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Oral history interview with Sue Fuller, 1975 April 24-May 8

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Sue Fuller on April 24, 1975, April 30, 1975, and May 8, 1975. It took place at Fuller's home, and was conducted by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: —[inaudible]—background. Let me see, it's April 24, 1975. Paul Cummings talking to Sue Fuller in her apartment on 63rd Street in New York City. Uh, you were born in Pittsburgh, correct? Um, now, what—did you grow up there? Did you have brothers and sisters, or could you give me some kind of family background a bit?

SUE FULLER: Yeah, all right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh, what, what schools did you go to, then? Start with the, with the schools in Pittsburgh.

SUE FULLER: Oh, um, well, um, I come from a family that's um—uh, I had a father who was an engineer and a mother who was uh, from Colorado, which makes her unique, [laughs] in the city of Pittsburgh. But uh, I have—uh, I had an older brother uh, who was five years older, and a sister who's two years younger.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. What are their names?

SUE FULLER: Um, uh Sam was the—Sam Fuller was the brother, and he was really um—both my mother and my brother had a natural ear for music, and what they could do would be to hear something, and sit down, and play it without music. So our household was full of music all the time, and my brother naturally being a young man, opted for jazz, so as I grew up, I heard Jelly Roll Morton, [laughs] and the rest of them firsthand, and uh, my brother had a terrific collection of um, of jazz records. He also had his own uh, jazz band. In the—we went to uh, Fulton School in Pittsburgh, which is out in the—near the King Mansion in the Highland Park District, and uh, this was a great public school and it had good teachers, and so the teachers, uh, seen my brother's uh, inclination. A lot of the boys were taking music lessons, and my brother studied flute with Victor Saudek, and uh, Victor Saudek's son became a producer-director for NBC uh, later in his life; he didn't follow a music career. But my brother didn't stay with classical music. He uh, really started in doing jazz. His first orchestra in the eighth grade was called The Mah-jongg Syncopators. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What a great name.

SUE FULLER: I think there were three of them: Frank Morris on drums, at the age of you know what, [laughs] and my brother was a very good pianist, so, uh, I forget who the other member was. I remember it was Ned Campbell on sax or something like that, but it was really a wild combination. So these, these boys all went to Peabody High School. Now, my brother went right straight through Peabody High School, and graduated, uh, and when I graduated from uh, Fulton School, I went in to Peabody High School, and remember, this is in the '20s, when the girls are giddy and Maya [ph] was in Charleston Inn [ph] everything, and I was—and the minute I set foot in that high school, a whole bunch of these giddy seniors came down and said, "Which one is Sammy Fuller's sister?" [They laugh.] Because my brother was the big man on campus. He was uh, because of his orchestra, he could naturally play for these uh, school, school dances and they did, but the thing that happened at our house was that uh, those orchestra sessions were just heaven, because technically, my sister and I were supposed to be in bed, but we sat out on the stairs and peered down at the men as they were uh, having their jazz sessions. And they would have to transcribe their own music, and write breaks and endings. I've never figured out what breaks and endings were, but they used to get into hazems [ph] about breaks and endings. But uh, I was just shook with the vibrations from all this. I'm glad we didn't have electrical cars at this time. [They laugh.]

But uh, my mother was a very good homemaker, and in the old sense of the word. She did a lot of canning, and um, cooking, and made her own bread, and she was terrific in that sense. And so, she would make two cakes [laughs] every night when these boys were practicing, and there wasn't a scrap left by the time they left. And they, they went on quite, quite long, and the neighbors were in Belgium when they had practice, but because of the disruptive influence of—in the neighborhood, why, they would take turns going to each other's houses, anybody who had a house that was big enough to accommodate the group. Uh, well, towards the end of my brother's uh, you know, career at Peabody High School, they had a, they had a competition in a local movie theater uh, in the East Liberty, and it uh, was to be determined, uh, the prize was to be determined, on the basis

of the applause. So the whole family went down and clapped for Sammy, and uh, unfortunately, uh, the—another orchestra won first prize, and so he only got second prize, and that was a crushing blow. [They laugh.] But, he, well, he—what his little orchestra did for, for him was that it, it employed him. Uh, for instance, he was good enough so that the fraternities at Pitt and Tech would, would get him, the country clubs would get him for little, little things, and these boys would make $10 a night apiece, for their uh, uh work. But that was my brother's big love.

Unfortunately, my father didn't see his son as a musician, you see. I mean, after all, S. L. Fuller [laughs] was my father, uh, was a country boy from New Hampshire, and uh, I don't recall exactly; I think they were part farmer, part shopkeeper-type people. Uh, in Walpole, New Hampshire's where he was born, and I think they lived in and around that area for some time. I don't know—didn't—I never knew my grandparents, because my grandfather was so old when I was born that he was a grumpy old man and all I can remember is being afraid of him. But, uh, uh, my father was, was a real honest-to-goodness, American, self-made man, because he had an older sister who uh, had gone to normal school and was a teacher, and she loaned him the money so that he could go to uh, Norwich University, which was a uh—it was a military school. And so my father was inclined to be uh, spit and polished. [They laugh.] Uh, only in the sense that he was—fortunately, he wasn't uh, he wasn't, he wasn't a Prussian in this respect. He was more Teddy Roosevelt, because uh, after all, Teddy Roosevelt was the man. And my father's favorite uh, exhortation to my brother was to "take the message to Garcia, and if you"—[inaudible]—[they laugh]—"this, take the message to Garcia." You know exactly what it was intended to do, but you take the message through even though it costs you your life. [Laughs.] So, uh, my father was full of that and he was full of the Rough Rider spirit of uh, of uh, Teddy Roosevelt. And, being a self-made man, he uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of activity was he engaged in?

SUE FULLER: My dad?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SUE FULLER: Well, see, he was an engineer. He was a construction engineer, uh, and he was—it was interesting. I always think it's interesting to look back on your family and get uh, some idea as an adult about them, because you know as a child, you absolutely don't know what's going on. So, uh, my father, uh, started out as an engineer, and then he had a job in Pennsylvania, in eastern Pennsylvania, and he was the first member of his family uh, who went over the mountains, meaning the Appalachian Mountains, and took off from New England. Anybody who was out—according to my father's family, anybody who was outside of New England was just nobody. So, when my father met my mother, who was from Colorado and fell in love with her, [laughs] why, that was the living end for the Fuller family, because they were staunch New Englanders. They thought he was, he was marrying uh, you know, one of those wild frontier creature types, and nothing could be further from the truth. But anyway, my mother had—was sent East to visit uh, an aunt, because I think her boyfriend had been trampled by horses on an icy night up in the mountains of Colorado, some gruesome thing and she was young, and it made a terrific problem for her. So, they changed that; they wanted to change her scene for her and they did! [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Totally.

SUE FULLER: Totally. But Dad was working there as a draftsman uh, for the mining uh, in Pennsylvania, because of his engineering skills, and then he took a, he took a flyer. Uh, this was before reinforced concrete came in, but he had read about it, and there was some funny man; I don't know his last name, but my father referred to him as Friday, and Friday—this sounds like G. K. Chesterton, but it isn't. [Laughs.] And uh, my father—uh, this man was recruiting young engineers to go down to Jamaica, and this is about 19—I think in 19[0]7 they had an earthquake in uh, in Kingston, Jamaica, which absolutely leveled the city. And uh so, this guy Friday had talked somebody into putting up reinforced concrete buildings which would be so constructed that they would withstand the uh, shock. So my father and mother went down there in Jamaica, and particularly, Kingston, was you know, it was just a—it was a sugar plantation with—it was purely provincial, uh British government, and there were sugar plantations with men hacking with machetes for the sugarcane, and it was before it became a banana plantation. It was uh, it was still sugarcane.

And uh, and my mother and father lived in a—this was—because they—my dad took this flyer with Friday's construction company that he had the job in Jamaica. And so my mother and father spent the first year of their life living in a grass hut—[they laugh]—in uh, Kingston, Jamaica. And they had an East Indian uh, woman who came and cooked their dinners for them uh, on a little uh, pottery brazier, with the charcoal, and uh well, the family—in other words, the family got off to a great start because I can't think of a better idea of your first year of marriage—[they laugh]—than to live in a grass hut on a nice island. But anyway, by the end of the year, naturally, my brother was on the way, so, uh, the fam—my mother, uh, being a Westerner, probably objected—you know, Westerners have a wide-open, like a trusting, friendly character, or at least they did at that time, and she was, she was not used to uh, uh, the social life, which would've been uh, like Pittsburgh, where you belong

to the country club, this, that, and the other thing. She really didn't like it, you see. And so, uh, but before she knew about Pittsburgh's life that she didn't like, uh, she, she took an aversion to uh, British pomposity, and naturally, these engineers would be invited every now and then to some big, brassy deal with uh, everybody all gussied up in—[cross talk]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —colonial style.

SUE FULLER: —real colonial style, and my mother couldn't stand that, but she was a, she was a—she had a great relationship, you know, really friendly relationship, with the, with the, with the Jamaicans themselves, and she, for, for many years, kept up uh, up a correspondence with many of them. Well, anyway, that was how the family got off to a start, and then my brother was born in Pittsburgh, and—no. Wait a minute. Yeah, yeah, he was born in Pittsburgh. And then I don't know what happened, but then eventually, I was born in Pittsburgh. But my sister was born in Canton, Ohio. But because Dad's job—Dad, by that time, he'd gotten in on this reinforced concrete, so he was, he was a knowledgeable young man, and uh, being in on the ground floor of an industry such as reinforced concrete, it—uh, he was valuable, and he was taken on by the John F. Casey Company. Now, he worked his way up from a, from a superintendent really, on the job, uh, found the boys where to get the—you know, your steam shovels working, [laughs] this and that. He was that kind of a man, and he was an outdoor man, which, he loved the outdoors. Uh, he worked his way from superintendent up until the time I went to college, he was vice president of the John F. Casey Company, and eventually was made president. But uh, that's Dad. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow! [Laughs.] Sounds very busy.

SUE FULLER: Was. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, I'm, I'm interested about the music, which seems to have been a great kind of family interest. Um, what about things like reading, or pictures, or other kinds of things? Were there books around? Were you interested in books?

SUE FULLER: Well, the family, the family was uh, was very smart in that uh, these were—I—it's nice to look back at your family and find them swinging, and you'd thought they weren't, you know. [They laugh.] But actually, they insisted—they were a real, honest-to-goodness, well-knit family, and uh, uh, you know, it was all for one and one for all, and it—and we had a very good relationship. It was a real happy home. And uh, of course, we had our fights and this and that, but you know how that goes. But uh, um, as for the books, the family really developed this business of uh, they wanted every one of us to have a good education. Now, remember, when my mother was living out in Cañon City, Colorado, it had just barely gotten into, [laughs] into the statehood, I think, so that what happened was, my mother's background was one of a—well, it's a frontier town settling down into being a town, and uh, my grandfather out in Colorado was—he had a little jewelry store, uh, and uh, he was, he was, he was bitten by the gold bug, you know, and would always get together a pile of money and go and blow it, looking for gold. Well, he had a lot of claims out there which, in those days, you know, those claims could get mighty mixed up and, and that sort of thing. And uh, my, my uncle was the one who uh, more or less inherited the interest in the mines and things like that, and eventually, whatever claim that there had been to anything out there was uh, you know, signed over to him, and uh, he took care of it. And it was a—mostly, uh, what happens is in those days, they were only looking for gold; they weren't looking for any of the other uh, minerals, you see, and of course, who knows what they had or they didn't have. But my grandfather I remember was a very public-spirited citizen and uh, he was uh, honorary chief of the fire department, [laughs] and all that kind of thing, and he was uh, he was a Mason, a 32 Degree Mason, and he was in the Knights of Pythias and all that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —know every—what was his name?

SUE FULLER: —all that jazz. Uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can you remember?

SUE FULLER: Cassidy [ph], Cassidy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Um, so you grew up really with all sorts of activity.

SUE FULLER: Oh, we had, we—actually, the family was interested in everything, you see, but at the time my mother lived in that, in that area, now, she had a brother and sister too, you see, so that was the same deal that I had. But um, uh, she didn't get in a high school education, you see. In other words, she went through a couple of years of high school. And uh, yet, uh, the people, the people in the family and around it were book people, and so she was not an uneducated woman. She did it privately, and then she did something which was quite way out for that time: she studied to be uh, a dental technician, because that was, you know, that was pretty way out for a woman to do in those days, you know. But in that little town, everybody had to help with whatever

they could do, and probably because my father's—uh, my grandfather's jewelry business, she probably was uh—I don't know; I wasn't there, so—but I'm sure that with those little tools around, she'd probably be damned good at it. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fun. Well, um, how was high school? Did—were there—you know, did you have any particular interests? Did you start drawing? Were you—did you have art interest—

SUE FULLER: Oh, no—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —or was that later?

SUE FULLER: It started way long before that. It started in uh, it started in uh—well no, I was always the kid who scribbled on the wall, and my brother had done it, he would have been beaten, but my father thought it was cute, so it was okay. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see; I see.

SUE FULLER: And uh, so, uh, my uncle, my mother's brother, uh, was an artist, and he was a mighty interesting young man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

SUE FULLER: Beg your pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was his name?

SUE FULLER: Edwin Gray Cassidy [ph], and uh, what he did, you see, he was, he was in World War I, and he had this, he had this artistic ability of his, but of course, it was practically unschooled, until he uh, he got in the Art Students League and he studied with Bridgman and Knight and Nicolaïdes, you see. And then, nobody ever had any money, and he didn't have any money, really, to fool around with, but he worked, and he'd do odd jobs, this and that and the other thing, but of course, he was snapped up for overseas duty in uh, World War I, and uh, because of his drawing abilities, he was a cartographer, a man who—they used to fly, fly them up in those rickety little planes before they were sure they could even get a gun on them, you know, and without guns, [laughs] these rickety little planes would fly this guy up so he could look at the German lines and go back and make maps. So that's what he did during World War I. Now I'm not sure about overall the details of the thing, but I know that they must've had something similar to a GI Bill of Rights, or else he'd saved his money from being in the Army, whatever amount that was, because right after the war, he went to Mexico. And he, he spoke Spanish because living in Colorado, you'd pick up, you'd pick up more Spanish than you would in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—[laughs]—it's—at that time. So, uh, he, uh went to Mexico, and uh, he was nuts about things—about Indian things. He used to, as a young man, uh, you know, hang around the Indians, and he knew their pottery. He knew their weavings. He knew uh, even their building techniques, and of course, being a young man, he also got down to Mesa Verde. Well, he must've, uh, along the way, found out about the great archeological things in uh, Middle America.

So he went down, and he went to the Yucatán Peninsula, and because he was from Colorado, and a man who was used to loading up a burro, and taking it up in the mountains for some reason or other—of course, this was all probably training from my grandfather looking for gold, but actually, he was—he, he had his own survival techniques and this and that. So he uh, would, would take off on burro to, to look for these uh, probably Mayan ruins that you can now fly right in to their front doorstep practically, but in his day, it was work to get there. And when he'd run out of money for this kind of thing, why, then he'd go and he'd work in the oil fields in Tampico, and that was uh, what he would do there would probably be similar to the type of thing that my father did in the mines in Pennsylvania, was to merely help them with the mapping out of something or other because of his cartographic abilities. And when he got enough money, he then quit them, and he'd go. [Laughs.] He then, so, he'd go and he'd buy some paints and sort of stuff, and he'd paint. So, uh, he had a checkerboard career, and, and part of his time after the war was spent in uh, the Yucatán Peninsula and in, in Mexico, and he did speak Spanish, which was great.

But I didn't meet him until I was about 12 years old, but boy, the tales that we heard about Uncle Ed. Well. So, we were all ready for him. I think I was about 12 years old. Well, maybe nine, maybe about nine. But anyway, he came to visit us, and uh, in Pittsburgh, and he was uh—he came with a big, wide suitcase, you know, that was all scrapped together and it had the best goodies in it you ever saw, those lovely—the things that my sister and I would get into of his were: He had a pair of, of World War I goggles that, that came in their own little case, and they had—they were straight glasses, uh, and they had little sidepieces out of metal that were perforated, and these were the most interesting glasses we'd ever seen, and of course, we were always getting to them, and getting them out, and playing with them. And of course, when we played World War, my brother always made my sister and me be the Germans, and he was the American, so. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see; I see. Oh, sounds like lots of fun.

SUE FULLER: It was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. Well—[inaudible]—you know you said you started drawing as a child. Um, what did your family think of that besides your father saying, "Aw, don't—go ahead"?

SUE FULLER: Oh, well, the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you continue in through school or start studying—

SUE FULLER: Yeah—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —with anybody?

