons, their influence in getting this room for us. We didn't have to pay for using the room to lecture. And I can't remember who those people were that lectured. But they weren't local people. Oh dear.

KEN SHORES: Well, lots of crafts people used to come to the gallery too, didn't they, and give lectures about their own shows?

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...own show, uh huh. Sometimes the night of the show...

KEN SHORES: Vic Avakian really played a big role in the beginning, too, didn't she?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, but sending us people. Vic never would come to our meetings or anything. Hardest thing to get her out of Eugene; you just couldn't. She never was on a jury or anything.

KEN SHORES: She did a lot of experimenting, though, with clay for Lydia.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. She called it her "language of clay."

KEN SHORES: What was that about?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Different glazing and... I don't know. Vic called it her language of clay. They were mostly plates, because I remember putting them up in the window. We used them at the gallery, and I think most of them have gotten broken. There might be one or two there.

KEN SHORES: I recall some of those plates had different sounds as you tapped them too, didn't they? And there was a resonance or a ringing to them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Maybe that was it.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a great technician.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. But she stayed in her little niche and we couldn't budge her. Once, we did. I think she was one time here.

KEN SHORES: Yes, for a board meeting.

[MAURINE ROBERTS is uncertain about timing of visit--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: I think she came up shortly after Lydia died and they were talking about closing the gallery. And it was very critical, you remember, and she came up for that meeting.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right.

KEN SHORES: And we all wrote this plea to keep it open, and to enlarge the back room and make a new gallery. They came so close to closing at that time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. And I know I was always adamant that anybody that took it over should be part of the University of Oregon.

KEN SHORES: Well, it's had a great history.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it really has! How many years?

KEN SHORES: 1936, it's almost 50 years, 48.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Gosh!

KEN SHORES: And to think of the people that have gone through there, crafts people, artists, volunteers.

MAURINE ROBERTS: It would sometime be fun to count them up, wouldn't it.

KEN SHORES: When did the permanent collection start?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I've been trying to think about that, too. It isn't too old.

KEN SHORES: Well, things were collected from those early days, though, like...

MAURINE ROBERTS: This is the way it happened. Somebody would have a show. At the end of it they'd give us a piece, a gift. And I always took it. Whether I believed in it or not, I thought I didn't have the courage to say, "I'm sorry; we don't want it." That's the way it started. Those pieces were all put away then until they grew to quite a number.

KEN SHORES: Early Voulkos pieces and all of those early pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Of course we wanted those, kept those. Did we ever get a piece back that we sent to California? Pete was always writing us and wanting to borrow his things.

KEN SHORES: Oh, I don't know.

MAURINE ROBERTS: One time we had an awful time to get it back, I remember. Hmm. And how many different technicians have we had?

KEN SHORES: Well, there was [Jack--Ed.] Anderson and [Hal--Ed.] Riegger. There was Jack Wright. And then, I think, myself. Then it stopped, because we didn't do any more firing for the school system.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah.

KEN SHORES: Then I became director, and technician.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Finally gave up because we put small kilns in so many of the schools.

KEN SHORES: Yes, it was no longer necessary.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Hal made a lot of little kilns.

KEN SHORES: Yes. Well, it was no longer necessary after people got acquainted with clay and did it on their own; that service was no longer needed. But it was only through the gallery that that was encouraged.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Didn't we still supply clay to them? We sold clay for a long time.

KEN SHORES: For a long time, and then we finally disbanded that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: And now, just the sales gallery and the exhibition gallery. And the new expansion, a few years ago, that's now called Maurine Roberts Gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Once in a while I get an invitation. Once they mentioned it on TV. Well, that's neither here or there, but I think it's the prettiest gallery of them all. And for a while, they were going to... [They-

-Ed.] insist they were going to block out some of the glass. And I said, "Look, if you're going to name it for me, you're not going to cover those windows up." So (chuckles)... That would give them more hanging space, and I objected anyway. Plenty of hanging space in the big gallery, you know. Oh dear, I know we've missed things and people.

KEN SHORES: Well, there were so many people involved as always, in this kind of an organization. Architects...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, the Women's Architectural League always put on a benefit for us every year for a long time. That's worth mentioning.

KEN SHORES: Yes, and house tours for benefits.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, house tours, with people that had interesting things.

KEN SHORES: And the interior designers did a couple of shows using crafts, people's work.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, setting up a room using our things.

KEN SHORES: Rooms, vignettes, yeah. The whole city cooperated and made use of the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well sure, they did. Don't say the whole city, but then...

KEN SHORES: You know, a good many of the talented people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Good publicity. And don't forget at the end to say that Lydia's last words for me were, "Keep the press talking," because she believed that we gained more that way than almost any one way.

But John, what's his name? The big fellow from California. We didn't mention him. John Ryder?

KEN SHORES: Oh, that's right! He was a technician, too. I'd forgotten him.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He was a good potter, but lazy. And then he went into just nothing, I think, going into one of the schools to teach. I wondered the other day if he was still there. And he lived across the street in that little apartment upstairs.

KEN SHORES: Oh yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And did you know that Lydia's sister's daughter is working at the gallery now? She came in and volunteered.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Is she attractive? I never seen her since she grew up.

KEN SHORES: She's quite attractive, yes. Well, there are still a few of the old guard left, but not many.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, not many, but Freddie [Schatz--Ed.] said that those were the only ones that were invited to Warren's [Warren Weber, architect--Ed.] service. [Memorial funds after Weber's death were used to buy furniture for the gallery, dedicated summer 1984--KEN SHORES]

KEN SHORES: Um hmm.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And she thought it was a wonderful time.

KEN SHORES: Well, if you had anything to say about the gallery, if you had to really say in a few words or few sentences what the gallery means, _____ with somebody that didn't know anything about it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I definitely feel that my aim in life, when I had to give up my own work... See, the reason I took this job, I couldn't work with clay; my hands broke and I couldn't weave; I had to wear a mask. So my aim in life was to educate the public to the use of a handmade thing, to want to have a handmade picture or whatever [at the forefront]. And well, I guess that's what it was, to educate the public. And that's the most valuable thing I did, I think. Through exhibits and through handling things.

KEN SHORES: Well, in a way, though, art is more important than just the object too, don't you think?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes, surely. Well, I said, "To create art." I took a pledge. That pledge, in the honorary fraternity in the University of Washington, that was in there, that I pledge myself if I can't continue my own

work, for any reason, to continue to work to try and educate the public to the use of-- How was it worded? Have to look it up-- to the use of going to exhibits and...

KEN SHORES: Art in general.

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...owning, holding art objects, or buying paintings. It was just a general thing there. But in case I had to give it up, which I did have to. I took all the pleasure I had in the things that I wanted and wanted to do and what other people could do. And I helped many of them change their point of view about weaving and, well, ceramics too, I can remember that. By trying to help people, helping craftsmen to do things that we felt would be more saleable. And I can't remember the only one here that had done any pottery; we showed some of them at that first show, but for the life of me I can't remember his name. Hmm. But there was very little handmade crafts and things. Only someone doing them as a hobby.

KEN SHORES: Yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And those that were trying brought in things that were really not acceptable. They were either old pattern weaving or, you know, nothing.

KEN SHORES: But you spent time with them to encourage them a lot, redirect them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I did spend a lot of time getting rid of one old lady. She, what did she bring in? I was just appalled at it, but the next thing she brought in was that big scarf of mine, which I have-- that red and white one-- oh, I want to get that scarf out to show you. But she came in with it and I was just astonished! See I would help them pick out...

We also bought, you know, tons of that white stuff, and had it dyed. So weavers could have [work]. No, that was during our first [Dorothy--Ed.] Liebes classes.