SUE FULLER: No, not, not at an early age, because actually, there wasn't so much going on in Pittsburgh at that time, or if it was going on, my family was so busy, you know, living their own life that they couldn't find out about it. I can remember that, though, that, that uh, it came to the point where, for instance—well, all right, in high—in, in grade school, the teachers always—I was always ahead in, in drawing abilities, you see, and so the teachers would—one of the great things was that the—uh, as you get up in, in uh grade school, at that time, the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon you was to be selected to draw pictures on the blackboard, so, Santa Claus and things like that, for the younger children. I, I shudder to think of it now, but that was the type of art activity that was first opened to you. [Laughs.] And then, uh, they also, they also had—well, for one thing, I was a Girl Scout, as were, was every other girl [laughs] in that school, you know, and we'd uh—I subscribed to *The American Girl* at a very early age, and they have areas where you can submit drawings, and well, one of my drawings was selected by *The American Girl* for publication, and I was overjoyed, and of course, my father was so proud he couldn't see straight. [They laugh.] And uh, but uh, most of the drawing was a struggle, more or less to uh—it, it was not a good drawing atmosphere. In other words, that nobody was drawing around my family. My dad's drafting instruments were, were around the house from his early experience, but he'd long since ceased to use them. So, I was you know around things that had to do with drawing, but it wasn't until about uh—well, I'd say I was supposed to be a pretty good uh, artist by the time I was in the eighth grade, you see, and I won the poster prize, local poster prize, and I got so mad at the teacher because she practically was telling me how to do it, you know, and even then, I began to get my hackles up at being told what to do as an artist, you see? But then I went to, when I—I went to Peabody High School for one year, and uh, I had a great watercolor teacher whose name was Jean Thulberg [ph] and she's still around, and she's in the city of Pittsburgh, and I'm sure she's taught more people watercolor techniques in the city of Pittsburgh—[they laugh]—than you would believe. So, uh, but I only stayed, I only stayed at uh, Carnegie—I mean, at Peabody High School for a year and a half, and then my family uh, sent me away to school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much time did you spend with her?

SUE FULLER: Oh, in, in high school?

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the watercolor, yeah.

SUE FULLER: Well, I was only there for a year and a half at uh—and so, I would take it as one as—art was always one of my elective subjects, you see. I had a great Latin teacher. He was fun. His name was Mr. Henry, and he could even make you like Latin! [They laugh.] He wrote a book that was a good high school textbook, and I also had a great English teacher, Mrs. Rainbow, and I don't know whether it was her name or whether it was herself, but she was a very nice woman. Uh, but she got me uh, interested in literature. You start—uh, you asked me before about uh, books. One of the interesting things about books in my family was that as we were growing up children, the family always bought us good classics. Now, they would buy us a variety of books, but we never—well, we did so read the junk. We read *The Bobbsey Twins*, this, that, and the other thing, but, we always got good books, good children's classics, and I got so particular about the pictures in the books that I can remember specifying, when the family said, "What do you want for Christmas?" and I would say, "I want *The White Company* by A. Conan Doyle, but I want it illustrated by N. C. Wyeth," but I couldn't even pronounce his name, you see. But N. C. Wyeth, according to me, was the man for illustrations, and I didn't like any of the other ones. One time they brought me something illustrated by Arthur Rackham and these thorny old things. I couldn't stand it. So, I, I would specify all this business, and my family really had on their hands somebody who really knew what they wanted. [They laugh.] And I finally found out that N. C. Wyeth [laughs] was one of the best illustrators of children's classics there ever was. But, I don't go along with his son or his grandson. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened?

SUE FULLER: [They laugh.] Well, that's for a lighter—[inaudible]—[they laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous. Um, so, after the year and a half of high school, where did you go?

SUE FULLER: I went to Principia, which is a private, coed high school in St. Louis, and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How, how did that come about?

SUE FULLER: Well, the family didn't—my brother had had uh, had had this marvelous experience at uh, Peabody High School, but times were changing, and it was getting to be such a big school, and I—and we really were quite a ways away. It was a long walk there, and the school is getting bigger and the classes more crowded, so they decided, what the heck, they'd take a chance and they'd send me away to school. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me, although I was very reluctant to go, because here had been this great family, you know, uh, experience that we had uh, out in Highland Park area, and uh, and I really didn't want to leave it. [Laughs.] But my family—my mother took me down there to school, and as we sat on a bench just before she was to take off, and I was a scared little rabbit, she said to me, she says, "Now remember, you only have to stay one month. If you don't like it, by the end of the month, you can come home." And I liked it so well, the family hardly ever heard from me for a month! [They laugh.] But the school did have this thing that you had to write before you could, before you could go to bed on Sunday night, you had to have a letter to your family in the house mother's basket, so that uh, you had a letter to your family every single week. Well, I really did enjoy that school: small classes, great teachers, living with uh, other kids your own age, and uh—but of course, then, you see, I'd always been, uh, been—I drew all the time, and uh, uh, I used to cartoon. Even in Peabody High School, I'd sit there in the back of the room you know with my friend, and entertain the people on either side of that drawing ridiculous cartoons, you see. And so, this was, you know, this was it, so I just carried this ability right into this private school, and uh, it really became uh, quite a fun way to be a cartoonist, you see.

Well, uh, Lynd Ward published a book that was uh, called *Gods' Man*, and it was a series of woodcuts, and it didn't have a single word in it. Well, this was the first book that I had ever seen that was nothing but pictures, you see, and I thought this was a great idea and that was my favorite book, and I found out about it through a very good art teacher I had down there at the school whose name was Kathryn Cherry. She had a lot of good books, and she was a watercolorist, and quite uh, a well-known painter in the St. Louis area. And it was largely due to her influence uh, that uh, my family was uh, later on, as I stayed at the school, was later on convinced by the school that I should be given special instruction in art. And so that was when my fam—uh, there were some Japanese kids at the school, and since I had read *The Japanese Twins*, *The Scottish Twins*, *The Dutch Twins*, *The This Twins*, *The That Twins*, and all the rest of the twins, I was absolutely fascinated by these kids, and I became great pals with this one, Yuri Yagima [ph] who is still my friend and I see her frequently, so, this is a lifelong friendship. But my friendship with Yuri Yagima [ph], and Iku Takaki [ph], and Emmy Takaki [ph], and Sadah Takaki [ph], and Nakama Takata [ph], was really a classic thing.

Well, in the summertime—now look, these kids had come from Japan. And that was a mighty long journey in those days by boat and over land by train and this and that and the other thing, so that they couldn't go home during summer vacations, you see. So the school had the Japanese contingent on their hands and some kids, some other kids from other countries. Uh, but, what happened was that uh, they had to take care of these kids, so they cooked up this—the school cooked up the scheme to take the crafts teacher, who was very good, and her name was Louise Andrews, and the uh, phys-ed teacher, whose name was uh—I don't know what her first name was, but Miss Armstrong. [Laughs.] We always called them "Miss." We always called our teachers "Sir." We always stood up when somebody came in the room. Believe me, we were trained! [They laugh.]

And the other thing was that was uh—they decided that they'd take, they'd take two Buick Touring cars and show the Japanese children some points of interest, like Monticello, uh, Jefferson's home. We went to Washington. They brought us to New York. I saw my first—we all saw our first Broadway musical with Bea Lillie, and things like that, and of course, this was just heaven—[they laugh]—you know, heaven, and we were really—[inaudible]—but uh, the teachers that took us on the trip were very good, because they let us uh—you know, they, they were good to be with. They were good company, anyway, and there were few enough of us. I think there was a girl from Canada on the trip, too, uh, uh, Pat Hammersley [ph], but she was a little bit older and she had another problem: she was more boy-oriented than the Japanese kids and myself. [Laughs.] Uh, Nakama Takata had a grandmother who lived in Connecticut, so she could go there in the summertime, but uh, Iku and Emmy and uh, Yuri, uh, the girls in the group, didn't have uh—I mean, didn't have any place special that they could go.

So, uh, we all spent the summer together and it was just heaven. And then I decided, well, all right, if I was going to get some mileage out of this uh, acquaintance with Japanese, I said to this group of three, I said, "Teach me Japanese." Well, Iku Takaki was the only one who took me seriously, you see, so she starts me out: "Ma-mi-meh-mo-mu, ka-ki-keh-ko-ku"—[they laugh]—et cetera, and she was writing it down and I was supposed to learn it, but then it was too much for the other two. And remember when you're a teenager, you can't take anything too seriously. So, they started teaching me children's songs, which I still remember, and then they'd think it was so uproariously funny when I'd sing them to them, that they had great—I mean, they let me be the, the one

they made fun of, which was fun. [They laugh.] And I'd do it just exactly as they taught me, and I could still do it. But uh, I never got very far learning Japanese, and that's too bad. But my friend, Yuri Yagima, later, taught the entire [laughs] Army and Navy of this country Japanese, you know, as—because they were living in this country at the time of the war, and they were on the East Coast, and uh, they had a different situation. But, anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Well, you had—you hadn't been to any museums or anything, had you, by this time or—

SUE FULLER: Had I been to museums?

PAUL CUMMINGS: —or what—[cross talk]—had?

SUE FULLER: All right, now I'll tell you how I really spent my youth. [They laugh.] I, because of my mother telling us these real, honest-to-God Wild West stories, my mother was the center of interest for all—well this goes back to grade school, and I played with uh, the nephew of uh—and he was a classmate of mine—the nephew of the people next door. And one day, the people next door called up and said, "Miss—Mrs. Fuller, you'll be glad to know that you are part Indian, that's why you know all these good stories." [Laughs.] And my mother really had a great uh, collection of tales, one of which later appeared in uh, Dashiell Hammett's uh, uh—I forget what it was called—*The Thin Man*, or something like that, but it was a, a book. He tells this tale of a, of a prospector—no, of uh jumping mine claims, and there was one guy who was doing this, and the cop who was out there would arrange a posse and uh, and take off after the law offender, you see. So what happened was that they chased him up into the mountains, and he got very far up in the mountains, and what happened was that it started to snow. Now it starts to snow on the peaks in Colorado mighty early, like the middle of September, maybe the latter part of August, and, and they chased him. He went—took them—he led them up so high that when the winter snow really started closing in, they were at his mercy. So he had the posse at his mercy, because he had the supplies, you see. The posse didn't expect to be gone that long. Well, so, uh, the sad end of this tale is that in the spring when they went up there, they found the bodies of the entire posse, with the meat taken off the chests for bacon, undoubtedly, [laughs] and this and that and the other thing, you see. And, and it—the ju—the, the, the whole thing was tried. Uh, they brought him in in the spring, and uh, when the judge tried him, he said, "Stand up, you man-eating son of a gun! There are only five Democrats in Las Animas County, and you've eaten three of them." [They laugh.]

That was justice in the West in those days, and of course, in the fifth grade, I can remember when we were studying Going West and this and that, I got up and told this in my, in my, in my, in my class of fifth graders, you see. I recounted this story, and the teacher, who was absolutely appalled you see by this tale, you see, [laughs] she'd be a nice, eastern Scottish type. [Laughs.] Uh, her name was Miss Nixon. She says, "Well!" [Laughs.] She says, "I think you've gotten things mixed up, because up in Los—when you speak of Los, uh, Los Angeles, it's way out on the West Coast." And I had not said "Los Angeles"; I had said "Las Animas," which is a county in Colorado. [They laughs] But it, but it was really great, true tale. And my mother was full of this sort of thing, so you can see that the—when the little boy told his—was convinced that my mother was part Indian, and that my mother was really in with the kids.

And what we did was, we had an Indian tribe. Well, naturally, I read every book that James Willard Schultz ever wrote on the Blackfeet Indian tribes. I could even probably go from coast to coast with them. But anyway, I was, I was started on this Indian reading by a man—uh, a boy in my class whose name was Sam Cahoon [ph], and uh, Sam showed me the way to the public library, which was beyond [laughs] Peabody High School. In other words, you had to walk about a mile and a half to get to the library. But believe me, we did it every single week, and we'd read one book, and go and act it out in the woods behind the house you know, and go back the next week and we'd go back and we—we had such a rich uh, Indian life, you see. Well, so finally, when Sam Cahoon was, was—probably had to get a job or something; I don't know. He was a poor boy, but Sam Cahoon was uh, my first boyfriend, and uh, he was very shy, and uh, he'd hide behind telephone poles, just like an Indian, if he saw my brother coming. [They laugh.] My brother would come into the house and he'd say, "Your old Indian friend's hiding out there"—[they laugh]—"behind the telephone pole," so that's how I'd know he was around. But I insisted on having a BB gun at the time, you know, when I was a kid, and that was the greatest thing. I could get a gun! You see. And we'd have target practice. We were great. We also were, were good at making little darts. All the things which disrupt a schoolroom, we knew how to do. We'd make these beautiful little darts by taking a matchstick and putting a pin in it, and wrapping it with thread, and slipping the other end and putting feathers in it, and then, *f-f-f-t*! [They laugh.] So, we had a rich Indian—our whole—the whole, I'd say from about uh, well, the fifth grade right straight through the eighth grade. It got to the point where in the eighth grade, I told my family I was never going to wear silk stockings, you see. That was too civilized, you see. Oh and here's my family kind of stuffed the teenaged thing into a dress, into a brassiere—they never managed to do that. [They laugh.] But anyway, so, it ended just about then, and that was, you know, always a rough time. So it—going away to school was probably the best thing that, that could have happened to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that—what appealed to you in St. Louis? You know, the whole, the school—[crosstalk]—

SUE FULLER: Well, wait a minute. Let me tell you about what we used to do besides going down to the public library and turning in our James Willard Schultz book from the week before. [Laughs.] We also used to get down to Carnegie Institute, which is the museum in Pittsburgh. Now, it's unlike the museums in New York. It's like the Museum of Natural History, and, an art museum combined. Well, we made short shrift of the artworks. I mean, aside from [laughs] being told in school that we should look at Mary Cassatt, Cecilia Beaux, and people like that and—[inaudible]—we did that dutifully, but our true heart and love was the Indian collection in the Natural History Museum section. And of course, here you could peer in the case and you could see these figures of Indians sitting around, then what they were doing, you know, and then they had the most magnificent collection of tiny little baskets that were only as big as the end of your finger, and they had little, little feathers all around them. But they had a magnificent collection of baskets, and from the tiniest size right up. And uh, so, I remember that part of the—of Carnegie Institute first, and that was, because we, we had to have special permission from all parents concerned in order to go that far, because Carnegie Institute was a long hike from uh, from Highland Park, you see. But, by that time, I was taking music lessons too, and so I had to be trusted to get where I was going and get home all right, so I did it. And so then, if I could get that far, my music teacher's place uh, was near, nearer to, to Carnegie Institute. So if I could get that far, I could get to the Institute, and I convinced my family I could do so, and as long as I was with my two trusted friends—[they laugh]—I made it there and back. [Laughs.] But uh, uh, when I was going to Peabody High School, they had some uh, drawing classes at the Carnegie Institute, which were for grade-school children, and you'd go out with a piece of paper and a pencil, and you'd draw a picture of the statue of Bobby Burns that was out in the uh, in the uh, gardens, Schenley, Schenley Park near the uh, botanic gardens. And then you would be drawing architecture on a rainy day. Inside Carnegie Institute, they had a lot of plaster casts of uh, things, and of course, that was the way you taught children in those days. And at Peabody High School, they tried to get me into the Saturday morning classes for uh, advanced art students, and the only opening uh, that they had was in sculpture.

So, I studied at Carnegie Tech in the sculpture studio as a high school student, a freshman high school student, and again, it's again, the teaching technique at the time was pretty hard on kids, because I had Louis Squitieri for a teacher, and Louis Squitieri was an excellent uh, Renaissance uh, sculptor of the architectural detail uh, school, and he obviously was so good at it that the school had employed him in their sculpture department. Well, he was my teacher, and my first uh, sculpture experience was a bunch of clay, and a fleur-de-lis plaster cast, and a pair of calipers, and I was to make an exact copy of that. Oy. Oy! [They laugh.] I, I did it. I did it, but my heart wasn't in it, and, and if you know Carnegie Tech at all, uh, they had great, great, great rosettes in stained glass, which was a quote from Andrew Carnegie uh, which said, "My heart is in the work." Well, my heart wasn't in that work! [They laugh.] You can imagine that coming from this rich, Indian lore and all this and that, I had other things that I would probably rather have done, because I would say that I had—was squashed through my early years of art into a "what art is supposed to be" type thing. But, when I went down to uh, St. Louis, that teacher had sense enough to take me to a real, true art environment, and Ernest Thurn was a German teacher whose uh, studio was later put at the disposal of Hans Hofmann uh, when he was first teaching back in the East before he had established his uh, um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —school.

SUE FULLER: —school in uh, Provincetown. But uh, uh, it was when I was on that trip with the Japanese kids that we eventually settled in up in Rockport, Massachusetts, in an old hotel, and we had uh, we had access to the beach. Of course we weren't too much interested in going swimming; it was too damned cold. But what they did was, uh, they took us every morning over to Gloucester, where uh, each one of the students, uh, the Japanese—one of the Japanese uh, girls took weaving from a weaver, and one took uh, silversmithing, and uh, then Yuri and I uh, ended up in Ernest Thurn's studio, and we were drawing and painting, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that arranged then by the school?

SUE FULLER: That was arranged by the school, uh, that and they took us over every morning and brought us back, and uh, this and that and the other thing. Well, that was a great thing, because I can—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that like now, then? Because here you are again in a new environment but with somebody who is a head of a studio.

SUE FULLER: Beg your pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, you were in a new environment with somebody who had a studio.

SUE FULLER: Yeah. Well, Ernest Thurn was a great teacher. And of course he, uh, he was the first to confront this terribly uh—what do you call it, uh—conservative, uh, literal uh, education which I had been subjected to, and he was the first one, and he had great books. He had terrific books, you see? In other words, he had a library of Matisse, Picasso, you know, you name it, Plimack [ph]. And uh, so, when I wasn't drawing and at

lunchtime, you could look at the books, you see, and that's really, in the city of Pittsburgh, there were—at the time I was growing up, there were no little one dollar uh, things on uh, any of the great artists or the great artists of our time. However, we had the international exhibitions in Pittsburgh at Carnegie Institute. Now, I was taken there uh, at an early age, and as a child, I liked the kind of, uh painting which was spitting image, you know, all highlights and everything, and that was what I was enamored of, and they were always my favorites.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The skillful.

SUE FULLER: The skillful anything, from any country in the world, I was impartial in this preference. However, the city of Pittsburgh itself never really grew up all the time I was there in its attitude towards modern art. Now, in other words, I went, in the city of Pittsburgh, I went through a transitional period after I had hit Thurn, and had begun to learn about what Cézanne had done, and, you see, then I came back with new eyes to look at the, at the international. And all the time, whether I knew it or not, this great painting was sinking in, regardless of what my painting had to look like, or my drawing. And uh, so what the—the important thing about being exposed to great art in its original, no reproductions, no nothing, is that it really gets into your bones, you see, so that as you grow, these are your old friends, and that no verbalization had taken place in education about, you see, it just sank in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You made your own ideas and feelings and responses. You didn't go to something with a—say, "Now this is what you do when you look at Matisse," or something.

SUE FULLER: No, that's right. In other words, it was in your bones from—if you are visually oriented, you learn many things many ways, and so, this is what happened. The city of Pittsburgh was just appalling. Their press coverage of those exhibitions was entirely ridicule [ph]. The only person who took it seriously and who gave it decent uh, reviews was Harvey Gaul, and he was a music composer, and he was the father of my good friend, whom I later met uh, at—when I went to Carnegie Tech. But uh, it was due to Kathryn Cherry that I first hooked up, and also my friendship with these Japanese kids, since I got along with them so well, you know, and, well, the boy in the thing was also—I was his first girlfriend, you see, and he—oh, you know, notes, notes in, in high school was the thing, you know. You slipped the note to somebody, and you pass it along the—all right. His notes were the most beautiful folded things you ever knew in your life, you see, and I don't know whether I was in love with the look of his beautiful almond eyes—I couldn't—when I danced with him, I could never get out of his eyes. [They laugh.] Uh, and, and the thing was, or whether I was in love with the way he made his notes. [They laugh.] But anyway, you know, you're in love with a lot of people when you're in high school, and that's the way it was. You're, you're extremely fickle, [laughs] and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous. But now, how long were you in Gloucester then, just that one summer—[inaudible]—summer?

SUE FULLER: Well, I was—we were there for six weeks, you see, and uh, and I studied, as I said. I stu—that was my first uh, experience, and I think uh, that the fun of that was that every—there was Gorton-Pew Fisheries there, and they dried codfish in the sun in those days, and then there was the Hatfield Paint Company or, or where you could get Hatfield paints, and so I always associate the seaside, the smell of codfish, and the smell of turpentine and oil paint, and it's a lovely combination. [Laughs.] But Ernest Thurn was a serious German who had studied with Hofmann in Munich, you see, and uh, I later returned there, uh, after, when I'd gone into college, uh, for a summertime; I talked my family into it, but uh, uh, into you know, coming back East.

Uh, but then my mother uh, started taking us out to Colorado in the summertime because we were getting to be responsible people, you know, in the world, and so we went out to Colorado and spent our, our summertimes out in the mountains of Colorado, and uh, we rode horseback and traveled all along the trails and things like that. And my mother, who hadn't ridden since she was a young person, uh, saw that my sister and I would only go out for half a day and come back, and uh, we didn't want to leave her alone, you know, in a little cabin. So she went down, got herself fitted up, and she didn't, didn't tell us anything about it, and when the cowboy came out and said, "How many horses tomorrow?" [Laughs.] You know, uh, my mother—we said two, and, and my mother said three, and of course, that was her surprise for us. She was getting on a horse again after all those years, and she did! And she was as heavy as I am now at the time she took up horseback riding again, and once we got her on the horse and she got up there to go to these beautiful peaks where she—which she really remembered from her youth, we couldn't get her off the horse. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I'm sure! [They laugh.]

SUE FULLER: So, but she was good, she was a great sport, and the cowboy was great, and so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good, good.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side two. We have you still to the mountains, right? [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: All right. Well, how much of that do you want?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did—um, how, how many years did you go to school in St. Louis, then?

SUE FULLER: Three years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was three years.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, and then you see, I—from the first time I studied with Thurn, uh, that, it must've been a couple of years, because I went back at the end of my sophomore year at Carnegie Tech. I went back to uh, the Thurn Studio where, where Hans Hofmann was guest teaching. Now that was, that was what was so nice about Thurn, was that he uh, recognized uh, the importance of Hofmann as a teacher, and really put at his disposal his own studio and curtailed his own teaching, and that was a very beautiful thing for an artist to do, because Thurn was no mean, you know, artist himself. He was very good, and he was, he was more Cézanne-esque than anything. And the people, I met Arthur Carles because he was a great pal of uh, of uh, Hofmann's you see, and he and his daughter used to come up and I thought they were the most glamorous people I ever met, you know. And of course, beards weren't in then, but he always had a beard, Arthur Carles, at least when I saw him. But uh, anyway, uh, Thurn and uh, what—uh, Thurn, my association with the Thurn School of Art in Gloucester was the—was the best, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that—

SUE FULLER: —a serious thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That seems to be a point where you start looking at things differently. I mean, is that—

SUE FULLER: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a—

SUE FULLER: Yeah, a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —change, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —turning point. Now, I'll tell you, uh, uh, to go back and show you how tough it was, as, as far as an art, I must have felt that I was missing something with all uh, this high school and uh, and grade school type of teaching, you see, that was the only art available to me. I took music lessons, and now look, my brother had a natural ear for music, you see. He and my mother were just great. Even my mother without any training at all could you know, play—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —pick up a tune, yeah.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, and, and actually, she had a good friend who had studied, and who got her into, and taught her a lot about real music, but as a friend on a friendly basis—and would just give her the sheet music, you know—and uh, uh, and she would play it for my mother, and my mother would, could catch it so well that the, that the woman uh, just—you see, my mother was a natural, and there are a lot of people in the United States that are naturals, you see, and you just don't know about them. But had she been trained, she probably would've been darned good, [laughs] uh, and the, the, the funny thing is that my sister still employs the piano tuner who used to come to our house and play and, and tune my mother's piano. He was a blind man, and he'd always tune my mother's piano for her, and one time when my sister was talking to, to him and she has, uh—she, she was having her piano tuned, he said, "You know, your mother was one of the few people that I have ever known who had true pitch. She could correct me." And that was, you know, it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incr—

SUE FULLER: —great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that, you just have.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, that you just have. And so, never mind the education, you know, but they insisted that the kids get their education, so. Anyway, that was uh, uh—wait a minute. Where were we on this thing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you were—we were going to go back to St. Louis and talk about the rest of high school.

SUE FULLER: Oh, yeah, well, high school was great because see, they had, they encouraged student

government type things, and of course, uh, I've got to tell you about this great English teacher I had. You know, I told you, I was a son of a gun in class because I'd draw these pictures, and I could distract a class away from any teacher. I mean, I was a—you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just take a little bit of—[they laugh]—

SUE FULLER: So, this English teacher, and she, she was great, because she never scolded me. She never, you know, she never really made a bad example out of me. She never made it an issue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. What was her name now?

SUE FULLER: Irma Erickson [ph], and, and what she did was, she, um, uh, she would—because those classes were small, they could give individual attention to every—she ran a great creative writing course, and I learned more about writing and poetry. I even, under her auspices, I even wrote a poem uh, as a high school student, which won a prize in the St. Louis something or other. Uh, I forget the name of the society, but uh, it was a prize that was given by the local poetry, uh, group for a, a high school poem, a high school student's poem, you see. Well, she could turn you on, you see. Well, she not only turned me on to poetry, she also, in a very strange way, turned me on to art. Now, she had this thing in that, what she had done—now this was when I was uh—or, I spent three years my—in high school there. So during this period, I uh, developed a, a great interest in poetry and uh, and you know, creative writing and that sort of thing, and uh, oh, she would have us write a term paper, and it was—she, she gave us the controls which would be the similar for writing at a college type, you know, and this was the first we'd ever learned about all this, and about, about researching in books. And uh, when we were to choose our subject, I said, "I don't know what to write on," you know, because you could talk to your teachers, this was the nice thing, and she says, "Well you're interested in cartooning, aren't you?" knowing damned well I was. She says, "Why don't you do a, do a term paper on uh, cartooning?" Well, what she did was to expose me to Gavarni, [laughs] you know, Daumier, all the—Thomas Nast, you know, the whole bit, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Crosstalk.]

SUE FULLER: —right straight through. And what happened was is that she didn't mention anybody connected with cartooning. She just says, "Go to the library and look up what you can find," and what did I find? I found everything. [Laughs.] And so, it was such a terrific experience for me to discover these great cartoonists, you see, because you know, mostly, it was an annoyance type of thing for most people. Well, anyway, I really got into this, and I wrote a term paper on cartooning, and uh, then, the history teacher, Robert Fisher [ph], decided this was a great—they used to have projects in conjunction with your studies, so that you, you could do any kind of project, so I decided to do a cartoon history of the—when was Napoleon—well, anyway, Napoleonic era, you see, for this thing. So I did a whole series of original cartoons to illustrate the history of Europe from X to X, [laughs] and I had a big, thick notebook of this stuff, and, and—you know, you're supposed to get extra credit for this thing, but you also had to keep up your grades, and uh, they were really very good, because they gave you an excellent scholarly attitude, but it was not, it was not uh, it was not pounded into you. You joined them in it, you see, and it was a great school. I had a fine—then I became uh, the president of the entire dormitory and I was always active in all things, but I wasn't very good in sports, so I was a cheerleader, but—[they laugh]— only time I was involved in baseball, I stubbed my little finger, and I still have it, because nobody bothers to straighten it out—[they laugh]—including me. But anyway, I was never one for the uh, rough encounter type of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well what about, what about the rest of the students? Were you, all through those three years, were—did you stay with your Japanese friends or were there other friends, or—

SUE FULLER: Oh, no, I had lots of other friends you see, because what happened with the school was that uh, they had this policy that they'd move you around, you see. You just pick up—you slept in double-decker beds, and uh, the most that could be in one room or one suite would be four kids, but you usually had one roommate, uh, at least. They had very few singles. They gave a single if they thought the kid really needed to be calmed down or this and that or the other thing, not as a punishment; it was a privilege as well, you know, so that, but I had, I had friends from all over. I had friends from Alaska. I had friends from Hawaii. I had friends from [laughs] all over the United States, kids from California and Chicago area, and the South, and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think—

SUE FULLER: —every place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that that allowed you to look at things differently than just the year you had in Pittsburgh, I mean, where all the students were from—

SUE FULLER: —from the same—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the neighborhood? Yeah.

SUE FULLER: Well, I'm sure of it. What it did to me was to put me on my own feet. I was no longer a member of a tightly knit unit, family unit, and it put me on my own feet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you became the individual then.

SUE FULLER: I became an individual, and that was very good. But since I'd had a good family thing, I was easy to get along with uh, in school, you know. I mean, we, we really, uh—and I had, oh, I can't tell you the great friends I had [laughs] at school, both boys and girls, you know, and that was what was so great, because it was a coed school, and uh, the way—it was very—it was supervised. In other words, I grew up when you had a chaperone, when you had this, that, and the other thing, you see, and I was in a real structured unit, you see, and, and taught to be a law-abiding type of person, and then, as in student government things like running the dormitories and things like that, the students, uh, were encouraged even in high school here to serve on committees, this and that, and work out the problems which arose, you see. And the house mothers, you had two house mothers to a floor, and I don't remember how many kids were on a floor, but there were—it was a big building, you see, and they had three floors of—uh, I lived in a, in a dormitory with three floors of girls, you see, and uh, they had a big dormitory for the boys, and they were, the boys were military, you see. In other words, they had, had drills and everything like that, and that was a big thing in those days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They had uniforms? [Crosstalk.]

SUE FULLER: Uniforms. And we—and I wore miniskirts and of course, my Japanese friend has a lovely picture of three of us, uh, and we were just as tall and we were just, we were absolutely square in these minis—[inaudible] —[they laugh]—so, but anyway, uh, [laughs] we had a great time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what, you know, what happened after that when you got through high school? What were you interested in and—

SUE FULLER: Well, I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —where, where were you going to go?

SUE FULLER: Well, since I lived in the city of Pittsburgh and since my family had sent me away to, to high school, I stayed home to go to college, and that again was another whole experience, because having the convenience of your own home for entertaining and things like that when you're college age is terrific, and my mother saw to it that we had enough beautiful dishes and uh, everything like that so that when we had—they had little local sororities at the time, fraternities. I guess the fratern—I don't think they were national. I don't know. No, the fraternities were national, but the sororities were—see, there were not so many women at the Carnegie Tech. It was an engineering environment and uh, you know, the big, heavy-industry type thing, and it was more or less that all the way through, except for the College of Fine Arts which was uh, coed, and the women's school, Margaret Morrison Carnegie College, which was all women, and uh, that was a great school by the women's uh, division of uh, Tech, even though, I mean, they, they gave a terrific secretarial thing and they gave a four-year college preparation, and an awful lot of those women ended up to be executive secretaries in nothing flat, as well as people. They were dieticians. They were nutritionists. They were very valuable members of the community, and I understand—

PAUL CUMMINGS: A very practical education.

SUE FULLER: Very practical education, as well as all the kind of homemaking things. Well the problem is that uh, uh the school, later, uh Carnegie uh, Tech phased out Margaret Morrison Carnegie College, and I think it's the biggest mistake they ever made, because believe me, if there's one thing we need in this country—you just go out to a restaurant in New York City these days, and what are you getting? Nothing. In those days, you went to a restaurant and you had well-prepared food, beautifully prepared food, and thanks to somebody who had studied not only nutrition but the graces which go with serving it, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, and now they go *zap*—

SUE FULLER: Yeah, well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —and it still costs $40 for dinner. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: Yeah, I know, it's terrible! And so, I, I'm sorry to see that women's college go, but what happened was that when I went to Carnegie Tech—but the interesting thing about Carnegie Tech was that they had a pre-uh, school session or test for freshmen to see whether you had what it took to get into the school, and whether you could follow directions and things like that, and it was a week long, and you went there in the morning, you

came out in the afternoon about four o'clock, but if you were there all day long drawing or painting, according to what was required of you, and at the end of that week, the school could tell whether you could follow directions, where you fit in, whether you could do this, that, or the other thing, and that was a very good idea.

So I got in, and I met my pal Ione Gaul, who's father's a composer, and an organist at Car—at Calvary Episcopal Church in, in Pittsburgh. And uh, Ione's mother was a, was a writer who had written a bestseller, oh, I don't know when, but uh, in the '20s, probably. It was a mystery about Provincetown, because she and her—had gone up with her husband Harvey Gaul. They'd gone up there, Harriette and Harvey Gaul, and they had settled in Provincetown when it was just nothing but dunes, almost, you know, and there was a little coterie of artists and musicians, nothing like it is today. But uh, walkers now, you know, still have it as a mecca up there on the Cape, and uh, that was great. But Harvey and Harriette Gaul became to me—these are Ione's parents—they became my second set of parents, because although my own set of parents encouraged me and gave me every help, they really didn't understand what I was doing. It was blind faith. Whereas, Harvey and Harriette, having been educated people in the arts and things like that—well Harriette had gone to Smith College and she, she graduated from Smith, and Ione went, went—[inaudible]—but Harvey had never. He'd gone to uh, Harvard, but he'd cut out early because it wasn't what he wanted. But Harvey Gaul was a mighty interesting man. As a young man—he was born in Brooklyn, New York, and he, as a young man, studied and practiced. He studied organ music and he practiced on Trinity Church's organ, you see. Then this man went on to learn all he could, and of course, the Gauls had lived in Paris as a young married couple, and, and Harvey had studied uh, with all the good musicians that he could muster, you see, and he eventually ended up studying choral works because he uh, thought that his field would be sacred music, you see. So, he went down to the Vatican and he studied there, choral work and everything else. So when he came back to Pittsburgh, he really had something to give them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everything, yeah.