KEN SHORES: The workshop.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and Delight [Hamilton--Ed.] and I were... Delight took care of most of the dying business. I just found two big skeins of that white that I still have, for warping. And they did some nice colors and I combed the town for any scraps of braid or anything else that could be used in weaving. Because Liebes was already doing this, you see, putting anything into your weaving. And that was interesting, because all these people went ahead and used it and were surprised at how well it worked out.

KEN SHORES: Well, the encouragement of all these people, that must... Did you feel that you've helped some people keep going?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I feel, having no family, that I haven't lived in vain, because of the Contemporary Crafts Gallery and what I was able to contribute. I definitely feel that.

KEN SHORES: Well, you...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Because Art never would let me work, or take a penny, you know. (chuckles) "You can do what you want to do, but if I can't support you, why that's just too bad."

KEN SHORES: It's a nice attitude.

MAURINE ROBERTS: So, he didn't resent my working there at all, being there a lot. He came and helped a lot.

KEN SHORES: Yes, I remember.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I always got men to help me if I needed them. Remember Walt [Kliest?] built a little, some of the things we had. And of course, Sheehan across the street we didn't pay. But anyway, you can always get men friends to help. And that's why I was upset with what's-her-name [Marlene Gabel--Ed.] when she came in [as director--Ed.]. She began to hire her own secretary or treasurer; I think she has two helps, paid help in the office, doesn't she? And pays people to come in and set up a show. That just appalls me. Why can't she do it?

KEN SHORES: Well, it's so changed now, I don't really know what some of them...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And a lot of the girls won't go near the place since she's been there, you know, the old ones.

KEN SHORES: Yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I don't feel that way. You can't help but like her, she's so pleasant.

KEN SHORES: There've been four or five directors, haven't there? Gordon Smyth was involved as one of the directors. [KEN SHORES was the first formal director, after Lydia--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, Gordon. John, the last one.

KEN SHORES: Van der Marck? Jan van der Marck?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't think that's right. But... There was a squib about me once, in Craft Horizon, and this John, whoever he was... I was home, taking care of Art then. He called me up and said, "Well, we're proud, or you ought to be. I'm going to read this to you," and he did, which amazed me.

KEN SHORES: Well, that was in conjunction with your being elected as one of the first fellows of the American Crafts Council.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Was it?

KEN SHORES: Yes. You were, I think, one of the first ones, in the first group.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Only one here.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, here.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Two. [Guy] lived in California, there was one.

KEN SHORES: Yes. Was it Trude Guermonprez, I think? But certainly, you were one of the first ones to be elected.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Being recognized, yes.

KEN SHORES: So I think there's a great deal that you can feel you've accomplished over many years.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I feel I won't die in vain.

KEN SHORES: Oh, of course not! (both chuckle) Heavens no!

MAURINE ROBERTS: (laughs) Well, it was my own pleasure and good and the thing I wanted to do. And I used to get so mad at the activities committee because they weren't more dedicated. If they were invited to a party, they wouldn't show up, or would try and get someone to replace them.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, boy, was Lydia careful about whoever came into that field with us. Now they have a dozen or two, I think.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, it was very difficult to become a volunteer up there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, very difficult, because she knew human nature very well; her work in New York had included a lot of that. And his was too. I always wonder how the two got together, because he was so different. But they both worked in social service work. It was where she met him.

KEN SHORES: Her husband [Edwin Hodge--Ed.].

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I was the only one, I guess, that ever befriended him, but... I'll never forget one Christmas we came home and here was this funny wrapped package at the door. I don't know how many wrappings it had, and ties around it and everything. It was a piece of Lydia's. I guess it was the... What was the piece I had so long?

KEN SHORES: The Penguin.

MAURINE ROBERTS: The Penguin, yeah, which is one of Lydia's good... And there's a magazine at the gallery with a photograph of that in it. And I had it a long time, and then I thought it should be in the children's exhibition at the art museum. So I took it in, and I don't think he [Donald Jenkins, director--Ed.] ever looked at it, and said, "No. We're not interested. I think it should be taken out to the Arts and Crafts or out to..."

KEN SHORES: Contemporary Crafts.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Contemporary Crafts. And I got one of the girls to go immediately and pick it up. I was furious with him. The young chap. What's his name? Not young anymore.

KEN SHORES: Jenkins.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He should have been director by this time, if he weren't so dumb.

KEN SHORES: He is director now. Donald Jenkins.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Aren't they going to get a new one? Just have him? Ohhh. Well... Anyway, I got [some deserving?] and I said, "Well, let's loan it to the children's classes someplace for a while." And now, it's out at the zoo being shown. I think it has our name on it. Did you know Betty Feves has a wonderful sculpture out there in that new building of Lloyd Center, part of Meier and Frank's deal?

KEN SHORES: Oh, no.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I didn't see it either, once I was there. They've built a, a bridge across the highway there, connecting the two buildings, and it's all carpeted and pleasant to walk up there. And they have a parking lot for that area that goes off this way [gesturing--Ed.], and evidently, this is out in front of that. And quite a big piece, where they park cars.

KEN SHORES: Oh good.

MAURINE ROBERTS: [I said--Ed.] "Are you able to see this?" "No," she said. She went clear down into the parking lot to see it, I guess. Well, there's a darling little bar up there. Been there several times. They call it the happy hour, beginning, I think, around four o'clock, maybe. And there's a restaurant there, too.

KEN SHORES: There's a lot of work around the city that Contemporary Crafts helped commission.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Though I don't think we had anything to do with Betty.

KEN SHORES: Not that one particularly, but I think things in the past, though, the gallery has had... With Tom Hardy and a number of people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's true.

KEN SHORES: Well, you've worked with the designers and decorators here too, haven't you? Off and on a little bit?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, a little bit. Lydia never would let me out of her clutches, you know. (laughs) Anyway, I loved her very much.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a great woman, yes. An inspiration to lots of people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. I'm not going to live long enough to ever know one as well as I knew Lydia.

KEN SHORES: Well, besides you and Lydia, there were a number of other quite dedicated people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, yes; Rhoda was one. And Kay. And Delight. Of course, she was working at the Arts and Crafts at that time. And I think I convinced her that she should drop the Arts and Crafts and work with us, which she did. I'm sure she did help me page a lot of the schools, convince them they should use clay. But I think every teacher fought against that was...

KEN SHORES: Well, the people on the board like Ruth Halvorsen, supervisor of the schools...

MAURINE ROBERTS: She pushed it.

KEN SHORES: ...she pushed, assisted in that. A number of architects were very supportive. David Pugh, and Dick Norman.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I guess they were there for Warren's [Weber--Ed.]... It was invitational, but they were there at the gallery for Warren's ceremony. And they came, remember, when I was honored at the gallery that time. And she [Ruth Halvorsen--Ed.] cried! (laughs) It was so funny. Tears falling down her eyes, so happy for me, and so forth. She worked there a while.

KEN SHORES: That was opening of the Maurine Roberts gallery, was it not? So that's been five or six years ago.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it doesn't seem possible it was that long ago, but... I appreciated it. I wonder, I think I have a copy of, of what's-his-name's [Harvey Welch, president of gallery board--Ed.] talk. Rachael [Griffin--Ed.] wrote it. It might have some information in it.

KEN SHORES: Whose talk was that?

MAURINE ROBERTS: He talked about me, was honoring me _____! Then I was honored one year by the Artist's, Woman Artist of the Year.

KEN SHORES: That's right! Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't remember what year it was. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: That was here in Portland, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, from the fraternity-- I don't know the name of it-- I want to say literature, but the people at the Oregonian give that award each year, one award each year to someone.

KEN SHORES: Well, you've had quite a few important awards, and deserving.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I have. I'm an honorary member of the-- in Seattle, what do they call themselves?