SUE FULLER: He had something to give them, you know, and he did, and that, I'll never forget it. Uh, they—he and his—you know, Harvey and Harriette went on a trip out through the West, and Harvey went back into various Indian tribes and jotted down their interpretation of Christmas carol—any uh, any you know, Christian, Christian influence which had gotten back into the tribes. He jotted down what they did about Christmas, or, or any of this, and when he came back, he was just loaded with all this good research, and he put it all together for Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh. And he invited—uh, I mean, Ione saw to it that my mother was—oh, I know. Mrs. Gaul called up my mother and said, "Um, you got any Indian drums?" [They laugh.] And so she did, she forked over a couple to Harvey Gaul, you see. He set up Indian drums in the chancel of the church. Now remember, this is a very conservative community. Pittsburgh was not way out. And so, what happened was, he put on a whole section of, on, on—for the Christmas Eve service, uh, a whole section of Indian uh, uh Christmas carols, complete with the drums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

SUE FULLER: So he was a real showman, that Harvey Gaul, and my mother just adored it. [They laugh.] So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did the rest of the people think?

SUE FULLER: Huh? I have no—I don't speak for anybody, but I'm sure, I'm sure—well, Harvey Gaul was one of my favorite men, because here was a man who was a poor man, really. He scrounged. He moonlighted to keep his family going because a musician doesn't make a lot of money, you see, and he taught piano. He taught everything, you see, but he composed. He also had this, he ran uh, a chorus that—you know, the choral group at the—but he was a man who believed in life, total life, you see, and he wouldn't let anything get outside of it. In other words, he knew because of, uh, the upper crust would have to have some—would have to support the cultural things, you see, the upper crust of Pittsburgh would, because of—you know, I mean, this is the thing that you do if you're upper crust, you see. He had those people, you see; he knew them. They knew him because he was a real live musician, and—he also knew the people say, for instance, we'll take just the steel industry, which is in Pittsburgh. He knew Ferris, who was then president, at a backslapping [laughs] uh, you know, level. He also knew the guys down in the mill who were his puddlers, because Harvey Gaul, having had this terrific education, would go to every single ethnic group in the Pittsburgh, or would have had appeals from them to help with their chorus and, you know, in their church music, their this, their that. He knew Gretchaninov, who was a composer for the Russian Orthodox Church, and naturally this is a Ukrainian-type thing which is—the puddlers would even know about, you see, so that he had, he had acquaintances—and then thank God in Pittsburgh for the Jewish community. If it hadn't been for the YMHA or whatever the hell it was—tough now, you know, the thing, and the Jewish community really loved music, and uh, they would do sensational things there, and Harvey was—knew all of the people who had anything to do with it in that.

And then there was Mae Beagle who brought in uh, all the Hurok things and things like that, she ran concerts. And that was another part of my education which was very important. Uh, when I went away to school, they had

a concert series to which every child had to go, you see, and you had to go, but you got so as you liked it, [laughs] and my mother, even when we—before that, when we were in Pittsburgh, my mother loved music, so we always subscribed to the concerts, and I can remember, at an early age, being put in my best silk dress which she had proudly made, you know, with real rosebuds and stuff like that, and my hair combed and my feet not touching the floor, sitting there with a little pair of white kid gloves on, and you know, my sister beside me, you see, and we'd get to going—and you know I'd do that you know, and my mother would just reach over her hand and put it on us, and we knew what that meant. [They laugh.] So, so it was great because I heard Rachmaninoff. I heard Paderewski. I hear—I saw Uday Shankar uh, dance. I saw everybody, L'Argentina [ph], and the marvelous thing about this is that eventually, when I got to Barcelona as an older person, I went to a Gaudí designed house, and in it they had an entire room of L'Argentina memorabilia, you know, and I can't tell you. I was nuts about L'Argentina anyway, you see, and I loved uh, Shankar, and Paderewski, you know, but Rachmaninoff was really the man that really got to me. You know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

SUE FULLER: And I mean, all this good music I heard in the city of Pittsburgh, which was a dog of a city, mostly, you know, because it's not an art-oriented, it's an industry-oriented city.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Heavy industry.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, right. And, and you have all this—but it's an active city and it's a beautiful city, because even in the old—before they had, you know, cleaned up the smog and all that sort of thing, I remember even as a child being—going for rides with the family, you know, just to get mother out of the house, we'd take a little drive around at night, you know. We'd go down by the—along the roads by the rivers, and they, in those days, they had these big, open-hearth furnaces, and they had—they'd take—and you go to the rolling mills where they roll out these big, steel ingots, and they come out white hot. Oh boy, they're real white! And then as you watch them, they turn them over, and they become cherry red, and then they die down, you know, and they cool off, you know, but you see the sparks flying, and it's a beautiful sight with the reflections in the river and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Great drama! This is a visual drama.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, terrific. And, and there was uh, you know, it was really a great experience, and Dad being in this construction industry, which was reinforced concrete, he did underpasses. He worked—they worked for the uh, railroad, and he was even written up in some engineering thing for having figured out how to keep trains going at two-minute intervals across tracks while they moved something out from underneath them and put something else in, and he engineered it, he pulled it off and it was great. [Laughs.] But uh, he was—he knew western Pennsylvania, uh, inside out. He, he loved the country, and, and we were always going out for drives in the country. We, as a, when we were young, we were always going on picnics. We were wading in streams. We were doing this, that, and the other thing, and uh, Dad taught us things like picking up after yourself. He was a real, you know, he was a real good picker-upper—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —ecologist.

SUE FULLER: —after yourself, yeah, ecologist, and uh, and then we would also—I can remember him giving us a talk about geology. "Look at that rock over there!" So he had good eyes, and uh, we'd go on these picnics and you see, when he was in his lower echelons of the job, he would have to go up and supervise these jobs. Well, even when he didn't have to go up, he went, but he—uh, we'd go up to his jobs, which might be putting in a dam, a lock, a this, a that, so we knew all about the steam shovels, the, the whatever—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —all the equipment, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —you use, all the heavy equipment, you see, and uh, so we'd go along, take the dog, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, did you continue this when college was going on, or were you too busy, that was—

SUE FULLER: No, no, when college was going on, by then that cooled down considerably, because uh, you were too engaged in your own affairs, and when I started in uh, Tech, I studied—naturally, they had a course for freshman about drawing and design, and there I met Alexander Kostellow. Now Alexander Kostellow eventually left Carnegie Tech and set up the industrial design department at Pratt Institute, which was so good that I can remember, when I had a job as an indus—with an industrial designer as a draftsperson, uh, if a kid came in with a portfolio and he was from Pratt Industrial Design Department, he was so well trained that he would be accepted sight unseen practically, if there was an opening. You see? In other words, that was how high the credentials were rated in a, in a, in a working firm. But anyway, Alexander Kostellow had studied with Hofmann in Munich.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Back to Hofmann again.

SUE FULLER: Back to Hofmann again, you see. Now, Kostellow was a great guy. He was Persian, and he had taught out in Kansas City I guess, and he was married to a sculptor from there, Rowena Kostellow, and she was very good, too, but uh, he was my teacher for design, and he taught me about plastic recession, which has nothing to do with the plastic industries which wasn't even existent then, but has to do with picture tectonics, as we called them then. Boy, we certainly change our language, don't we? [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The same thing has many different names.

SUE FULLER: Right. But anyway, with the, uh, influence of Thurn, and Kostellow who'd studied with Hofmann, at the end of my sophomore year, I went and studied with Hofmann, and because I had been well prepared by Alexander Kostellow in my design course, I was a whiz at Hofmann's, and I studied with him for six months that summer. I talked my family out of going out to Colorado so that I could do more professional study, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was where, in Provincetown?

SUE FULLER: In, no—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you studied there.

SUE FULLER: —it was in Gloucester.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it was in Gloucester then, oh.

SUE FULLER: See, because this was when uh, this, in 1932, Ernest Thurn had turned his—no, wait a minute—'32, no '34—[crosstalk]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —'34.

SUE FULLER: —'[3]4, '34, he had turned his studio over to Hofmann for the first time, and Hofmann didn't establish in Provincetown his own place until after that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right, okay.

SUE FULLER: Now, the people who were studying with Hofmann at the end of that year were, uh, they were schoolteachers. There was a woman by the name of McKibbin, uh, who later became head of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Art Education and rejuvenated the system which I had, you know, sort of passed through, and, you had an awful lot of good schoolteachers who were interested uh, in doing something was worth a little bit more with it, as far as uh, modern art was concerned. You had people like that studying there, and it was great, and I was, you know, about the youngest one in the class, much to their amusement. I'd do these outlandish things, but by then I'd been liberated, and uh, I enjoyed it. So did they. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find Hofmann? Because he was what, he was 54 then.

SUE FULLER: Listen. If a teacher has a message, you don't care if the every other word is—[inaudible]—[they laugh]—you put a sorter on your mind. The words are the least things you pay attention to. It's the uh, it's the —it was the generosity of it. It was the generosity, the seriousness, you know, the bigness of the thing, and if that didn't inspire you, you certainly weren't any of the kind of material that could be inspired. And when he spoke, and he'd always give these class crits [critiques], he was terrific, and uh, you see, that was my first real, hon—I mean, uh, Alexander Kostellow at Carnegie Tech was the first good, honest-to-goodness, "what is modern art all about" type thing, and he had studied with uh, with Hofmann, you see, in Munich. Thurn had studied with Hofmann in Munich but Thurn was a different dish. Thurn was more Cézanne oriented, you see, and, and Kostellow, what he had gotten from Hofmann was this uh plastic recession, which was more in tune to a Cubist point of view, you see. He had derived that from it see, whereas Thurn, in his study—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean by plastic recession? [Crosstalk.]

SUE FULLER: Uh, you reduce things to planes, the planes overlap, and the space recedes. What it amounts to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —became the push-pull—[crosstalk]—

SUE FULLER: —the push-pull yeah, but it was, what it really truly was based upon was the Chinese use of perspective. You see, my era, my education, the young era, was overburdened by the one-point perspective, where the railroad ties come together—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —where everything goes to a point—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: Everything disappears to one point, this old Renaissance perspective device, you see. And the

field of modern art had already encompassed a completely different set of perspective, which was the Chinese, the kind that was used by the Chinese, because as you go—the, the point, it's a philosophical point, too. You know, that with these railroad ties coming to a point, you know that if you were at that point where they're supposed to come together, they never—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They just keep right on.

SUE FULLER: —they just keep right on going, you see. So what are you going to do? You're going to draw a line, these things going together, that's merely an appearance thing you ever do, you see. So this raises a mighty interesting question. So the, the Chinese, on the other hand, had a complete different view. See, they could encompass great space in a very small area. I saw uh, one section of a Chinese scroll several years ago at the—[inaudible]—show at the Metropolitan, and I would say that it wasn't more than four inches of a scroll which was nine inches high, and you could go from here to eternity in that four inches by nine, you see, mainly because number one, when I saw uh, a film of the real true Chinese landscape with one of the theaters—you know, they were doing something on China—I saw that the mountains are really like the way they paint them. In other words, they overlap vertically. Now, the way this develops as a device for getting you back in space is that the space is developed by overlapping planes, and the more planes you put between it, or the more implied planes—you see, you don't have to draw the entire rectangle in order to imply. You can do it with a hint here and a hint there, and the eye will fill it in. So that this is the way the Chinese got this tremendous space, the illusion of space, and you'd have your little wanderer down here and the other guy is 10 miles away still on four by nine inches, you know. So, anyway, this, this was the, the kind of thing which is implied by "plastic recession." In other words, you—uh, this was when you were not making everything on the surface of the canvas. You were uh, coming and going in a three-dimensional, illusionist sense on a canvas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But not making things in a round—

SUE FULLER: No, you, you were not—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —shaded—

SUE FULLER: You were not—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —style.

SUE FULLER: You were not interpreting from an academic standpoint. So uh, all this with the—you see, after I had gotten into art quite seriously, uh, I became a fighter for modern art. Now look. If you have a nice father who sits in his chair and falls asleep with his *Saturday Evening Post* over his stomach, and he adores Norman Rockwell, it is an uphill struggle to tell him the difference between modernistic art and modern art. You see? Because modernistic art, to my mind, was the Pop art version of modern. In other words, it was a rip-off of modernistic art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who's an example say, in the '30s or '40s of modernistic art?

SUE FULLER: Well, all right. So it's what we now call Art Deco.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, yeah.

SUE FULLER: You see? Anything Art Deco was an anathema and still is, to anybody like Anni Albers, Josef Albers, or those people. Now I didn't run into them until later, but I had sense enough to know, even with my Hofmann training, that, that this kitsch, kitschy, a kitschy, easy, quickie type of design, you see—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, and what about the Carnegie Institute study, too? Did that affect—

SUE FULLER: What do you mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, the design you studied there with, with Kostellow.

SUE FULLER: That wa—yeah, with Kostellow, but I consider, you see, I consider Kostellow part of the Hofmann influence at that point in my career, you see. And that was very good, because then, as I said, I was—look, there was no Museum of Modern Art. When I came to New York, and hunted up what was called the Museum of Modern Art, I think it was down in the plaza underneath where the skating rink is. I think they had a few rooms down there at one time—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that was—

SUE FULLER: —then they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —just before the new building.

SUE FULLER: And then they were in the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was later, yeah.

SUE FULLER: Then they were in a brownstone, uh, house.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well first in the brown—well, it was in the brownstone, then in the cellar, then—[crosstalk]—build it, yeah.

SUE FULLER: So what it was, was an art—whatever the sequence is, you establish it, but there was no Museum of Modern Art in the sense that now is, you see? That had not yet been established, and, this was the answer. This was the answer to that ridiculous point of view of all those millions of people who in Pittsburgh who sneered at, laughed at, and you know they'd do these nutty things in the newspaper, like *The Pittsburgh Press* would come out, "Ha, ha, ha," you know, a real hee-haw program on the front page, and they would make—they were really quite good, I must admit—they'd make [laughs] parodies of Léger with sausages and bolognas, like, "The sausages are running a prize this year," or something like that, you know, or "Here comes the baloney," you know, and they were just hee-hee, haw-haw, the same thing that happened in the, in the Armory Show over here in New York in 1914, you know, this was what? This was uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —20 years later.

SUE FULLER: —in Pittsburgh 20 years later. Pittsburgh was still hee-hee, haw-haw, and I was so sick and tired of these asses, you know. You know. By that time I was really—I'd really had it up to here. What—[inaudible]—some, some academic teachers that I hit in my last two years at Tech, oy. I really nearly had a nervous breakdown. I may have had one and we never knew it, but the problem was that I went from something that was charged with energy and interest and my whole life, I stepped from the first two years of my college experience into the most reactionary, academic-type illustration. Now, I had nothing against academic-type illustration, except when it's shoved down my throat. Now, in other words, those teachers were perfectly competent, and they were good. The only person who saved me was Esther Topp Edmonds. She had studied with Vitlichio [ph] who'd studied with Hofmann.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hofmann again.

SUE FULLER: You see? And so, Esther Topp Edmonds was my painting teacher, but I had for a drawing teacher the most reactionary thing. I'd just come from Hofmann where I'd push and pull, and this and that, and you know, what with my enjoyment of caricature. It really helped, all that junk with the caricature and this and that and the other thing as a kid, you know, fooling around. Well, it all helped because to a certain extent, when you extract from nature, you are getting into essences which is what a cartoonist does when he *whrrp*, nips you off in some appalling way, but you see what you are seeing, you know, which is in a different light, and, and you see it more succinctly, so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, who else did you study with at Carnegie? Was that a four-year program?

SUE FULLER: —four-year program. We had cast drawing. We had drawing from still life. We had painting from still life. We had painting from life. We had drawing from life. We had this; we had that. We had everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The standard—

SUE FULLER: The standard bit, you see, and you had to elect at the end of your freshman year whether you're going into the painting-design department or whether you're going into teaching or whether you're going into sculpture. Nobody in his right mind would go into sculpture, because how are you going to move those heavy things if you make them? You had better chance in the graphic arts thing. But I think that's such a mistake, because to tell you the truth, every artist, I think, has the, the ability to work in any damned medium that is going, you know, and what happens is that you really—you can express yourself in many ways, and so—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —you do many things.

SUE FULLER: That's right, and you should be trained in many things, and uh, later on why they, you know, the school wrote to some of its alumni asking their opinions, not many schools do that, but some do, and I told them what I thought about what had happened, you know, but I also told them what were the good points of it, what stood you in good stead, and uh, I felt—you see, they had so compartmentalized uh, the—they had the art school here; they had Printing in Industries over here. Well the printers, you see, now graphic arts had always been involved with uh, some form of printing, you see, and they had it so isolated over there that you had to be—you know, you had to join the printing school in order to take printing or anything to do with it. But those

printing things could have come in handy to the art students, so I said to them at a real early age in the ’40s, you know, I said to them, “I think that what’s going to happen in the future is that you’re going to find that you’re going to have to get more engineers and printers in mixed up with the arts and the arts mixed up with the printers,” and believe me, that’s exactly what’s happened! [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you have printmaking classes then?

SUE FULLER: No. Uh, there was one teacher who gave us one course in lithography, but that only lasted about six weeks. We did not have any printmaking at Carnegie Tech.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really!

SUE FULLER: No. I didn’t hit printmaking until I came back to New York City. Well, see, having been uh, here with my Japanese friends, New York City was it, so, I went to Columbia Teachers College. I—see, that was the Depression. When my fath—my father was a funny thing because he was not a failure during the Depression. He was increasing. He was on. I mean, he was becoming the president of the company, you see, so that we were never deprived of anything, you see, during those years. However, uh, you couldn’t get jobs and uh, uh number one, if you came out of Carnegie Tech, you had a fine art education, but it was most of the kids who really had to earn a living, and wanted to earn it at art, had to go to an ad art school after they left school in order to learn how to set type, do this, that, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —commercial art.

SUE FULLER: —scan type, commercial art type of things you see, which an awful lot of them had to get into, and I attempted to do that on my own. I took—I went up to the League, uh, but I was going up to the League for a different reason from what my uncle was going up to the League for. My uncle had studied with uh, Bridgman and Nicolaïdes, but I was trying to pick up some lettering, and so I studied with Harold Trafton [ph], who was a good commercial artist, you see. But I went to—I got my M.A. in uh, Fine Arts Education at Columbia Teachers College and I was bored stiff, but the only redeeming feature of the thing was Arthur Young. He was a doll of a teacher of graphics, and he was the kind of man who worried about each one of these people who was going to become a teacher, to know exactly what happened, and how-to, and print it yourself, and this is good technique, this isn’t, and this and that, and he did that through every single—there was woodcutting, lithography, there was edu—you see, and he gave them the works, and silk screening. He gave them the works in one course, and he was a master at this, and he was an artist himself, who had just never practiced too much you know, but he had all the sensitivities, and he took the trouble to know the world of art. He knew Gonzo. He knew Pascin. He knew everybody who breezed—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —who was around, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —in and out of New York, you know, and he showed you. He’d go down to Vaya [ph] and bring back to the class some prints he’d borrowed from old man Vaya, you know, so that the kids could—I mean the kids, these were young teachers—young people could see—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the real thing.

SUE FULLER: —the real thing. And so, again, it’s another door opening. You learned about printmaking. And so by the time I had hit Hayter in the ’40s, I had already, I not only—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —from the groundwork.

SUE FULLER: I had a real good grounding, because I had a feeling for this sort of thing, and Arthur Young taught me everything I knew about printing or anything like that, so that when I went to Hayter, I was qualified to print an edition of anybody, and I did. I printed an edition. I printed uh, two plates for Chagall and one for André Masson, because Bill Hayter at that time was in one of his pure wet periods where he couldn’t be bothered doing this but you see, the printers had, because of the war were cut off from Europe, they couldn’t have the editions printed. The dealers needed them. Curt Valentin needed them. He called on Bill to do the editions. Bill couldn’t be bothered. I was a good printer, you see, so he turned the job over to me, and I didn’t even know enough that you were supposed to get one of the ones you printed. You know who got them?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who? Bill?

SUE FULLER: Bill.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And he still has them. [They laugh.] [Inaudible.] [They laugh.]

SUE FULLER: But uh, it was good experience for me, so, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How'd you like working with those people?

SUE FULLER: Who, Bill?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Masson and uh—

SUE FULLER: To tell you the truth, they did—well, now look, again, this is another point. Uh, for instance, I went to Teachers College; I then went back and taught in my old school, you know—the school that I'd had such a good time at as a student in high school. I went back there and I taught uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In St. Louis?

SUE FULLER: In St. Louis, I taught art, and I taught, I taught everything, whereas they before, they had two teachers. They'd had an artist, and they'd had this terrific Louise Andrews who was so good with metalwork and things like that. She really grounded me in metalwork, so that even though I did jewelry more or less, you know, off and on, here and there, but she taught me so much in high school that I could go on and teach quite a bit and good grounding to many teachers without having had anything further than what she had had. But it got to the point where I really was not interested in a craft. However, the, the good metalsmithing which she was good at, and put you all through the uh, paces in making jewelry from scratch—you didn't buy blanks; you made the blanks. You set the bed. You made the—you learned how to solder. You did the whole bit. You set the stone. You designed the piece. You did everything, and you put the design on the metal and this and that, and you went through the whole bit, and you polished it too, but that came in handy when I was into printmaking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

SUE FULLER: Well, my familiarity with the metal of the plates, not so much an etching technique which I hadn't gotten into, but I knew about cutting metal. I knew the proper types of tools. I knew the use of a scraper and a burnisher, which were very important in engravings, and Hayter taught me, as he taught many people, engraving. He was—that was his contribution there in a technical way, but the other thing that was so important was, Hayter really knew how to make a soft-ground etching, and that's the key to the whole thing, because I had gotten—see now, uh, Arthur Young had put me in touch with books again. He put me in touch with Lumsden, *The Art of Etching*. I used Lumsden as I would use a Bible. [They laugh.] I really did. I would read those things. I'd read between the lines. I'd look at these great illustrations. I'd go down to the public library; I'd go up to the Metropolitan; I'd look at the prints. I'd, you know, I'd look at the originals, you see? And this is something which I think is so important for young people. Never mind the illustrations, this, that, and the other thing, go and look at the originals, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the only thing that'll do it.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, all right. That's it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay—

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —[inaudible]—this is side three. It's the 30th of April, 1975, Paul Cummings talking to Sue Fuller. Good morning. In going through the bibliography, you have a first initial that you used at one time, C. What do—what does that stand for?

SUE FULLER: Caroline. That's my first name. I was named Caroline Susan Fuller, and my father called me Caroline for a good many uh, years, and I used it through the eighth grade, and then I read a book that was written by [laughs] an author who had put some initial and a period, and I thought that was very chic. So this was one of my teenage extravaganzas, that I dropped my early name. And of course, this goes back to my old Indian lore, that uh, you can choose your own name at the age of twelve. [They laugh.] Everything with me goes back to the Indians.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Back, back to the Indians.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, so I, uh, I shortened my name and I put C. Sue Fuller, and I was—I carried that for quite a while, and then I dropped the C, officially, because Sue Fuller makes it much easier. It's shorter, and it, you know, it's an easy thing to remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Um, we've gotten almost to about 1940, roughly, um, and you were come out Carnegie, I guess. Actually, we've gotten you out of Carnegie. How did you come to go to Columbia, the Teachers College at Columbia University?

SUE FULLER: Well, uh, I had met some teachers who—well, as I said, the people up at Hofmann's in the—at the

end of my sophomore year were teachers, and then I met other people who were teachers, and I thought they were pretty nice people, so, I thought, might not be such a bad idea to get some kind of an anchor in a teaching field. But uh, when I went to Teachers College, I had something like 400 units of actual drawing and painting courses behind me, and all they required for you to be a teacher was something like 130, and so that made me very angry indeed, and I had to go back and take courses in the fine arts where I could almost teach the teacher, and that was a little bit too much. Uh, that's the part that bored me, but I did meet—since Carnegie Tech at the time was very technical, you had no opportunity to take things like any science or history, or any social studies, as they have them now. Uh, we took French, or, and English, I mean, they were required, but there was nothing of the other nature. And you see, Carnegie Institute uh, of Technology, which is Carnegie Tech, didn't have even university status at that time, and now, it's known as Carnegie Mellon University, and they've uh, filled in all their vacancies, you know, or omissions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how, uh, how'd you like Columbia University, or Teachers College, the segment of it after Pittsburgh?

SUE FULLER: Uh, the part I liked about Teachers College was I had Belle Boaz, who was a marvelous educator, and she was a really very gentle person but very strong, aesthetically, and she was also an extremely sensitive teacher, and she taught at Horace Mann School which was right connected with Teachers College at the time I went there. And uh, I had an educational class with her and found her extremely interesting as a teacher. I also enjoyed uh, Victor D'Amico, who was later down at the Museum of Modern Art. Uh, but Victor's classes were provocative in that, for instance, all through Teachers College, I first learned about John Dewey and became a, you know, an advocate of John Dewey, because I could see the sense in it. Having suffered under another form of education as a child, I was certainly uh, influenced to wholeheartedly agree with John Dewey's philosophy. And then, there were social science teachers, they had a large compendium of teachers there, about five teachers that did uh, special symposium-type delivery, and many ideas I never even considered before [laughs] came up in that, and so it was a bonding in my education.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Who was Arthur Young, there?

SUE FULLER: Arthur Young was the—taught graphics, and he was the man who was such an inspiration to me, because he [laughs], he really cared as a teacher. He really wanted every single person in that class, who was going out to teach, to know everything and to handle everything, and to know how to really, honest to goodness know what he was doing, so that he could teach others.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you do everything? I mean, you know, etchings and lithographs, woodcuts, the whole —

SUE FULLER: We did the whole bit, and uh, he not on—well, he'd had—he was an artist himself, and of course, couldn't make any [laughs] money at it, so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Probably because it's the end of the Depression—yeah.

SUE FULLER: —the Depression, and so he was a very, oh, he had a lovely wit, and an easy way with the class, and people were devoted to Arthur Young.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go to the galleries much, the museums, once you came to New York?

SUE FULLER: Oh yeah. Uh, actually, what really started me off on that was, well, we were—when I was back in Carnegie Tech in, in my later years there, uh, I came to New York with a [laughs] couple of friends, and one of the friends had a sister who was on WP—was not on WPA project, but she was working for somebody who was, and that was an interesting [laughs]—[inaudible]—low economic level. You know, you have an assistant. So anyway, she'd gone all the way through Tech, and her name was Ban Phillips [ph] and uh, she was working—I can't remember the name of the man that she was working with, some painter, you see, and she was his assistant, but she, in order to get her food, she was the hostess at the Jumbo shop on the corner of MacDougal and Eighth, which was a great rambling place murals by Guy Pène du Bois around one of the rooms. And uh, you see, this was just enough of a nip of the real world of art—[they laugh]—you know, that it was, uh—so, we started going to all the galleries. Of course, we started out on Eighth Street where the Whitney Museum was, you see, and then there were a lot of little galleries down there at the time, and even though it was the Depression, and uh, eventually, Hofmann even settled down there on Eighth Street, and it was a very respectable kind of uh, a good, working community. Uh, it—and of course, Doris Lee and Arnold Blanch were friends of Ban, the older sister that I've made mention, and uh, so that we got to see inside a real, live artist's studio for the first time in our lives, [laughs] and if you don't think we were just gaga [laughs], so—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you'd been up to—you'd seen the German fellow.

SUE FULLER: Uh, Thurn, Ernest Thurn, yeah, well of course, that gives you a feeling, but then you see, that was,

uh, you were still under the auspices of your parents when that happened, to a certain extent. This was freedom, life, living [laughs]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the whole thing.

SUE FULLER: —the whole thing, you see. So, uh, it was really a tremendous enthusiasm for anything that was real, live art, you know, and of course we scrounged all the art galleries there were, and we would, of course, began to hear uh, stories by artists about, "Well, you ought to see so and so," and this and that, and so—although it was American scene painting uh, for the most part, that I walked into at that time—oh, I did, on my own—uh, I had been to Europe at the end of my college career in 1936. I talked my family into $500, and took off and spent three months in Europe, including my passage, for $500. If you don't think that was a lark, it was. [They laugh.] It was the first time anybody in my immediate family had gotten out of the country, so other than my mother's and father's first year of marriage in Jamaica. But the family was always uh, worldwide conscious. In other words, we had *National Geographic* you know, and all those things, and they were always interested in other peoples, and uh, they were not interested in a superiority attitude but more on a person-to-person basis, and it was very uh—it was a nice culture to come from, because it made you approach things in an attitude of learning, for one thing, and uh, also because your families are all mixed up with blood from every country, you, you were more or less curious about those things, but you didn't go into it very far.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you go in Europe that, that trip?

SUE FULLER: Well, [laughs] starting out in steerage, practically, on the American uh—what was it? It was the United States Lines. It was practically the cheapest you could get and we were third class, [laughs] so, [laughs] and what happened was, uh, we went to England, southern England, and northern France, and by this time, uh, I had acquaintances whose elder brothers and sisters had gone, or this or that and the other thing, and uh, it was a good time because the Holland America Line published a lovely little book called—uh, let's see. What was it? Uh, can't remember what it was called, but it was a lovely little book, and what it was was, teachers and students who'd gone to Europe and found a great place and had written it in, you see, written it down, and if you were going to be in that town, you could look up what they had, their entries, bed and breakfast and they told you the price, and then they'd say, "And don't miss so and so, which is right outside of town in Bologna." And in this way, we had an enchanted uh, kind of discovery. It was truly a discovery, because uh, originally, we were going to travel by bicycle in France, and we immediately scotched that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you travel with somebody this time?

SUE FULLER: Oh yes. I was with a couple of other friends, and what happened was that uh, what we did was, we had a knapsack and a suitcase, and we'd send our knapsacks between two big towns, like we'd send our suitcase from London to Paris, and we'd have in our suitcase things you could wear in the city, but in our knapsacks, we had uh, anything we could send between which could be washed and dried, you see, even though it was long before real dry [ph] came in. It was seersucker then. And uh, so, it enabled us to change plans very fast, and get where we wanted to go, [laughs] and then come back to a central point. So uh, we went out to around Paris, but when I arrived in Paris, there were—had been so much interest in this trip [laughs] generated by everybody that I had plans for Paris, and uh, I had looked up in this little booklet the possible place to stay which fit a very low budget. [Laughs.] And uh, we got out of the station, the Garden ward [ph], and looked at the street signs on the corner, and with our suitcases and our knapsacks went to one hotel, and didn't care for the looks of it, and then took out our book again and figured out by going by map, and we took the subway immediately to the first hotel, and as well as to the second hotel, and finally uh, found something that we liked.

But when we went into Germany, we then uh, crossed into Germany, and we were going to stay in youth hostels, you see, which was the big thing to do at though—in those—at those times. But already, in 1936, it was pretty uh, Hitlerian, and we found these big Brunhildes were a little too much, and straw mattresses. After all, we were from comfortable American homes and weren't really prepared to uh, rough it, and of course, they wore great, big clodhopper shoes and we had sandals on. We could bicycle all right, but we were not athletic about it. We bicycled when it made sense, and put our—put ourselves onto a train otherwise, you see, and when you consider that for $15 you could get a roundtrip uh, rail pass in Germany, which would take you up the Rhine—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —every place.

SUE FULLER: —and every place, you see, any place you wanted to go, and we had this roundtrip thing. Well, when we got to Munich, uh, [laughs] we counted our money and we'd been so pinch-penny about it—[they laugh]—that we had—we considered our progress and then, and we had enough money to either fly over the Alps into Italy, which was not on my itinerary, or go into Hungary, so that's exactly what we did. We changed our plans, and this is what you can do with a suitcase and a knapsack. And uh, so we changed our plan and went to Vienna and found that enchanting, but the place that really took our hearts was Budapest. Now this was before the war, and Budapest, when we get to Budapest, we find that we can go to the borders of Romania,

practically, to Debrecen, and uh, I can't begin to tell you the lark that we had—out in the middle of nowhere on the Tisza River in a hunting lodge that belonged to one of the—you know, what was it, Rudolph? Was it Rudolph? [Laughs.] Uh, [laughs] we met, of all things, boys from Dartmouth. We had one heck of a good time. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific, terrific.

SUE FULLER: So, uh, then we came back to Czechoslovakia and again, we were caught—we met people and talked to them on trains, and uh, we got a lot of good information and we could see where uh, the political beliefs of certain types of people were likely to be swayed by Hitler, but we were cautioned by a doctor and his wife, you know, against cashing any of our money in uh, Germany, if we—to cash as little as we had to, and to get it outside, and smuggle it in for the simple reason that every dollar that we cashed in Germany was only going into Hitler's pocket. And that doctor later showed up having escaped. Now he was not Jewish,but the thing was that, that we were well aware by the time we left Germany of what the SS meant, because the very way that they would roar in on their motorcycles, and they—uh, we were in Munich at the time when Hitler had just passed through. Thank God we never had to look at him. What happened was that the SS men were all over, and they were so brutal, and they had little piping, black and white little piping around the edges of their collars, and little lightning rods on their insignias, and oy, [laughs] believe me, enough to set the fear of God into you, because they were really—it was the fear of them, and all this noise and brutality that you were aware of. But uh, we uh—I saw an exhibition in Munich, which was certified German art and uncertified, the so-called *Degenerate*. Now I saw that in 1936 in Munich, and anybody you ever wanted to look at was in the *Degenerate* thing, and forget the [laughs] German certified art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Now, did you, in traveling through all these places, look at the, you know, the buildings and the museums, or what, what kinds of things did you do?