KEN SHORES: Oh, the Northwest Designer Craftsmen?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I have an honorary membership there. It seems like another one someplace. Well, New York.

KEN SHORES: In New York, yes. [fellow of American Crafts Council--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: Due to Jack [Larsen--Ed.] and... Oh, I don't remember. I've had...

KEN SHORES: Well, all well deserving.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I've had plenty of credit given me for my work. You know, some people give their life and... What's-his-name [____--Ed.] was elected president of the board once. He said, "Well, I don't know who's going to take care of this,"-- some of Lydia's thing. And I said, "I will do it." I said something about Lydia Hodge. He said, "Who was Lydia Hodge?" He didn't even know who Lydia was, or anything about it!

KEN SHORES: That happens so often. People forget or don't know to begin with.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, he didn't know anything about it to begin with, which just floored me for a minute. So I went and got the history and put it in his hands. You know, we have a history; there's one at the gallery.

KEN SHORES: Every board member should be forced to read it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. We had a paper copy of it made, I mean, just a loose one, at the desk. And I always urged everyone who came there to work to read it.

KEN SHORES: Well, it's so important to know who did what and who had been there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, and what our aim was.

KEN SHORES: I've often thought if there hadn't been such a thing as Contemporary Crafts Gallery, what a gap that would have made in not only Portland, but in so many people's lives, all over the United States.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Of course Arts and Crafts always were hurt by us, you know.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, it was really more of a school, and not a promoting...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And it was for hobbyists.

KEN SHORES: Really, at that time, it was.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, I went with Walt a few times, because he wanted to take lessons from there. What was his name? The man that taught there for years and years.

KEN SHORES: Deutschman?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Deutschman! Is that it? Umm. Well, they were mostly women that were, just did it for a hobby. Wilma's [Roberts, MAURINE ROBERTS's sister-in-law--Ed.] husband. She wanted a big silver tray, so he went to class and made a silver tray. But Deutschman would do most of it. They made the most terrific things, because he was a marvelous craftsman. Pitchers, teapots, things they'd seen in jewelry [class, glass] windows.

KEN SHORES: But they were actually learning how to do it, and not much about the art; just the technique. But it served a purpose.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, they just wanted a teapot or a tray or something. (chuckles) We've had people, too, who wanted to make their own cups and saucers.

KEN SHORES: Right. But the more people get involved... It's really showing people that crafts people are as dedicated as the traditional artist is.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, sometimes I think more so.

KEN SHORES: They have to be sometimes more so. They have more to deal with, especially potters.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and they have to stick to it longer periods than a painter.

KEN SHORES: And it takes longer to learn the techniques. Well, it [Arts and Crafts school--Ed.] certainly served its purpose, and it's nice to see that it's continuing on.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it's a part of the art picture in Portland, surely. The president's wives visit the gallery. And what's her name, Mrs...?

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, Joan Mondale was...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, she was here. I think Freddy [Schatz--Ed.] talked to her. And she bought a teaset or something.

KEN SHORES: Well, most dignitaries coming to the area drop into the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, well, the president's wife will be here today, or this week sometime. It was on TV last night.

KEN SHORES: Perhaps she'll stop by.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, um hmm. She said Portland will be one of her stopovers, her first one I think. Well, there's a lot of important people just come especially to see the gallery.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes. And crafts people come up from everywhere to show and to sell there, too. It's well recognized.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think so. So that should come in someplace, with it as well known as the art museum I think. Sometimes I think more so. I think Rachael got a little concerned about that, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: It had more of a national coverage I think. It has still.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. That's where I think Jack's been a big help.

KEN SHORES: Jack Larsen? He's still a very loyal supportive person to the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I have a letter there on my desk, and he signs his name crazy. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: Well, it's not all been in vain, by any means.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's the way I feel, never had a family, why...

KEN SHORES: Had a big family of crafts people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, right. (chuckles) Had mother [no one] some crafts people. Some I really had to mother along. And I remember when Bill Willbanks was determined he was going to make a living at selling pottery. You remember?

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, he didn't succeed. He went into Tectronics [Portland electronics firm--Ed.] and gave it up completely.

KEN SHORES: Yeah. Well, at least people were encouraged to try it.

[Deleted section, MAURINE ROBERTS trying to remember a potter's name--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't know what [Ralph--Ed.] Spencer... What's happened to him?

KEN SHORES: Oh, he died, quite a while ago. I think Lorene's [Spencer--Ed.] still alive, but she sold the pottery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I have a bottle of his I'll give to the _____ [clay].

KEN SHORES: Well, you must have quite a great collection of pots.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, no. Because I couldn't afford things, but I got a few things. Hal's [Riegger--Ed.] luster bowl, you know. Well, I have a few things. But I definitely would like to be there when they jury things [sorting out the gallery collection--Ed.]. We'll make enemies, some of the things we throw out. But I think before it's all put away it should be shown.

You need that furniture to put it on; you can think of things that would be neat for that. I think the long glass counter will be closed and you look into, because we have several pieces that are valuable. And the nice little pedestals and maybe a square one or two or something.

KEN SHORES: Well, the permanent collection really is an important part of the gallery now. There are some great pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think a few pieces could be shown always, maybe not as a whole.

KEN SHORES: But it's historical now, with some of the early pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's the way you said you were going to do it. Who hit upon this idea?

KEN SHORES: Well, you mean in chronological order?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Of course, a lot of the things that I just said thank you for, should be shown, as early history. I was the one that started that, insisted that we have that. Also a library, which has never come to pass and it burns me up.

KEN SHORES: Well, there's a nucleus of a library there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I know. And you know, the Arts and Craft came in and asked for it, not too long ago.

KEN SHORES: But they didn't give it to them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I said, "Over my dead body!" So it cost me seven dollars for a cab to go out there and say, "You can't do this." To the board. That's the only time I've been to the board. (laughs)

And they [had--Ed.] put some shelves up in the board room, for the books. And I guess some had already been stolen. You see, they were stolen right there. Now they were going to... Anyone who wanted to use the library would have to get the key.

KEN SHORES: Well, the sales gallery was the whole exhibition gallery in the beginning, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I guess it was, wasn't it?

KEN SHORES: Yes. Everything had to come out, all those pedestals and counters, for each show.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's right. I'd forgotten that. We added the big deck, hopefully to show outdoor work on. Was that our first enlarging the thing?

KEN SHORES: Yeah, the back...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we made the big room more usable.

KEN SHORES: The back room was a workshop; got rid of all of that and made it into a gallery. Remember it was a workshop with sinks and filter press and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: You mean, when you were working there?

KEN SHORES: Yeah. And then, I moved into the smaller space, where the old kiln was.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. A big room. The glazing and everything was done in there. And that was made into a gallery, and I guess the little oak room gallery was there then.

KEN SHORES: That was a part of it, yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But we didn't have offices. All we had was one little two by four office, in the beginning. And we always ate our lunch in the furnace room, we called it. (chuckles) Card table in front of that old furnace. For years! The kitchen wasn't very adequate.

KEN SHORES: No, it was tiny.

MAURINE ROBERTS: So we've grown by enlarging one, two, about three times. Wouldn't it be?

KEN SHORES: Oh, at least three times, yes.

[Tape 3]

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...benefits.

KEN SHORES: To exist, you had to hold benefits?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. [A lot.] Well, what were they? Well, supper parties, barbecue party, and silver teas, and... What else did they pay to see? I think for the opening and some exhibitions we charged a little bit, in the evening, for the preview.

KEN SHORES: Oh, one of the big benefits was at the museum, the Fire, Clay and Grog.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. We charged for that, I'm sure. Besides charging for drinks, because we had drinks at the bar that night. It seems to me I designed something for a bar.

KEN SHORES: And it was in conjunction with the Syracuse clay show [Syracuse National Clay Exhibition--Ed.] that was traveling, at the museum. And there were crafts people, working.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Weren't you working?

KEN SHORES: I think so.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Sure, I'm sure you were. Our best. And Rhoda and I had charge of that.

KEN SHORES: Roy Setziol was carving wood.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, we wanted a woodcarver and finally found one. For years we'd been [_____, hunting?]. On jurying those shows, our annuals, we always managed to pay to have guest from someplace, like John Risley [clay sculptor--Ed.] was one.

KEN SHORES: As a juror.

MAURINE ROBERTS: As a juror. We always had enough. Someone important in the east. John I remember so well.

KEN SHORES: I remember Paul Soldner was there once.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, he was there. I didn't like him.

KEN SHORES: Pete Voukos juried a show once, along with Vic Avakian and... I think it was a three-person jury one time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't think so. Well, there might be three people. I don't know. Maybe Rachael was once.

KEN SHORES: Rachael Griffin?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. If we had, had all the [gallery records--Ed.] together then we'd know.

KEN SHORES: But it did bring lots of people from out of town, from around the country, here to jury. It made it more of a national entity.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Should remember more of them. See the last [one--Ed.] was a woman, I think. Oh! We juried in our gallery, the show that went back east. What was that?

KEN SHORES: Oh, that was Craftsmen USA '66. And it was shown in the Museum of of Contemporary Crafts, in New York.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. But we handled it all through the gallery.

KEN SHORES: And those were the days when we juried by pieces, and not by slides. And all the work would

come in.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, there was a woman juror on that.

KEN SHORES: Toshiko Takaezu [potter--Ed.].

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. I always sat in with the jury.

KEN SHORES: Well, this gave, gave the gallery a lot of distinction, I think, for bringing these people into the community.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, I do too, definitely. [I must have missed it.]

KEN SHORES: And winning the awards is important, coveted.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. The art museum had the privilege, before the show opened, to select a piece that they would buy. And I'm sure they gave most of them to us.

KEN SHORES: They have a big collection.

MAURINE ROBERTS: They had a big collection, I know. And there are times, I think, when they bought more than one piece. And, or maybe they bought one and in some way acquired others. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: But architects and interior designers really used the gallery a lot, didn't they?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, that's right. Reed College did a lot for us, because of the Hamiltons. We used to use their room for lectures, I remember. We held some lectures, and I can remember two that were in their lecture room over at Reed, because we couldn't accomodate enough seats, hundred people. (That probably was before you were there.) That came through the Hamiltons, their influence in getting this room for us. We didn't have to pay for using the room to lecture. And I can't remember who those people were that lectured. But they weren't local people. Oh dear.

KEN SHORES: Well, lots of crafts people used to come to the gallery too, didn't they, and give lectures about their own shows?

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...own show, uh huh. Sometimes the night of the show...

KEN SHORES: Vic Avakian really played a big role in the beginning, too, didn't she?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, but sending us people. Vic never would come to our meetings or anything. Hardest thing to get her out of Eugene; you just couldn't. She never was on a jury or anything.

KEN SHORES: She did a lot of experimenting, though, with clay for Lydia.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. She called it her "language of clay."

KEN SHORES: What was that about?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Different glazing and... I don't know. Vic called it her language of clay. They were mostly plates, because I remember putting them up in the window. We used them at the gallery, and I think most of them have gotten broken. There might be one or two there.

KEN SHORES: I recall some of those plates had different sounds as you tapped them too, didn't they? And there was a resonance or a ringing to them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Maybe that was it.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a great technician.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. But she stayed in her little niche and we couldn't budge her. Once, we did. I think she was one time here.

KEN SHORES: Yes, for a board meeting.

[MAURINE ROBERTS is uncertain about timing of visit--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: I think she came up shortly after Lydia died and they were talking about closing the gallery. And it was very critical, you remember, and she came up for that meeting.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right.

KEN SHORES: And we all wrote this plea to keep it open, and to enlarge the back room and make a new gallery. They came so close to closing at that time.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. And I know I was always adamant that anybody that took it over should be part of the University of Oregon.

KEN SHORES: Well, it's had a great history.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it really has! How many years?

KEN SHORES: 1936, it's almost 50 years, 48.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Gosh!

KEN SHORES: And to think of the people that have gone through there, crafts people, artists, volunteers.

MAURINE ROBERTS: It would sometime be fun to count them up, wouldn't it.

KEN SHORES: When did the permanent collection start?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I've been trying to think about that, too. It isn't too old.

KEN SHORES: Well, things were collected from those early days, though, like...

MAURINE ROBERTS: This is the way it happened. Somebody would have a show. At the end of it they'd give us a piece, a gift. And I always took it. Whether I believed in it or not, I thought I didn't have the courage to say, "I'm sorry; we don't want it." That's the way it started. Those pieces were all put away then until they grew to quite a number.

KEN SHORES: Early Voulkos pieces and all of those early pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Of course we wanted those, kept those. Did we ever get a piece back that we sent to California? Pete was always writing us and wanting to borrow his things.

KEN SHORES: Oh, I don't know.

MAURINE ROBERTS: One time we had an awful time to get it back, I remember. Hmm. And how many different technicians have we had?

KEN SHORES: Well, there was [Jack--Ed.] Anderson and [Hal--Ed.] Riegger. There was Jack Wright. And then, I think, myself. Then it stopped, because we didn't do any more firing for the school system.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah.

KEN SHORES: Then I became director, and technician.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Finally gave up because we put small kilns in so many of the schools.

KEN SHORES: Yes, it was no longer necessary.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Hal made a lot of little kilns.

KEN SHORES: Yes. Well, it was no longer necessary after people got acquainted with clay and did it on their own; that service was no longer needed. But it was only through the gallery that that was encouraged.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right. Didn't we still supply clay to them? We sold clay for a long time.

KEN SHORES: For a long time, and then we finally disbanded that.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: And now, just the sales gallery and the exhibition gallery. And the new expansion, a few years ago, that's now called Maurine Roberts Gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Once in a while I get an invitation. Once they mentioned it on TV. Well, that's neither here or there, but I think it's the prettiest gallery of them all. And for a while, they were going to... [They-

-Ed.] insist they were going to block out some of the glass. And I said, "Look, if you're going to name it for me, you're not going to cover those windows up." So (chuckles)... That would give them more hanging space, and I objected anyway. Plenty of hanging space in the big gallery, you know. Oh dear, I know we've missed things and people.

KEN SHORES: Well, there were so many people involved as always, in this kind of an organization. Architects...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, the Women's Architectural League always put on a benefit for us every year for a long time. That's worth mentioning.

KEN SHORES: Yes, and house tours for benefits.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, house tours, with people that had interesting things.

KEN SHORES: And the interior designers did a couple of shows using crafts, people's work.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, setting up a room using our things.

KEN SHORES: Rooms, vignettes, yeah. The whole city cooperated and made use of the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well sure, they did. Don't say the whole city, but then...

KEN SHORES: You know, a good many of the talented people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Good publicity. And don't forget at the end to say that Lydia's last words for me were, "Keep the press talking," because she believed that we gained more that way than almost any one way.

But John, what's his name? The big fellow from California. We didn't mention him. John Ryder?

KEN SHORES: Oh, that's right! He was a technician, too. I'd forgotten him.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He was a good potter, but lazy. And then he went into just nothing, I think, going into one of the schools to teach. I wondered the other day if he was still there. And he lived across the street in that little apartment upstairs.