SUE FULLER: Well, uh, yeah. I, I think that what was the biggest revelation to me was probably the kinds of architecture that they had, and naturally, uh, that was exactly what we did, mostly. We went to museums, and uh, we sought out little collections that we could see, and things like that, and then uh, we went to a little of the theater, and whatever. I, I heard a B-minor Mass in the Chartres Cathedral, and if you don't think that makes you really jump and walk, that's beautiful, you know! But it was all a discovery, and the châteaux country, you know, it was just heaven, and when you're on foot, or on a bicycle, believe me—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —you're really where it's at. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: You're there, and I can never see, you know, I never think of the châteaux country without seeing you know, these beautiful [laughs] paintings of Caroux [ph], because that's exactly what it was to me. It, it was, the feeling that the artist had given it, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, what did you do about language? Did you know enough French, or—

SUE FULLER: Oh well, we had—you know, no, I'm no linguist, but fortunately, [laughs] my friends were, and so, I had a handful of whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One gets along by waving your arms around. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: Yes, that's it, that's just about it. And the other thing is that uh, there is a certain—if you're young, anything's possible, and forget the details, you know. [Laughs.] So that was a terrific trip. When we came back, I saw Dresden; we went up through Prague. I saw Dresden before it was bombed. I saw all that beautiful china, and uh, you know, went into the potteries and all that sort of thing, and uh, then into Berlin and uh, all the museums and what was still in them, and it still was in them in 1936, you see, and uh, then, the little—you see, to a certain extent, it was the architecture which really, really impresses somebody who has never seen that type of building for real, not a fake American copy of it, you see. And uh, so, but the—but for kicks, we'd go in the bookstores, and we—I discovered Wilhelm Busch, who is a German uh, caricaturist-cartoonist type man, and really, I just flipped for him. So, [laughs] so I bought several small books of his, and I came back with German books. I came back with Ernst Barlach, Lehmbruck, Käthe Kollwitz, all these I discovered in Germany you see, and I came back with the tiniest books that would fit into whatever you weren't carrying, you know, so. [Laughs.] But it was, it was a juicy experience, and then we went to Hildesheim and Goslar, which is one of—it's sort of middle of Germany towards the north, but middle, you know, and they were so beautiful, these marvelous old medieval towns, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do any photographs or drawing or sketches of these various places?

SUE FULLER: Listen, sketches, drawings, it was getting home, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was playing. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: You're playing. [Laughs.] If you're, if you're out with somebody else, I dare you to sit down and take a—you know. I mean, that's not how you do it. You have to be alone. You have to sit in an area and then, you see, unless of course you're one of those people who's gifted in complete reportage type of drawing, and I had a student in one of my classes who was that way, he really was. He was just—it's a gift, that type of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you just—

SUE FULLER: I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —sit down and it flows right out of you? Yeah.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, but I think that the thing which—I think it was a very enlightening experience to me, in deeper ways, in that it uh, brought all the art history together for me. It brought everything I knew was of value for once, thank God. You know, it was going to waste over here, but over there, it was of great value.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It made sense, fell into place, yeah.

SUE FULLER: It made sense, fell into place, and then you had one heck of a good time, you know, [laughs] so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can't forget that. Well, what—you know, after um, Columbia University which is in '39, I think, um, where did you go from there? What, what were your—

SUE FULLER: Well no, uh, I went to Columbia from '30—let's see—uh, '36 to '37, I went for a whole year as a resident student and stayed at International House, you see, and I was there through the summer school. So I had one summer to do, I think, one or two—no, two summers to do probably after that. But anyway, I made up in three pieces I think my second year, which got me my M.A., that's why my M.A. reads for '39, because I really only had one year's residency, and the other two years I went in uh, summer school. But I uh, I got a job in St. Louis, I told you, at my school well after that, and so, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you in St. Louis then, from—

SUE FULLER: Um, well now, let's see. No, I guess it wasn't 1936 I went to Europe; it was 1937, and then I went to, and then I went to uh, teaching school, you see, and it was part of that that I was going to have employment from then on. So I was—I went back to uh, my school in St. Louis and taught art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But was it your intention then to be a teacher at that point?

SUE FULLER: Yeah, right, because uh, after all, that was one way of making your living. So um, that's uh, well, that's what I did, and I had all the trauma of a teacher. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What am I going to say? [They laugh.]

SUE FULLER: Yeah, right! And [laughs] and finally, the second year I found my marbles and really turned it on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did Teachers College prepare you for what, you know, for really teaching, or was it all kind of —

SUE FULLER: —theoretical?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SUE FULLER: No, I'll tell you, it really did. It really did, and I had a practi—I didn't—Edith Mitchell was one of my teachers, and she has been very active in public school uh, teaching and supervisory work, and she was teaching up at Columbia at the time, and she was very good. Uh, she had—she was my practice teacher supervisor, and it worked out, you know. I mean, uh, once I got over being scared, [laughs] you know, that's the main thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean not looking at the room the other way?

SUE FULLER: [They laugh.] But, it turned out all right and I found my own uh, balance in the teaching field. And, but I was—to a certain extent, it was a great letdown, going back from where I'd had such a marvelous time as a student, and uh, the years had made quite a good deal of difference, and the depth of my commitment to art had made quite a difference, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way do you mean? How do you mean that, in your art commitment?

SUE FULLER: Well, in other words, that I was truly uh, involved in being an artist, that was the main thing, you

see. And I was not a person who was uh, a career teacher, so to speak. I was an artist first, last, and always, and those kids were taught, not what they taught me at Teachers College, Columbia, but they were given the riches of my experience to date, and it may have been quite unorthodox uh, curriculum, which I set up, but I had no—you know, they gave me a free hand, and those kids were really—I was teaching not only the art departments but the crafts departments, and keeping two floors of uh, studio going, you see, and that's quite a job. But I had had sense enough, in other words, I had a certain rapport with the students eventually, after I got over being scared, and, and that rapport uh, really enabled me to, to try and get out of the kids what was in them, you know, rather than impose a rubber stamp on them, and uh, this is something that I was vitally concerned with, because I suppose it was, to a certain extent, a reaction against the kind of teaching which had just snuffed me at certain—at, at times in my life, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that reflect your interest in Dewey, do you think?

SUE FULLER: I'm sure of that. I think that Dewey, Dewey made word sense and philosophical sense out of what I felt, you see. I'd had these experiences as a student, you see. And I, and I th—and, so it was like Peggy Lee's song, "Is That All There Is?" When you get the—through with some of the courses you took, you know, and you know damned well it wasn't all there was. And as I said before, I had the capacity because my family, uh, my family was really a very reasonable family, and if they saw something wasn't working out for one of their children, then they were malleable, they'd switch it. So, I can remember, my brother, as I said before, was very, uh, very gifted in a musical way, and I had to go to music lessons with him as a child, and what happened was that it was murder, because he could play like crazy, and I was still going, you know, bum-bum-bum, you see, and it was just—it was awful! I felt sorry for him, I felt sorry for me, because he had to sit through my lesson, you see. And, I had to sit through his lesson which was no problem, you see, [laughs] but he had to sit through mine which was murder. And then my little sister came along, and she was catching up with me awful fast [laughs] with this music lesson bit, and I was in a squeeze play and I really wasn't committed, but I'm indebted to my family for giving me music lessons, bec—and surrounding me with music, for the simple reason that although I didn't carry on with it, I finally, at an early age, staged my first sit-down strike [laughs] with my family. I said, "I don't want to take music lessons. I want to take art lessons, you see," and that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that, do you think?

SUE FULLER: Beg your pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, what—how old were you when you did that, do you think?

SUE FULLER: Well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Roughly.

SUE FULLER: Um, I was still in grade school, because what happened was that when we first went out to Colorado, my mother came up with a plum. She had found me a teacher, an art teacher, you see, and that was one—another one of those experiences, because this man painted purple mountains and skies. He was very good at landscape painting, and he had had a wide experience but he was an old man, and so he taught me uh, in a form, the student copies the master, and he was the master, you see. But I imagine I was 12 then, but I'd already—my family had already gotten me into some classes over at Carnegie Institute and things like that, and they realized that they had to try and find teachers, and in those days, it was harder for people who were not, you know, in the field to find people to tr—to give their children any experience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, I don't know, so how long did you teach in St. Louis then?

SUE FULLER: I taught there for two full years, and that was uh, at the end of that time. And as I said before, uh, after I got my feet on the ground, I found St. Louis to be a rather deadly environment. In other words, it was almost like going back into your mother's apron pocket, having gone to school there and gone back, and you were still "cute little so and so," had been the doll around the place, you know, and I didn't, I didn't—you know, that was well meaning, and I don't mean in any way to cast any reflection on the people who were there who were really great. It was just that, as a young person, I was going through a tremendous you know, fight with myself as to what I wanted to do, what I was going to do, and this and that. And the other thing was that St. Louis at that time was pretty much of an isolated spot as far as uh, somebody from out of town knowing what to do there, and so I studied—I went down to the art supply store, Baders, and on the bulletin was a little card, and it said, uh, "Painting lessons given," and it was signed "Joe Jones." So I made contact with Joe Jones, and uh, he took me on as a student, and of course, I had to have some—I said, "All I've got are nights and Saturdays and Sundays to paint," and so he said, "Well, and you need a studio." So he got me a studio on the edge of the then uh, Negro Ghetto of St. Louis for $15 a month, and I painted there nights and Saturdays and Sundays, and I spent an entire year copying El Greco.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. Really!

SUE FULLER: [Laughs.] Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How—what brought that on? I mean, how—

SUE FULLER: Well, that was because I wanted—I went to Joe with this proposition. Uh, I wanted to learn underpainting, you see. Underpainting was what in the middle '30s, Kenneth Hayes Miller and everybody, was into, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Big thing.

SUE FULLER: Big thing, you see, so, underpainting was in, [laughs] and uh, I had never been—I didn't have the time to, or the opportunity to—I wasn't—you know, I was at Columbia so I was busy up there. I couldn't study with anybody directly in New York. And so when I found Joe in St. Louis, it was like heaven itself, because here again was a real, live artist. This was somebody to talk to—[inaudible]—well, uh, he really, you know, he was a good inspiration because he was in a strong fit phase of his life, and he was doing wheat fields, uh, with the reapers and all that, and he was very much class-oriented, because he had been, as I understand it—the story of Joe Jones was that he was a house painter who some wealthy St. Louis people had been—had gotten together a sum of money so that he could go and study at the League, and when he came back, he was quite on the left side, and was [laughs] you know nip and biting the hand that fed him, you see. But what happened was that if you sort this out, he was really a very gifted young man, and, never mind what the heck—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the politics.

SUE FULLER: —the politics on the thing. And it was uh, the Depression, and I have every sympathy with anybody who took an interest in the worker, and he did a whole series of farmhand thing, you know, and, of course, I never got into too much of that for the simple reason that it wasn't my bag, really, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were you doing when—I'm curious about the El Greco again. What were you—what did you work from photographs, or—

SUE FULLER: No, I had a book. I bought a book, and I'd take these paintings and enlarge them, and you see, then, uh, I was really learning a technique because I was learning how to cramp board and to—it was uh, a sys—it was fat on lean and lean on fat, you see, I mean, that was the principle, and you have to learn to build up things like that and put on glazes, you see. And, and Joe said, you know, since we were talking about well, what did I want to do, I was sort of wide open to suggestion, and he says, "Well, this is something that I, I found," and he pulled out an El Greco, uh, you know, that—and he had actually done an El Greco type thing, and the—his approximation of an effect was really quite good, you see. So, I felt he was competent and he was fun, and all that, and so, I spent that year uh, having my dinner at school getting on the streetcar, [laughs] and going down to this studio and coming back, and I would come out at the same time every evening. And there were some nice colored ladies there that were also taking the streetcar down to my area down there, and so what happened was that one night, one of them said to me, [laughs] "Do, do you work around here?" And I said, "Yes, I do." And she says, "Are your folks nice to you?" [Laughs.] And I said, "Yes, they were." [Laughs.] But you see, she was curious about the routine of this, and then she, she had mentioned that she had seen me around there a lot, and I have always enjoyed black people, I really have, and I have enjoyed them because I was—they were a great part of our family, and we were taught to respect them, and we called them by their last names with Mr. or Mrs., you see, which was quite a switch, but that was part of my mother's Western training, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. What kind of things were you painting for yourself besides the, the El Greco?

SUE FULLER: Well, I was doing a kind of—I could draw like a house afire, and uh, it was mostly figure drawing, and I loved twisting arms up and doing things like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have models ever, or—

SUE FULLER: No, I did it all from my imagination. In other words, mine was sort of an inspired type of—it was a, to a certain extent allegorical, to a certain extent. I would make up these uh, these figures, and a funny thing that happened was that, I had painted a Negro man, I can remember one time and he turned out to be a dead ringer for a man who had worked for my mother. [Laughs.] But you know, it's all this thing that you had stored that came out, but of course, his skin, the problem of rendering this rich brown skin, you see, was really quite, quite good you know, and it would be mostly portraits, you see, but they were fictionalized portraits. They were not from a model. And uh, I had out West when, in the summertimes, I had painted landscapes and I had done cowboy things, action things, of, oh, you know, cowhands sitting around a table playing poker, and uh, a cowboy being thrown off. We'd go to a rodeo, you know and we'd come back loaded with this stuff, or we'd go to an old ranch that nobody knew of way off where there were some wild horses, and the feeling of the place, it'd really get into you, and then what with observation and everything else, you make it up as you go along, and that's the

type of thing that I was painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you—well how—why did you leave after two years? Was it just too much, or—

SUE FULLER: No. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —something else?

SUE FULLER: All right, I'll tell you, I'll tell you. What happened was that naturally, the school was in an economic bind, as well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, because the war was—this was '41, right?

SUE FULLER: No, this was '39, I'd say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but I mean two years later, it's, it's now '41—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: No, wait a minute. I went down there in '38, you see, so, and see, it was '37 to '38, '38 to '39, and I finished my M.A. then I think, and '40 found me in New York City. But it was because I was away from uh, these art people. I mean, the touch with Joe Jones was the abi—was the only thing that kept me from boredom.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The only one, yeah.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, it was, it was the only thing that kept me from boredom, and I'll tell you, uh I—in my first year I'd gone down to uh, the public library in St. Louis and taken out—every spring, I'd take out a book of poetry, and I found this nice, fat Gertrude Stein book that had tapestry on the cover, really, honest-to-goodness tapestry you see, and I took out this beautiful book. It was big and fat, you know. I was doing a lot of reading of poetry again, and I'd read an awful lot of Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell and you name it, the Imagists all that. So, H.D. was one of my favorite, and so, Hilda Doolittle, and uh, anyway, poetry was really part of it. So uh, I took out—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you write poetry?

SUE FULLER: No, I wasn't writing at the time, but what happened was that uh, I took out the books, let's say on, on a certain day in April, and the following spring I must've gotten the same [laughs]—[inaudible]—and I went down and I took out the same book as I enjoyed it again, you see. And when I found that my number of my card had ca—appeared right under my number of my card, and that book hadn't moved off that shelf in a solid year, that was the end of St. Louis for me. [They laugh.] But, when I was in St. Louis, I heard Marian uh—oh, what the heck—the great Negro singer, Marian Anderson, and [laughs] being an enthusiastic person, I screamed and yelled for her, and her voice was just beautiful at the time. But I was—I would escape from my environment. You see, in other words, what I—what as a student had been a marvelous structure for me to grow up in, you see, as an older person, and especially as a lively young one, I found it mighty conservative, you see, and that I found that it was such a drag to try and get these people who were tenured teachers and devoted ones, very good—I was still looked on as a student, as I said, and it was as not man to man, you know, [laughs] woman to woman, uh, grown-up attitude, you see, and I don't—it, it's not a good position to be in, but I did a bang-up job my second par—uh, second year down there, and so they wanted to give me the entire lower school as well to be the teacher of, and I decided that was just the living end. And the other thing was that, uh, well, it just wasn't the place for me, that I had, I had interests elsewhere, and I really truly was—I felt imprisoned there, and to a certain extent, I had already left home, you see. Now I had to leave school, and so I didn't hit my own feet until the 1940s, really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So, what did—you came back to New York then, after the St. Louis—

SUE FULLER: I came back to New York, and I can't remember the exact circumstan—well, I had to finish up that one summer at uh, Columbia, which I did, and I finally got my M.A. in 1939, and—but, uh, then I started looking for a job, and after that, it was pretty impossible. So, uh, I heard about—now I was always interested in good design, because at Columbia Teachers College, even though I had balked at some of the courses I took, I did take some courses which I hadn't had at Tech, which were things like lettering and, and insignia design and things like that, and because of my background, which was a strong one in uh, in design and everything else, uh, I got interested in—what do you call them when—it's like trademarks. There's another name for it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, seals and—

SUE FULLER: No, there's another name. Oh, they have even battles over them in the courts now. There, there's another name for it. But anyway, and it's neither here nor there, but, but then I—you see, here in New York City, you could find magazines; you could, you could—[inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Logos or something.