KEN SHORES: Oh yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And did you know that Lydia's sister's daughter is working at the gallery now? She came in and volunteered.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Is she attractive? I never seen her since she grew up.

KEN SHORES: She's quite attractive, yes. Well, there are still a few of the old guard left, but not many.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, not many, but Freddie [Schatz--Ed.] said that those were the only ones that were invited to Warren's [Warren Weber, architect--Ed.] service. [Memorial funds after Weber's death were used to buy furniture for the gallery, dedicated summer 1984--KEN SHORES]

KEN SHORES: Um hmm.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And she thought it was a wonderful time.

KEN SHORES: Well, if you had anything to say about the gallery, if you had to really say in a few words or few sentences what the gallery means, _____ with somebody that didn't know anything about it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I definitely feel that my aim in life, when I had to give up my own work... See, the reason I took this job, I couldn't work with clay; my hands broke and I couldn't weave; I had to wear a mask. So my aim in life was to educate the public to the use of a handmade thing, to want to have a handmade picture or whatever [at the forefront]. And well, I guess that's what it was, to educate the public. And that's the most valuable thing I did, I think. Through exhibits and through handling things.

KEN SHORES: Well, in a way, though, art is more important than just the object too, don't you think?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes, surely. Well, I said, "To create art." I took a pledge. That pledge, in the honorary fraternity in the University of Washington, that was in there, that I pledge myself if I can't continue my own

work, for any reason, to continue to work to try and educate the public to the use of-- How was it worded? Have to look it up-- to the use of going to exhibits and...

KEN SHORES: Art in general.

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...owning, holding art objects, or buying paintings. It was just a general thing there. But in case I had to give it up, which I did have to. I took all the pleasure I had in the things that I wanted and wanted to do and what other people could do. And I helped many of them change their point of view about weaving and, well, ceramics too, I can remember that. By trying to help people, helping craftsmen to do things that we felt would be more saleable. And I can't remember the only one here that had done any pottery; we showed some of them at that first show, but for the life of me I can't remember his name. Hmm. But there was very little handmade crafts and things. Only someone doing them as a hobby.

KEN SHORES: Yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And those that were trying brought in things that were really not acceptable. They were either old pattern weaving or, you know, nothing.

KEN SHORES: But you spent time with them to encourage them a lot, redirect them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I did spend a lot of time getting rid of one old lady. She, what did she bring in? I was just appalled at it, but the next thing she brought in was that big scarf of mine, which I have-- that red and white one-- oh, I want to get that scarf out to show you. But she came in with it and I was just astonished! See I would help them pick out...

We also bought, you know, tons of that white stuff, and had it dyed. So weavers could have [work]. No, that was during our first [Dorothy--Ed.] Liebes classes.

KEN SHORES: The workshop.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and Delight [Hamilton--Ed.] and I were... Delight took care of most of the dying business. I just found two big skeins of that white that I still have, for warping. And they did some nice colors and I combed the town for any scraps of braid or anything else that could be used in weaving. Because Liebes was already doing this, you see, putting anything into your weaving. And that was interesting, because all these people went ahead and used it and were surprised at how well it worked out.

KEN SHORES: Well, the encouragement of all these people, that must... Did you feel that you've helped some people keep going?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I feel, having no family, that I haven't lived in vain, because of the Contemporary Crafts Gallery and what I was able to contribute. I definitely feel that.

KEN SHORES: Well, you...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Because Art never would let me work, or take a penny, you know. (chuckles) "You can do what you want to do, but if I can't support you, why that's just too bad."

KEN SHORES: It's a nice attitude.

MAURINE ROBERTS: So, he didn't resent my working there at all, being there a lot. He came and helped a lot.

KEN SHORES: Yes, I remember.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I always got men to help me if I needed them. Remember Walt [Kliest?] built a little, some of the things we had. And of course, Sheehan across the street we didn't pay. But anyway, you can always get men friends to help. And that's why I was upset with what's-her-name [Marlene Gabel--Ed.] when she came in [as director--Ed.]. She began to hire her own secretary or treasurer; I think she has two helps, paid help in the office, doesn't she? And pays people to come in and set up a show. That just appalls me. Why can't she do it?

KEN SHORES: Well, it's so changed now, I don't really know what some of them...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And a lot of the girls won't go near the place since she's been there, you know, the old ones.

KEN SHORES: Yeah.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I don't feel that way. You can't help but like her, she's so pleasant.

KEN SHORES: There've been four or five directors, haven't there? Gordon Smyth was involved as one of the directors. [KEN SHORES was the first formal director, after Lydia--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, Gordon. John, the last one.

KEN SHORES: Van der Marck? Jan van der Marck?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't think that's right. But... There was a squib about me once, in Craft Horizon, and this John, whoever he was... I was home, taking care of Art then. He called me up and said, "Well, we're proud, or you ought to be. I'm going to read this to you," and he did, which amazed me.

KEN SHORES: Well, that was in conjunction with your being elected as one of the first fellows of the American Crafts Council.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Was it?

KEN SHORES: Yes. You were, I think, one of the first ones, in the first group.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Only one here.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, here.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Two. [Guy] lived in California, there was one.

KEN SHORES: Yes. Was it Trude Guermonprez, I think? But certainly, you were one of the first ones to be elected.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Being recognized, yes.

KEN SHORES: So I think there's a great deal that you can feel you've accomplished over many years.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I feel I won't die in vain.

KEN SHORES: Oh, of course not! (both chuckle) Heavens no!

MAURINE ROBERTS: (laughs) Well, it was my own pleasure and good and the thing I wanted to do. And I used to get so mad at the activities committee because they weren't more dedicated. If they were invited to a party, they wouldn't show up, or would try and get someone to replace them.

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, boy, was Lydia careful about whoever came into that field with us. Now they have a dozen or two, I think.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, it was very difficult to become a volunteer up there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, very difficult, because she knew human nature very well; her work in New York had included a lot of that. And his was too. I always wonder how the two got together, because he was so different. But they both worked in social service work. It was where she met him.

KEN SHORES: Her husband [Edwin Hodge--Ed.].

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I was the only one, I guess, that ever befriended him, but... I'll never forget one Christmas we came home and here was this funny wrapped package at the door. I don't know how many wrappings it had, and ties around it and everything. It was a piece of Lydia's. I guess it was the... What was the piece I had so long?

KEN SHORES: The Penguin.

MAURINE ROBERTS: The Penguin, yeah, which is one of Lydia's good... And there's a magazine at the gallery with a photograph of that in it. And I had it a long time, and then I thought it should be in the children's exhibition at the art museum. So I took it in, and I don't think he [Donald Jenkins, director--Ed.] ever looked at it, and said, "No. We're not interested. I think it should be taken out to the Arts and Crafts or out to..."

KEN SHORES: Contemporary Crafts.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Contemporary Crafts. And I got one of the girls to go immediately and pick it up. I was furious with him. The young chap. What's his name? Not young anymore.

KEN SHORES: Jenkins.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He should have been director by this time, if he weren't so dumb.

KEN SHORES: He is director now. Donald Jenkins.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Aren't they going to get a new one? Just have him? Ohhh. Well... Anyway, I got [some deserving?] and I said, "Well, let's loan it to the children's classes someplace for a while." And now, it's out at the zoo being shown. I think it has our name on it. Did you know Betty Feves has a wonderful sculpture out there in that new building of Lloyd Center, part of Meier and Frank's deal?

KEN SHORES: Oh, no.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I didn't see it either, once I was there. They've built a, a bridge across the highway there, connecting the two buildings, and it's all carpeted and pleasant to walk up there. And they have a parking lot for that area that goes off this way [gesturing--Ed.], and evidently, this is out in front of that. And quite a big piece, where they park cars.

KEN SHORES: Oh good.

MAURINE ROBERTS: [I said--Ed.] "Are you able to see this?" "No," she said. She went clear down into the parking lot to see it, I guess. Well, there's a darling little bar up there. Been there several times. They call it the happy hour, beginning, I think, around four o'clock, maybe. And there's a restaurant there, too.

KEN SHORES: There's a lot of work around the city that Contemporary Crafts helped commission.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Though I don't think we had anything to do with Betty.

KEN SHORES: Not that one particularly, but I think things in the past, though, the gallery has had... With Tom Hardy and a number of people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that's true.

KEN SHORES: Well, you've worked with the designers and decorators here too, haven't you? Off and on a little bit?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, a little bit. Lydia never would let me out of her clutches, you know. (laughs) Anyway, I loved her very much.

KEN SHORES: Well, she was a great woman, yes. An inspiration to lots of people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. I'm not going to live long enough to ever know one as well as I knew Lydia.

KEN SHORES: Well, besides you and Lydia, there were a number of other quite dedicated people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, yes; Rhoda was one. And Kay. And Delight. Of course, she was working at the Arts and Crafts at that time. And I think I convinced her that she should drop the Arts and Crafts and work with us, which she did. I'm sure she did help me page a lot of the schools, convince them they should use clay. But I think every teacher fought against that was...

KEN SHORES: Well, the people on the board like Ruth Halvorsen, supervisor of the schools...

MAURINE ROBERTS: She pushed it.

KEN SHORES: ...she pushed, assisted in that. A number of architects were very supportive. David Pugh, and Dick Norman.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I guess they were there for Warren's [Weber--Ed.]... It was invitational, but they were there at the gallery for Warren's ceremony. And they came, remember, when I was honored at the gallery that time. And she [Ruth Halvorsen--Ed.] cried! (laughs) It was so funny. Tears falling down her eyes, so happy for me, and so forth. She worked there a while.

KEN SHORES: That was opening of the Maurine Roberts gallery, was it not? So that's been five or six years ago.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it doesn't seem possible it was that long ago, but... I appreciated it. I wonder, I think I have a copy of, of what's-his-name's [Harvey Welch, president of gallery board--Ed.] talk. Rachael [Griffin--Ed.] wrote it. It might have some information in it.

KEN SHORES: Whose talk was that?

MAURINE ROBERTS: He talked about me, was honoring me _____! Then I was honored one year by the Artist's, Woman Artist of the Year.

KEN SHORES: That's right! Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't remember what year it was. (chuckles)

KEN SHORES: That was here in Portland, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, from the fraternity-- I don't know the name of it-- I want to say literature, but the people at the Oregonian give that award each year, one award each year to someone.

KEN SHORES: Well, you've had quite a few important awards, and deserving.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I have. I'm an honorary member of the-- in Seattle, what do they call themselves?

KEN SHORES: Oh, the Northwest Designer Craftsmen?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I have an honorary membership there. It seems like another one someplace. Well, New York.

KEN SHORES: In New York, yes. [fellow of American Crafts Council--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: Due to Jack [Larsen--Ed.] and... Oh, I don't remember. I've had...

KEN SHORES: Well, all well deserving.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I've had plenty of credit given me for my work. You know, some people give their life and... What's-his-name [____--Ed.] was elected president of the board once. He said, "Well, I don't know who's going to take care of this,"-- some of Lydia's thing. And I said, "I will do it." I said something about Lydia Hodge. He said, "Who was Lydia Hodge?" He didn't even know who Lydia was, or anything about it!

KEN SHORES: That happens so often. People forget or don't know to begin with.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, he didn't know anything about it to begin with, which just floored me for a minute. So I went and got the history and put it in his hands. You know, we have a history; there's one at the gallery.

KEN SHORES: Every board member should be forced to read it.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes. We had a paper copy of it made, I mean, just a loose one, at the desk. And I always urged everyone who came there to work to read it.

KEN SHORES: Well, it's so important to know who did what and who had been there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes, and what our aim was.

KEN SHORES: I've often thought if there hadn't been such a thing as Contemporary Crafts Gallery, what a gap that would have made in not only Portland, but in so many people's lives, all over the United States.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Of course Arts and Crafts always were hurt by us, you know.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, it was really more of a school, and not a promoting...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And it was for hobbyists.

KEN SHORES: Really, at that time, it was.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And, I went with Walt a few times, because he wanted to take lessons from there. What was his name? The man that taught there for years and years.

KEN SHORES: Deutschman?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Deutschman! Is that it? Umm. Well, they were mostly women that were, just did it for a hobby. Wilma's [Roberts, MAURINE ROBERTS's sister-in-law--Ed.] husband. She wanted a big silver tray, so he went to class and made a silver tray. But Deutschman would do most of it. They made the most terrific things, because he was a marvelous craftsman. Pitchers, teapots, things they'd seen in jewelry [class, glass] windows.

KEN SHORES: But they were actually learning how to do it, and not much about the art; just the technique. But it served a purpose.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, they just wanted a teapot or a tray or something. (chuckles) We've had people, too, who wanted to make their own cups and saucers.

KEN SHORES: Right. But the more people get involved... It's really showing people that crafts people are as dedicated as the traditional artist is.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, sometimes I think more so.

KEN SHORES: They have to be sometimes more so. They have more to deal with, especially potters.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and they have to stick to it longer periods than a painter.

KEN SHORES: And it takes longer to learn the techniques. Well, it [Arts and Crafts school--Ed.] certainly served its purpose, and it's nice to see that it's continuing on.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, it's a part of the art picture in Portland, surely. The president's wives visit the gallery. And what's her name, Mrs...?

KEN SHORES: Oh yes, Joan Mondale was...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, she was here. I think Freddy [Schatz--Ed.] talked to her. And she bought a teaset or something.

KEN SHORES: Well, most dignitaries coming to the area drop into the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, well, the president's wife will be here today, or this week sometime. It was on TV last night.

KEN SHORES: Perhaps she'll stop by.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, um hmm. She said Portland will be one of her stopovers, her first one I think. Well, there's a lot of important people just come especially to see the gallery.

KEN SHORES: Oh yes. And crafts people come up from everywhere to show and to sell there, too. It's well recognized.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think so. So that should come in someplace, with it as well known as the art museum I think. Sometimes I think more so. I think Rachael got a little concerned about that, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: It had more of a national coverage I think. It has still.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, that's right. That's where I think Jack's been a big help.

KEN SHORES: Jack Larsen? He's still a very loyal supportive person to the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. I have a letter there on my desk, and he signs his name crazy. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: Well, it's not all been in vain, by any means.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's the way I feel, never had a family, why...

KEN SHORES: Had a big family of crafts people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, right. (chuckles) Had mother [no one] some crafts people. Some I really had to mother along. And I remember when Bill Willbanks was determined he was going to make a living at selling pottery. You remember?

KEN SHORES: Yes.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, he didn't succeed. He went into Tectronics [Portland electronics firm--Ed.] and gave it up completely.

KEN SHORES: Yeah. Well, at least people were encouraged to try it.

[Deleted section, MAURINE ROBERTS trying to remember a potter's name--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't know what [Ralph--Ed.] Spencer... What's happened to him?

KEN SHORES: Oh, he died, quite a while ago. I think Lorene's [Spencer--Ed.] still alive, but she sold the pottery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I have a bottle of his I'll give to the _____ [clay].

KEN SHORES: Well, you must have quite a great collection of pots.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, no. Because I couldn't afford things, but I got a few things. Hal's [Riegger--Ed.] luster bowl, you know. Well, I have a few things. But I definitely would like to be there when they jury things [sorting out the gallery collection--Ed.]. We'll make enemies, some of the things we throw out. But I think before it's all put away it should be shown.