SUE FULLER: Logos, that's it. Uh, that type of thing, and uh, and so I was trying to get a portfolio together so that I could go and get a job and uh, naturally, I had no experience, according—to break into that field, although I had taught two years, you see, so what happened was that I went to Donald Deskey's. I'd heard that he would take on college students, and so I told him that I'd already been out of school a couple of years, but I really did need the experience. He looked at what I had to show him, and he allowed me—and this was what he did. He allowed college kids to come in and act as part of his staff, without pay, for six weeks, but at the end of that time, you had to leave. But at the—by the end of that time, you had experience, [laughs] I mean, technically speaking, you see. So then that led to my next job, which was with Sue Williams's Display Studio, which was a window, uh, display firm, and made custom-made windows for Lee Dashay [ph], Lord & Taylor, Macy's, Gimbels, you name it, and had a mail-order Christmas business in—that extended to Washington—Christmas and Easter, Washington, you know, St. Louis, Chicago, they used the same windows, custom-made windows, or pieces of them out to all these places. So this was a freewheeling enterprise, and that was a really good thing for me to be into.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you, what did you do with Deskey, though, and those, those—[crosstalk]—

SUE FULLER: Well, to tell you the truth, you did everything. First they wanted you to sit on the switchboard when everybody was there, but I never could master that. I wasn't fast enough. [Laughs.] So I could get everybody's calls screwed up very well. But, um, what they did was, they'd—Deskey would come in and he'd give his man, his assistant, his real, honest-to-goodness working assistant, uh, an idea for a job, and then, and then he'd discuss it in front of you, and he'd say, "You might try this," you see, and he uh—oh, I don't know. He was doing something for Exercycle. In those days, they were streamlining everything, and the exerciser had all its bones showing, and somebody had talked him into streamlining this thing. Well, streamlining didn't really, honest-to-God, as far as I was concerned, make sense, you see. I liked the bones better, but I didn't know why. So what happened was that when they had some kind of a spray, uh, like a spray can thing, to redesign or something, I changed the whole principle. [Laughs.] In other words, it was something with which I'd had some experience. So I changed the whole principle on the thing, and it was a way out spray can, and it looked more like a little uh, submachine gun, I think. [They laugh.] But it worked on a different principle, you see, and uh, but I don't think I contributed anything to Donald Deskey. He just was magnanimous enough to let the—some college kids and, a little bit older people, come in, and at least get the first line down—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —an idea of what it—

SUE FULLER: —on an application.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —what it looked like, yeah.

SUE FULLER: Yeah. And that was very nice because uh, the men there used airbrushes, and I toyed with that idea of practicing airbrush, but the airbrush and I didn't get along, get along very well. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the, the display company now, did you work with them for very long?

SUE FULLER: Mm-hmm. I worked with them until they became a casualty of the war, but that was a great place. This was down on West Third Street, and uh, one of those little streets, and they've torn down [laughs] everything that was there before, but that building is still standing. And this woman had uh, that I worked for, Sue Williams, was an artist who had studied at Parsons School of Design, and at that time, there were about five good window display, private companies in this thing, and Sue Williams at that time was the best. And uh, my—one of the men up at Deskey's had gone down to Sue Williams, you see, and his name was Dana Cole [ph], and uh, so the secretary up at, at—Deskey's secretary, Helen Hutchins [ph], uh, said to me, "Why don't you go on down there where Dana is? That sounds like a, you know, good place for you, but at least try them out." And Helen Hutchins was always very good with the people who came in because she, she had a grasp of the whole situation. Eventually, she had her own placement bureau.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

SUE FULLER: Yeah, and she placed people in, and she would try and get the right type of talent for various jobs around. Uh, but anyway, that was my first real job, and boy did I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you—

SUE FULLER: —love it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, what did you do there?

SUE FULLER: Oh, [laughs] my God. Listen, the best thing about the display business is that [laughs] anything is possible, and that your imagination is not a lost cause, you see. In other words, you get right down to the line, the job's got to go out in two hours, you see, and we haven't finished this, you see, and the only way you're going to be able to finish that is to do it with your imagination. So you always come up with some brilliant idea right in the nick of time. That was a hassle, that place. It was just marvelous. They had two stories in this building. They had a whole shop, woodworking shop, with German cabinetmakers. In another building, they had a whole group of Italian plaster workers. They could turn—they, they could—well of course, Sue Williams had a lot to do with the—with keeping the thing in trim so that they would be stylish. She was very good; she was a good stylist in this sense, so that she would make these, oh, plaster reindeers and all that junk that you req—that the general public requires, except she did it with a flair, and with taste. And I was darned good at mixing colors, you know, and matching colors, and I always was, you see, so that was my forte.

I could [laughs] match the color of anything. I'd go around to these ribbon companies. I was a shopper for them, you see. I was a shopper for them, and I learned the streets of New York backwards and forwards. New York became to me like my own left hand. You see? I knew where to get the pips for stamens in [laughs]—what do you call it—in artificial flowers. They used to put them together with pieces. This was before the glorious plastic age, you see, and I was real amazed that you had such quality products in these throwaways, you see? And I really think that the display field, uh, when it was going great guns, you see, now they—that was a good business. It kept all those people employed in an awful thing, and Sue Williams herself was quite a person. In other words, she had a lot of artist friends who were out of work, and she'd go and get them out of bed or get them out of a bar, you know, and she'd put them to work. She'd say, "Here, do this, I'll pay you for it," you see, and that's how she got started, until she had this big compound, as I said, and she had a trimming department. She had a couple of German painters who were really *skrrreeek* for the paint, so that it was all quality thing. It was not—and whenever she had to take a job for a mass-produced, low-cost thing, it just killed her, and it killed all of us, too.

But the thing was, I can remember sitting there, and I could pinch hit in any department you see, because I was skillful with my hands, and that was something that's—the artist who just sat and did sketches, you see, I didn't have to do that. I could do it, but I didn't get into it. And you have more freedom and also, you can run your own life in art at home, you see. And oh, I could tell you lovely stories about being picked up by a couple of agents because I was carrying [laughs] artificial flowers, which weren't supposed to be made in homes, and they thought that I was the runner that brought the stuff from all these little home shops, you see. And it was illegal, you see, and it wasn't that at all. I had this great big box of artificial flowers that I'd gotten from regular dealers, you see, and these two guys stopped me right in the hall. Believe me, the "take the message to Garcia" of my father came in, and I thought they were labor union, uh, the organizers, because there were a couple of people upstairs in the trimming department—that means putting the beads and the feathers on it—that were trying to get people to slow down on the job and I thought this—I thought that was the worst thing anybody could do. You know, if you had to get the job out, then why pull something like that? You know, it was against my principles.

Anyway, I thought these two guys were labor organizers, and they were trying to stop me, and believe me, I just barged past two great, big guys who had sat right on either side of me in the subway, and followed me to where I was going, you see. And what happened was, we were in one of those, uh, you know, split-second timing things, and I had to get some more flowers, and I had just picked up this junk from one other place, and was delivering it, and so I just took it in, I just *ffrrpp*, flu—swung open the door, put the flowers down, and I said, "There's a couple of guys out there you're going to have to deal with." They followed me in, and they tried to stop me on the way up and I just pushed right past them. And of course, they couldn't lay a finger on me and it's a darned good thing, because finally, [laughs] I went to the other place where I had to pick up stuff, and called back in and I said, "What happened?" And they said, "It's all right, you can come home now," and they thought it was the biggest joke, because they had called and taken the men and explained the whole situation to them, and everybody was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were they though? Where were they from?

SUE FULLER: They were from—I think they were uh, they were trying to put clamps down on, in labor laws so that things were done legally and according to Hoyle [ph], you see, but there was an awful lot of, of poor people who would, would—it was sort of like undercover uh, industries where they couldn't keep track of them, you see. It was almost like bathtub gin, which was made over in Brooklyn, [laughs] you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. Um—

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side four. How, how long did you work there, up until when?

SUE FULLER: I worked there for about um, about two and a half or three years, I think that was—but it really

was a casualty of the war, because much of the material that we got was imported. In other words, it was impecunious for any American manufacturer to manufacture artificial flowers under a certain size. In other words, all the tiny little work came either from Czechoslovakia or Switzerland, you see, and as Czechoslovakia was already gone, you see, and everything was closing down, and you couldn't get things—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —couldn't get the materials even to make them.

SUE FULLER: —couldn't get the materials, and so that whole business was a casualty of the war and they had to let us go. But uh, after that, why you see, that was 1942, I'd say, and uh, after that, then I really had to scrounge again, and I had some very unhappy experiences, because again, I tried to be a commercial artist, which I wasn't really cut out for, and I had an unhappy experience, uh, of really being without money, and I broke down in somebody's office, you know, crying, because I really needed a job and I couldn't get one. I think that was the Art Alliance that saved my life. The Art Alliance gave me a job with a very nice man down in Lower Manhattan, who taught uh, he taught at Pace college and he was an old-time advertising guy, and he was just like Major Hoople. He went on and on, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

SUE FULLER: Well, he actually had took me through the business of teaching me how to cast type and things like that, and it was a very small office. It was so cramped, and if you didn't agree with his point of view on things, it was too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was his name?

SUE FULLER: Uh, Ray [ph], Mr. Ray, I can't remember his first name. But anyway, he was very nice, and he taught me how to get the copy into the space, and once I learned that, then I took off and I made some good layouts for him, but it was all industrial advertising. It was like, uh, rat knots and things like that. Well, the cartooning with the rats and all that junk came in handy, but you know, I used to take my lunch down and eat it in Trinity Churchyard and go into the services if [laughs] I had a little time, you know, and listen to the music and then go back to the office. But the, but the problem was—uh, and of course that downtown area, I'm a great devotee of New York downtown, uptown, in between town, anyplace, you know, and I used to go around there and go into those little Syrian shops that used to be there before they built the Brooklyn Battery and Tunnel with the gorgeous writing on them and [laughs], you know, and then I would go over to Washington Market and for 35 cents have the best fried oyster sandwich on rye bread you ever tasted or even have them raw, you know; go into the Exchange Restaurant down there—what was it called—something Exchange Restaurant, and that was in the days when this was a cafeteria. You picked out what you wanted, took it to a table, ate it, and then verbally told the woman at the cash register what you'd had to eat, and paid for it. And believe me, life was bliss in those days compared to now. You know? It was a whole other thing, you know, because you actually, you—it would never occur to you to cheat them. And of course, it didn't amount to much in those days. You could eat for well under a dollar. Under 50 cents you could eat well.

And so, uh, it was a whole other era, but I didn't last long at that; [laughs] I couldn't stand it! And so, what happened was, I quit that. And, in between times, as I—I had been—I had joined the Associated uh, Artists of Pittsburgh, and I kept sending things back, and I won a couple of watercolor prizes, and I was still sort of having a hangover of uh, of American scene, and so I took some of this juice from my—from the uh, going into all these factories that I did, and I did the uh, *The Umbrella Factory*. It won a prize at the, in Pittsburgh at the local show there, you see, and it was a watercolor thing. And, I went in—back to watercolor because I was living in a one-room apartment with a roommate, and if you don't think keeping oil paint off people's clothes—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It doesn't happen. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: So, I gave up oil paint. I had to! You can't live in a one-room apartment [laughs] and do it, so, what happened was, I went to watercolor which you could wash off. And then the other thing was that, that I had a little setup where I could make jewelry, and uh, the friend that I was living with was working up at Time Life, and uh, she'd wear something I made, and then some other secretary or file clerk or something would see it and say, "Oh, isn't that cute! You mean, she made it?" [They laugh.] You know, and so, I had a nice little small business in small, five and ten dollar pieces of jewelry, [laughs] so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but they add up, you know.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, [laughs] so, this was uh, this was sort of under-the-counter thing. But I uh, but the thing that happened to me was very interesting. I was painting these prize-winning pictures, and one year I won one prize, and the next year I won the other watercolor award, you see, in Pittsburgh. Then I got the—I got the feeling, and this is possible for an artist to feel this way, I got the feeling that I knew exactly what the response to this thing would be, you know. And you could just hear the cheers of the crowd, the mob, the, the football player with the ball, you know. All right, so, what happens is—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You start playing to the audience.

SUE FULLER: No. What happens is, I get bored right in the middle of painting one of these smash-hit winners, you see? And I put down my brush, and I didn't pick it up again, period. And that's how I, you know, I nipped whatever was left of that, that thing. And, and at the time I, as I said, I was doing this jewelry, and I was hunting for somebody to teach me how to engrave on jewelry. I couldn't. I didn't know anything about engraving tools or anything like that, although I knew quite a bit about a lot of other things. I, I also tried to get a job in a—as a jewelry designer, and I even applied to uh, Arpel. Uh, what's that fancy one up here on 57th?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Van Cleef & Arpel[s].

SUE FULLER: Van Cleef & Arpel[s]. They were just organizing to open here, you see, and I'd go up to them with a smash hit. By this time, I had good stuff in my portfolio. I had terrific designs and everything like that, and they'd look at these things, they'd see they're full of—loaded with ideas, you see, and they are really immediately interested in hiring me, and I said—then they asked me how much I wanted, and I said $65 a week, and now that was a big salary for those days. And so, what happened was—and I was asking for it because I, by that time, I was feeling that something should really be worth it, you see, and $65 a week would have, in those days, been very nice. So, they were appalled, absolutely appalled that anybody would walk into their place and ask them for $65 a week to be a, a jewelry designer? So what happens is, you know what they told me? I said, "Well then what is the salary that you are offering?" And they said, "Well, men have worked for 15 years for us and been a senior designer, and they get $35 a week." And I said, "Thank you, but no thanks," and walked out.

But I did—I went, I went to see a great old gal that ran Lord & Taylor in those days, I think it was Dorothy Shaver, had an appointment to see her. And she was just lovely, because she knew kid stuff when she saw it, [laughs] you know, and she knew I knew from nothing about the great big world outside, and she saw all this great jewelry which was imaginative, unorthodox, everything about it, you see, and it was all hand done beautifully, so that what happened was, uh, she thought well all right, I'll teach this kid a lesson. So she sends me, sends me down, underneath the sidewalk at Lord & Taylors was where the jewelry department was, and there was some old Jewish bag down there who really knew the jewelry business, you see. And she looked at the stuff and she had her assistant uh, to look at the stuff, and, and uh, she said, "Ah, well where could we send her?" You see, and uh, the one of them comes up with some name over in Brooklyn, and the one says, "Oh, no, God, they'd break her heart!" [They laugh.] I loved her for it, you know, because she knew damned well when she saw something that was going to be taken for all it was worth, you know, and so, my forays into getting jobs were uh, full of stuff like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One adventure after another.

SUE FULLER: The one adventure after the other, and fortunately, you can let it roll off your back. Well, then what happened is that uh, I hadn't made contact with anything—with anybody, at that time, that really amounted to a job. Um, but as I said, I was looking for somebody to teach me engraving on jewelry, and somebody, bless them—I don't know who they were or when, but said, "There's a guy down at the New School who's teaching engraving." It happened to be Stanley William Hayter. And I went to him, asking [laughs] to be taught engraving on jewelry, and when I saw what it was that he did, [laughs] naturally, I had come home under false pretenses, because the fine arts was what I was really looking for, because in between times, I had been committed to the uh, etching and engraving, and I had gone as far as I could with Arthur Young, and had gotten bogged down in a thing about soft-ground etching. I had tried it with paraffin, and it didn't work. Wax, to me is paraffin, because it's what my mother put on the jelly glass, you see? It is not beeswax; I never heard of beeswax. You see? [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something else altogether, yeah, right.

SUE FULLER: So, all right. So that was the beginning of a beautiful experience. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous. Well, he was at the New School for a year or two, then he had his own—

SUE FULLER: —place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —place at one point.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, well now, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was at the New School though when you started with him?

SUE FULLER: I started at—with him in uh, 1943, and then my mother died, and believe me, that really threw me for a loop. And so I went home for a bit, and then just left the scene, and came back to New York. But when I came back, [laughs] I brought all this lace, all this jud—my mother was a great uh, home person that knitted

afghans and made clothes when we were small, and she, you know, gave us lace petticoats and little lace around our panties when we were little and things like that, and she had odds and ends of this stuff, and as we were cleaning out some of this stuff, I think I was absent from the atelier for a while. And when I came back, I brought lots of good stuff like whole bunches of old sheets for them to have for rags, and if you don't think that was a bonanza, and I got all this lace and things like that, and uh, I got into soft-ground etching with my mother's lace collars, her lace this, her lace that, you see, and uh, eventually, I made the scene with soft-ground etching. But I also had previously been accepted in a Whitney downtown show with one of my unconventional watercolors. It was the first really, truly, runny abstract which I had done, but it was at a time when I had already cut the cord of that American scene bit, and uh, it was a very uh, important time for me. Many decisions, many directions had been sort of catalyzed.

Now, the other influence which was great was that eventually, I got a job with the Museum of Modern Art in the —in their children's classes, and again, it was Victor D'Amico, who had been one of my teachers up there, he met me on the street and he says, "I'm setting up some children's classes; would you like to be one of my teachers?" And that's how good a teacher I had turned out to be, for children. I had written uh, an article for the *Teachers College Journal* in 1939 called "Bringing Up Teacher." It was, I don't know, the whole thing, but it was my first experience, my first teaching experience, and it told of my experience uh, at this private school. And uh, it told of my conviction and my interest in feeling that the imposition of out—of external standards at a tender age is a wrong way to go about—you know, I mean, in those days, that was a revolutionary idea. In other words, I had been trained by many teachers who were, "You copy this, you'll learn. You copy me, you'll learn." And I rebelled at this, and my uh, study with the man in Colorado, it was inspiring for the first year, because I was really into real oil paint for the first time in my life, and then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And that was—

SUE FULLER: —and I had my picture taken with my boyish bob from grade school, you know, [laughs] and my—and a long coat, and a palette like this, and a brush, and I was an artist! Boy. So. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh, but um, I want to talk about Hayter and after the age of 17 and what he was doing.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, who was there and who did you—who were your fellows, and what was the world like at that place? It's—

SUE FULLER: Well, I—it was great, because the minute I walked into that place with my dumb request [laughs]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you say?