You need that furniture to put it on; you can think of things that would be neat for that. I think the long glass counter will be closed and you look into, because we have several pieces that are valuable. And the nice little pedestals and maybe a square one or two or something.

KEN SHORES: Well, the permanent collection really is an important part of the gallery now. There are some great pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I think a few pieces could be shown always, maybe not as a whole.

KEN SHORES: But it's historical now, with some of the early pieces.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's the way you said you were going to do it. Who hit upon this idea?

KEN SHORES: Well, you mean in chronological order?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Of course, a lot of the things that I just said thank you for, should be shown, as early history. I was the one that started that, insisted that we have that. Also a library, which has never come to pass and it burns me up.

KEN SHORES: Well, there's a nucleus of a library there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I know. And you know, the Arts and Craft came in and asked for it, not too long ago.

KEN SHORES: But they didn't give it to them.

MAURINE ROBERTS: I said, "Over my dead body!" So it cost me seven dollars for a cab to go out there and say, "You can't do this." To the board. That's the only time I've been to the board. (laughs)

And they [had--Ed.] put some shelves up in the board room, for the books. And I guess some had already been stolen. You see, they were stolen right there. Now they were going to... Anyone who wanted to use the library would have to get the key.

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH MAURINE ROBERTS

AT HER HOME IN PORTLAND, OREGON

DATE: AUGUST 31, 1984

KEN SHORES, INTERVIEWER

MAURINE ROBERTS: MAURINE ROBERTS

KEN SHORES: KEN SHORES

[Tape 4 (cont.)]

KEN SHORES: Maurine, while you were at the University of Washington, and after you graduated, you were very much involved with art groups, up there in the Seattle area.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, not particularly. I...

KEN SHORES: When did you begin the Lambda Rho?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, that's when I was in school. I was the only freshman. I was about the first to graduate in art.

KEN SHORES: Was Lambda Rho started when you were initiated?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I guess. I helped organize it, the name and everything.

KEN SHORES: Oh. Was this a part of a national sorority?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, it's just our own University of Washington.

KEN SHORES: Does it continue on till today?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, it continues to this day, though there is a national one.

KEN SHORES: They gave, and continue to give, awards to the Henry Gallery and other places in Seattle, don't they?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, they're just stronger today than they were then, I think.

KEN SHORES: What were some of your other activities at the university, or in Seattle before you came to Portland?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I... So many things I can't remember. There was an old market, where we had a booth, and started demonstrating weaving and... Just can't quite...

KEN SHORES: Was it in the Pike Street Market?

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, it was in a market that was up further. Wasn't Pike Street.

KEN SHORES: What kind of activities? Were people demonstrating?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, we did everything; it wasn't to sell or anything, it was just a place where... Well, you know, not many had room in their homes to do things.

KEN SHORES: So it was clay and weaving?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: And then you really got back into the art scene when you moved to Portland.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah. Of course I was always interested in fashion drawing. And after I was married I had a little show at the art museum there of fashion drawings.

KEN SHORES: In Seattle?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. And I also did something for a musical comedy. They burned up one of their costumes, and I stayed up all night reproducing that thing for their next performance. Dyeing it. (chuckles) Because I'd learned to do batik. (When I was in Chicago once, my sorority sent me to Chicago, and I ran away from most of the meetings, and took lessons in batik.) No one else was doing it.

KEN SHORES: Well, then, things were happening all the time while you were in Seattle.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, they were. I mean, I don't think I was idle much of the time. But... I had something to say. See, I get off. I say something, and all the time I'm thinking something else! This is difficult for me.

KEN SHORES: Well, it is. There's so much information. But you were in the Seattle area; at that time you were doing...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh! I know what I was saying, that I worked one year designing-- in the personal service it was called-- and anyway, it was a special room, about as big as this, where I could have drawings and things up and pieces of cloth. It was in the yard goods department. And anybody that bought yardage for a dress could bring it over and I would design the dress for them. And a girl named [Smithcall?] would cut out a paper pattern... She took all their measurements, cut out a paper pattern for them, pinned it all together, and then they would come in and try it on.

KEN SHORES: Where was this?

MAURINE ROBERTS: At the Bon Marche! [department store--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: So you created right on the body, in a sense, with the fabric.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, that was kind of fun. And I remember one awful mistake I made one day. She came in, a woman I, not too well dressed. She wanted me to design a gown for her, and I took one look at her and I said, "Oh,

you mean a nightgown?" (laughs) "No!" She meant a dress. That was awful. I was so embarrassed.

KEN SHORES: Well, that was fascinating.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And it was a good service. Very popular. We were usually a little bit behind maybe. Not me, but Miss Smithcall, who did the patterns. That was slow work, cutting it to their measurement, pinning it all together to try on them. I always wondered what happened to her. But anyway, and of course, while I was in school, I'd go to the football games and sketch clothes someone might have on and be mentioned, um hmm. Once, where I had designed a dress and my mother had made it, that was shown in the window.

KEN SHORES: So fashion was a great interest of yours in those early days.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And often, Saturdays, I went in and sketched for their advertising department, um hmm, fashion.

KEN SHORES: Well, with all of this drawing and fashion work, when did your real interest in crafts happen.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That was... I guess, when I came here.

KEN SHORES: When you came here.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Because when Art said go to Portland and I came here, the only thing I could think of was it was the end of the world, and "What on earth am I ever going to do with my time." But I knew about the Civic Theater, and I thought, well, maybe I could help design clothes and the stage there (which I did at the University of Washington as an honorary member of Mask and Quill, which was the drama end of it.)

KEN SHORES: So, it was actually meeting Lydia that, that turned your direction towards the crafts.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, absolutely. Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: You said a few minutes ago about one of the reasons that you got interested in the crafts was to bring it into an art form?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, instead of utilitarian. _____ and be shown in a museum.

KEN SHORES: On the equal basis of...

MAURINE ROBERTS: And I'm proud to say that this day it's being accomplished.

KEN SHORES: Right, yes. But it certainly wasn't before the studio started.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No. But Lydia talked about clay in the beginning. Sculptors, as well as children, could have a place to fire their work, you know. And there was a couple at Reed she did quite a bit of firing for. Oh, they were divorced.

KEN SHORES: Was that Marrienne Gold and Fred Littman?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, yes, Fred.

KEN SHORES: Yeah. I wonder how Lydia got involved in clay in the beginning. She worked in stone and even some metal.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, she'd been in Paris before that, and worked with her brother.

KEN SHORES: I'll bet it was the brother as a craftsperson; that would explain why she was so interested in materials then, because she as sculptor wouldn't necessarily have gone that way.

MAURINE ROBERTS: No, except her desire, I suppose, in her heart, that sculptors should have a place to fire their things if they wanted to.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, well that would be a good reason to start.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm.

KEN SHORES: But then her interest got really directed into the handworks area of weaving, clay, and metal.

[Repetition deleted--Ed.]

MAURINE ROBERTS: During the war I used to go out-- We had little little bed looms made, and I worked with the

heart patients.

KEN SHORES: Oh really!

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, in Vancouver [Washington--Ed.]. Once a week I'd go over to Vancouver. And they could only work for an hour, I think it was, because they were heart persons; they couldn't use their arms longer than that. I loved to work with the black boys, because they'd pick out color-- I always took the colored yarns and things along-- and they'd pick out what they wanted. And I would suggest what they do, maybe a pot holder they could finish in that hour.

KEN SHORES: Oh, yes!

MAURINE ROBERTS: But at least I would bring it home and finish it and take it back and they were always so thrilled to send it home.

KEN SHORES: Were these veterans, or wounded, or from the war?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, yes. Um hmm. At least they were in the service. I don't know, it's all-- there were different wards and I only worked in the heart department.

[Section deleted repeating gallery history--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: The gallery was run by a board of directors, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, we were responsible to a board, yes.

KEN SHORES: The volunteers, or the activities group, answered to the board?

MAURINE ROBERTS: We gave a report. We wrote a written report and handed it in at every board meeting. Because I always hated it. I was about the last one to get mine in. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: And your position was exhibition director?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I don't know. Lydia's right-hand man, as it were.

KEN SHORES: But you were responsible for all exhibitions, though, weren't you?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yep. Um hmm. Um hmm, and hanging them. We never paid people to hang a show.

[Another repetition of gallery history deleted--Ed.]

KEN SHORES: I was reading just recently that Bernard Leach had a show at the gallery, and Marguerite Wildenhain, some of the nationally or internationally known people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, Wildehain and... Did you study with Wildenhain?

KEN SHORES: Yes, I did.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And we sold her book, and had her show once.

KEN SHORES: Yes. And Leach too, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Leach, um hmm. Oh! Was he the one that had so much?

KEN SHORES: Bernard Leach from England.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes! We couldn't get it all out [on exhibition--Ed.]. Just cups and cups and cups and plates and plates. It wasn't a very exciting show, but we had do it after it [the shipment--Ed.] got there.

KEN SHORES: Well now, of course, a Leach pot would bring a sizeable amount of money.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Really?

KEN SHORES: But in those days, of course, he was a production potter too.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yeah, and it seems to me they were more utility things than they were anything else.

KEN SHORES: I think so. But the gallery did support these people and promote them too.

But then about that time, the annuals started; I noticed it was in 1949.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Was that the first annual?

KEN SHORES: First annual. And changed to a biennial in 1960. But that certainly brought different people's work to the gallery from all over the Northwest. How did you feel about those shows, the quality of work and the kinds of work that came in?

MAURINE ROBERTS: I really was surprised at how much of the work was very good in design and color, and we didn't feel embarrassed to show it anyway.

KEN SHORES: No, they were good shows. The work really, as I recall, was surprisingly good, in each annual.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes.

KEN SHORES: That was carefully juried, too, wasn't it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: That was juried show, yes, um hmm. But...

KEN SHORES: Sometimes it was a potter's first time that they've ever exhibited, I think. And they would be accepted in the annual.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh, I'm sure of that. Would that have been when Tom...

KEN SHORES: It wasn't his first show, but he was in several of the annuals, yes. And people like Rudy Autio used to send, and Frances Senska.

MAURINE ROBERTS: And Senska had a show.

KEN SHORES: Well, she had several shows, I think.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Only one, I think. She got mad at us for some reason which I can't remember now. Oh.

KEN SHORES: Well, the Montana group showed a lot at the gallery there.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, they did.

KEN SHORES: Autio, Senska, later on [David--Ed.] Shaner, some of [his] people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right.

KEN SHORES: There was a Montana group show, once or twice.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, there was! Definitely a Montana group-- even jewelry was shown.

KEN SHORES: Well, back to the annuals. They really served a great purpose.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, they did. Because practically everyone that was working in clay, sent in things. They weren't always shown.

KEN SHORES: Good awards, too. Quite a few money awards.

MAURINE ROBERTS: ...money and the art museum was privileged to come in before the preview and buy a piece for their permanent collection. And then the architects bought a piece. We always sold those two pieces in our shows.

KEN SHORES: But it was the first one of its kind in the whole Northwest. Later on, the Henry Gallery started their annual.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. That's right.

KEN SHORES: And things were juried by the actual work, not by slides. I remember all that work coming by the carloads, having to be sorted out, uncrated.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes, yes.

KEN SHORES: It was a big job.

MAURINE ROBERTS: It was. One day, one year it was so big we had to show it at the art museum. Because I

remember Hal [Riegger--Ed.] and myself setting it up in the art museum. We did a lot when Hal was there.

KEN SHORES: That was in the late forties; it was pretty active then.

MAURINE ROBERTS: He had a workshop, um hmm.

KEN SHORES: Well, one of the many great innovative qualities of the gallery was to get the annual going. Certainly the one-person exhibitions was important. It launched a lot of people.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm. Well, that took up most all of my time, [dadas] and invitations and all that sort of thing.

KEN SHORES: And sometimes you'd work a year or so in advance, too, for some shows.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, right. Because in the meantime for our Christmas, we did all extra things and brought in things that we didn't ordinarily show.

KEN SHORES: And that was one of the big shows of the year, the Christmas show, was it?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, we did this to make money. To make real money, we'd have these special Christmas showings.

KEN SHORES: Which still continues until today as a big part of the exhibition schedule at the gallery.

MAURINE ROBERTS: That's right! And I think it's juried today.

KEN SHORES: Yes. Well, in a sense it juried then; you didn't take everything that came in, did you?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, not always everything. But nearly so. Things that we might have not continued to sell, but...

KEN SHORES: But just for the Christmas season.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Just for Christmas.

KEN SHORES: But again, that probably started a lot of people working, just from that Christmas show. It was a very gala time with the trees and...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, tree ornaments, special tree ornaments always at Christmas, that the girls made, out of natural material mostly, that first time.

KEN SHORES: Yeah, that was a very big time, very important part.

[Break in taping]

KEN SHORES: Reminiscing back to your childhood and early days, you mentioned your first-grade teacher and what an impact she had on your life. And then you've mentioned that when she traveled, she would bring things back.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, from the east coast, like a shell or a...

KEN SHORES: Well, a little girl in Kansas probably never heard of the ocean.

MAURINE ROBERTS: She would actually send me the shells and things that she'd picked up on the beach.

KEN SHORES: As an inspiration to you?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Um hmm, as an inspiration, yes. They always were.

KEN SHORES: Well, to this very day, you still collect seashells.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Yes I do. (laughs)

KEN SHORES: Well, you've been a great collector of lots of things. I think that's been part of your talent: the collection of things that you used to put together for table decorations; they were well known around town as the very finest.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, I know, but people, some people used to say, "Well, they came to see the table."

(chuckles) They would appreciate that more than looking at the show, maybe.

KEN SHORES: How would you approach each setting for different shows?

MAURINE ROBERTS: Well, maybe, whatever flowering thing I could find-- we never spent money on them-- and arranging them in some pottery piece, and using ceramic candleholders and that sort of thing. I always used to take my handwoven things from Mexico, of course, for the table. Because no one here had seen those.

KEN SHORES: Well, you had wonderful cloths, tablecloths, and different materials that you coordinated.

MAURINE ROBERTS: But I loved doing that. That's... And I did that for the art museum. And for that big show they always at the art museum when... What do they call that?

KEN SHORES: Oh, it was the Art and Christmas, or something.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Art in Christmas, that was it. Which was a big thing.

KEN SHORES: That was a big part of the educational aspect of the gallery, too, introducing people to...

MAURINE ROBERTS: Brought in people by the hundreds! They finally had to take it to the... What is that? Just up from the art gallery here?

KEN SHORES: Well, the Masonic Temple.

MAURINE ROBERTS: The art museum wasn't big enough to hold the crowds. And it seems to me they had it in the hotel once, too.

KEN SHORES: I think so, yes. And other things that the gallery did and I know you were involved with were starting, setting up stands with homemade crafts in the Park during the Rose Festival.

MAURINE ROBERTS: Oh yes, we had a beautiful show out at Laurelhurst Park. Many people wandered through the park that had never seen anything...

KEN SHORES: This was way before Saturday Market and when people had pots. This was their first exposure. That was a very important aspect of the gallery. It wasn't just the gallery, because everybody went out of the gallery to these special events and hauled all of this material with them.

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