SUE FULLER: I don't know, I don't know. I don't know whether I ever told him, you see. I think it may have gotten to me before that, you see, the, forget the jewelry engraving kid, this is it, you know! [Laughs.] And so, I got—and it wasn't long before Bill found out that I knew what I was doing, and that I was not just somebody walking in off the street to take lessons, so. Um, the first plates I did were—naturally, he taught me engraving right off the bat. And I, I guess I said, "I want to learn engraving," and I just didn't say, "on jewelry." [They laugh.] But anyway, so that's how—and I took an old plate and just made, you know, nicks in it and everything like that, and uh, then I got so that I was pretty good. But again as I said, all my training, every skill I'd ever learned came in handy. In other words, the, the jewelry, the good jewelry teacher when I was th—in high school, had taught me about direct—what you could do with metal, you see, and I knew how to control it. I'd a—I was familiar with the use of a burnisher, a scraper, long before Bill Hayter. I was familiar with printing techniques long before Bill Hayter, uh, because of the—that great Arthur Young up at—and he had taught me to print. I want to clarify things. Somebody would like to say, "Well why didn't you go to the League, because they teach printmaking at the League?" All right, here comes John Dewey. *Shwwtt*! [Laughs.] It's that do it yourself business from beginning to end with me. You get into a process, you know it from beginning to end. In other words, at the League, there were a couple of artists teaching, but they turned all the printing over to somebody else. The artist would come in and scratch on the plate, and uh, they probably—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then they had a printer.

SUE FULLER: I don't know whether they even, whether they even etched their own things, who knows, but I had had enough of it, I mean, no second-hand bit for me. I wasn't taking—buying that, that proposition, you see. Well, uh, just about the same time, Mauricio Lasansky appears right there, the same time, with me in September of '43 at uh, the atelier. And from then on in, Lasansky and I have been great pals, right straight through. This guy came from South America. He couldn't speak hardly any [laughs] English, and yet, I must've had, with my experience with the Japanese friends, I had developed probably a sensitivity of listening to people, so that I could get what they were meaning, you see, [laughs] which is all there is to communication. But I didn't care; he could've spoken Chinese and I could've understood this guy. You see? He was my exact same age, and to a

certain extent, he was a pal, just like one I'd had years ago, you know, and he came up here, and that was a very interesting story because Lasansky uh, came from Córdoba in So—in Argentina, and, in Argentina, Perón was putting all the artists, all the writers, everybody like, that had a brain in their head, into jails, and many of Mauricio's friends were already there.

Well, it just so happened that Francis Henry Taylor went down to—from the Metropolitan Museum—went down to Argentina, and he got up to Córdoba. He saw the greatest drypoints he'd seen from an artist's hand in some years, and they were quite large, because prints were small in those days, you see, and he said—he immediately cabled to his friend, uh, at—let's see. Francis Henry Taylor was at the Met. Now, somebody else went down there I guess. I don't know. Anyway, what happened was—no, he cabled. It was Francis Henry Taylor who cabled uh, Henry Allen Moe at the Guggenheim and said, "You've got to give this man, sight unseen, a Guggenheim."

And so, Mauricio arrived in New York City. And at first, he went to uh, up to Columbia, and Hans Mueller was talk—was teaching up there, not uh, not—wait a minute. I'm not sure his first name was Hans, but anyway, it was M-U-E-L-L-E-R. He was a woodcut artist, and he did little houses and little scenes, things like that. This was not what Lasansky was looking for. Lasansky went down to the League, and it was, you know, let somebody else do it, you know, and that wasn't his bag either. And he ended up at Hayter's doorstep at the same time I did, and that was where we both belonged. It was a do-it-yourself everything—[they laugh]—I mean, you know, and we loved it. And, we were involved, I tell you, we spent days and nights working there. We worked and worked and worked, and there was an—Bill Hayter generated an ambiance about that place. This was for real. This was not a school; this was it, you see? And it was that which gained Bill Hayter the uh, antagonism from all the oth—from the head of the department down there who was a South American, you know. I forget what his name was, but anyway, he—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Elrod [ph], yeah.

SUE FULLER: And the other thing was that Bill, in his enthusiasm, treats anything like it's his own home place, you see, and the school resented this attitude on the part of a teacher too, so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm here, and this is mine. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: Yeah, well, the problem is, you see, that they were all jealous as hell about Bill, because Bill knew great artists, European, great European modern artists, on a man-to-man basis, you see, and uh, the thing is that he made his atelier their base here, their European base here for getting any printmaking done. You see? So—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because they were all now here because of the war!

SUE FULLER: They were all now here because of the war. Now, what happened was that, in the printmaking scene at that time, uh, John Taylor Arms was the president of the Society of American Etchers, and all the good etchers, most of the artists were members of the Society of American Etchers, and it was a great honor to become a member. And uh, when I got some prints together, I became a member. I can't remember exactly when I joined, but I did have prints from Arthur Young type things, and I had other prints probably, and I don't know whether I went in at the time that I was at the atelier, or whether I went in before, but anyway, it was—all the prints that were shown at the Society of American Etchers were the work of artists who had not possibly uh, become too well acquainted with the modern idiom. They were representation, they were American scenes, and uh, that was their great strength. They were very good technicians. They were terrific printmakers, and they knew what they were doing, and it was a very good organization, entirely run by artists. And John Taylor Arms, who was a Princeton man, ran it with savoir-faire.

Well, this was a nice, cozy little dish. You see? Bill Hayter comes in like [laughs]—ah, so fun—and you see, what happens when somebody over tips the aesthetic gravel cart, that's a no-no, you see, and yet they couldn't deny him his knowledge of the medium and what he was doing in it. And, John Taylor Arms, to my mind, in a man-to-man situation, just to keep things going, was the greater man, because he leaned over backwards to try to include the moderns whom he did not know what the hell they were doing, nor why, you see? But, he really did lean over backwards to include them, you see, and, it was—I finally persuaded Bill to join the Society of American Etchers, and he was an unhappy, he was an unhappy wiggler in his seat, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] I'm sure!

SUE FULLER: You see? However, he was in very dire financial straits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which he thrives on, I think.

SUE FULLER: Well, perhaps, but also, he was really—I mean, this is no kidding. [Laughs.] And so, what happens

is, uh, I felt that if he would establish a rapport with the opposition, that he would enlarge his field of circulation, and this was way before anybody took him up really, you know, in the museums or anything. And so, um, uh, he stayed with the Society of American Etchers, [laughs] until the—you know, there's all these back-scene things that you don't know what the hell is going on, you know, and remember, that was held in the American Academy, and then the American Academy is something that had been a deadly exp—you know, hand on my life, so I wasn't too fond of academic per se, you see. However, what happened was, it was all this back—not backbiting, but maneuvering behind the scenes, which eventually got to the point where, "Let's all us printmakers get together, even if we don't make etchings and, and join the Society of American Etchers," which then became the Society of American Etchers, Lithographers, Woodcutters, and something el—I can't remember. But anyway, the only thing they left out was silkscreen, because silkscreen, we don't talk about at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the bottom, wasn't it?

SUE FULLER: That was the bottom—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: —you see, so—[they laugh]—see how—so, so, the minute that happened, [laughs] Bill Hayter said, "Oh, I'm going to do these signs on the place." He said, "They're letting in all those woodpeckers." [Laughs.] And of course, Bill was right. Aesthetically, John Taylor Arms should not have been persuaded by anybody to open up the Society of American Etchers to other medium because really, truly, in my heart of hearts, I feel that etching and engraving is an art by itself. It has nothing to do with the other mediums, you see, in the way it was practiced then, you see, and this is pure etching, pure engraving. What's pure, you know? But then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, everything's piled up on top of another.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, but the, but the thing was that at that time, you see, this intermixture of things was a defensive move on the part of the Society of American Etchers, I felt. In order to, to not make it so much of a form for somebody like Bill Hayter to take over, because remember, he constituted a threat aesthetically and technically, and it was about time in this country that this thing became established as part of an—of the American scene, because printmaking before that had be—had hit a very static and very dry uh, plateau, and you could almost predict what was going to come off the next plate of any particular artist, you see, and that was too bad. And so, Bill Hayter was really the catalyst in this country for all modern techniques, because, he was picked up eventually by the Museum of Modern Art, and given a show, Hayter, and I took a—[inaudible]—and what happened was that it was a smash show, and it was circulated throughout the entire United States. It was circulated through South America. It was sent to Europe. Uh, this was all to the good, because it was an important thing that had happened here in the States. And a lot of the prints that were in that show were made by Americans who had studied with Bill Hayter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. Oh, and eventually, now all of his students are heads of art departments and you know, one thing and another. It's amazing the, the spread, how, you know—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: But you see, teachers and students and lines of where does this come from, you know, are very interesting. They're far more interesting than family genealogies, I think. Isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure!

SUE FULLER: And uh, for instance now, the—when I first went there, there were not many students.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was, who was there, can you remember?

SUE FULLER: Well, I, I remember there was always Abe, A-B-E Rattner. Now Abe Rattner at that time had a big sh—uh, he was connected with Rosenberg, the gallery owner, and it was on 57th Street then, and he had a very good, good show, and he was married to Bettina Bedwell, who was the, uh—worked for the Fairchild Publications as a—I don't know—like *Women's Wear Daily* you see, and she uh—they had met in Paris, and it was truly a love match because when she died, believe me, Abe Rattner fell apart. I used to pick him up and talk to him, take him on picnics, but get him back, you know, to—he was really a heartbroken man, and uh, I talked to him and, and you know, tried to cheer him up and get him on the upbeat, you know, but he would almost stagger from church to church seeking solace, and it was really a terrific blow to him. So, and—but before this happened, he was down there making a plate, and he was calling it *The Menyay Criblay* [ph], and here he was sitting with a little hammer pounding little holes into his plate, you see? And he did some things like that. Well of course, Abe Rattner was a big-time artist, you see, so, just as uh, you know, and when we were—when we saw Arnold Blanch and uh—what's her name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Doris Lee.

SUE FULLER: Doris Lee, oh boy, they were big-time artists right now—[inaudible]—big-time artists, so you never know when you're big time or not, but you—[they laugh]—but, everybody has some time when they're big time and they get—I mean, the influence rubs off on everybody else. So, his color was terrific at that time, and his forms were, they were very interesting. He was a strong painter. And so, he could speak English all right, so who else shows up? People who can't speak English so I can't understand a lot of it, and of course [laughs]—um, well, as steady people down there as I recall, there was Abe Rattner; there was a man uh, who came from Chicago whose name I—escapes me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mitch Collin [ph]? No.

SUE FULLER: No, no, he didn't—it wasn't at that time. But there was Andre Racz who teaches up at Columbia now. And uh, well, Minna Citron eventually came into the class. She wasn't there at the beginning, but she came in. And then of course, the other thing was that Bill Hayter had a—had to share this particular studio with, with Louis Schanker who was teaching woodblock. You know Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

SUE FULLER: Easy-going man, you know, and so he was easy to get along with, and this is how I learned about Louis Schanker's woodcuts, which were at that time were terrific, you see. And it was a good thing, but, but Hayter and, and Louis had to share the same quarters and it was pretty rugged. So, what happened was, they spelled off the thing, but you couldn't go in at certain times because the—there were shared accommodations, so this was not the ideal setup. Well finally, they got that straightened out so that we could work practically around the clock and we did. And uh, and I really mean it. We'd go in there at eight o'clock and we'd have lunch and we'd still be there. We'd go away for dinner and then we'd come back after dinner, you see, so, this is—that was, that was really—[inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a studio; that was everything.

SUE FULLER: That was a studio; that was everything. And, as I said before, everybody was going in his own direction. Uh, every now and then somebody like uh, Lipchitz would come down, or Chagall, and Masson came down, and, then there was oh, there are a couple of South Americans. I can't remember who they were, but they, each of them, did something. Matta was down there. Matta and Bill got together sort of in the corner and dr—and uh, Matta produced some [laughs] uh, erotic art, you see. Of course, this was my first uh, acquaintance with erotic art. [They laugh.] And I thought it was all some kind of a game that the boys played over there, you know. [They laugh.]

But when I came into that studio, personally, I mean just to go along with the thing, the kind of work that I did was, again it was more or less figure allegorical, and it got mixed up with these textures. Now, since I was teaching up at the Museum of Modern Art, in the children's classes, uh, Victor D'Amico was a good organizer, and he got uh, of teachers, and he had all kinds of committee meetings for teachers, and he was trying to get the teachers acquainted with the availability of the museums, staff, and this and that and the other thing. So he had Albers come. Now Albers was between jobs. Black Mountain had—*k-r-r-r!* And so, Albers was between jobs and you really couldn't study with Albers anyplace because Pratt Institute wouldn't let you take a course in color with him because you weren't enrolled for a degree, and there were plenty of people, artists, sitting around New York that wanted to study with him.

So, Victor D'Amico, uh, got for his teachers, uh, a little cup—I think one session with him on a Saturday morning so all the teachers could come, and I was in this session with him, with Albers, and that was my first acquaintance with Albers. And, as I was way over, uh, prepared for the experience at Teachers College, I was way over-prepared for a teacher's approach to what Albers had to offer, and so my work that I did at that time was single—[inaudible]—like this. And, you know, Albers taught me something right then. I had done this piece of two cut pieces of color overlapping, and I had done all the color in between where they would be overlapped, you see. And it was a terrific, again, terrific color-matching job. And I made uh, an illusion of one thing, and that of course was the problem. And when Albers saw my work, along with that of teachers who were not required to have this much art as I'd had in my background, to be sure, he just came up and he said, "Aha," and then he tapped his head, you see? He knew what—that I knew what I was doing, you see. So, he, he hauls it up and one of the teachers says, "How did you do that?" And he let me fall right into that booby trap of uh, telling them how I did it. And even as I spoke, I realized that when you tell somebody how you did it, you really can't tell them how you did it! You see? I could go through the cutting of the piece of paper, this lightening of the colors, and the things like that because being a teacher, I wanted other people to understand.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you could explain.

SUE FULLER: You see? I wanted them to—that there be an openness of accessibility to what had been done, you see, and yet, what I realized at that point was that it took a hell of a lot more than knowing how to stick those pieces of paper, or even to choose the color, to do what I had done, you see? It took experience, and all

those years with the matching of the, of the ribbons for Sue Williams and uh, you know, getting the right shade of this or that, and, it all paid off. But I never had a job in the commercial world that I didn't learn something from.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now what about—you know, just to continue Hayter a little more here. Uh, how long did you work there?

SUE FULLER: Well, I worked there [laughs] until Bill Hayter got too big for his britches. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a nice way of putting it. [They laugh.]

SUE FULLER: As to the exactly what happened, uh, you see what happened was, as I said, I had had this terrible blow of my mother's dying, and I don't care how old you are or how young you are, when your mother dies, you're devastated. And so, I really plunged into more and more into my work, you see, and I really knocked myself out. Now. What, what were you—what did you ask me about?

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you with Hayter?

SUE FULLER: How long I was with Hayter, yeah, right. Okay, now. I was with him from '43, right straight through that year, and I think it must've been '44 when that—or toward the—yeah, it must have been '44. I can't remember exactly when that show was at the Museum of Modern Art. But you see, success really did go to his head, and, he began, he began doing things to people which was not in the—which he had—it had not occurred to him before when he was uh, you know, in a more impoverished state. He was absolutely a very—well, he was a man who, if you did something for him, he appreciated it. Well, that vanished when he got this Museum of Modern Art thing. He was dropping people like flies, and one of the people he was going to drop was me. Now, look. When I was there, I was more than an appendage to that department. I was not just another unit. I became his assistant. When I came back from Pittsburgh, he said—he took me on as his assistant, and because he had learned that I knew all this bit of printing and this and that, I printed his Christmas cards for him, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: Really! I printed a hundred cards just like that. And you know, I mean I did this for you know, a couple of years, and what happened was that—the other thing was that Curt Valentin was cut out from Europe as was everybody else, and Curt Valentin was a great gallery up on 57th Street as you know, and he needed somebody to print etchings that were made by artists, Chagall, and so on, people like that, you see. So, he approaches Bill. Bill says, "Sure, I'll print them for you." Bill turns the job over to me. [Laughs.] I'm the one who printed two editions of Chagall's print, and as I said, I was so darned dumb at the time. I didn't even know that you were allowed to keep uh, a thing—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, printer's proof.

SUE FULLER: —and for the printer, you know. Nobody told me. So Bill had that. Well, but—that's aside from the point. What Bill did was, he created an ambiance which was a working thing, and nobody, I don't care how many ateliers are set up, unless they have that special gift of being a great inspirer of people, they might as well close up shop, because it becomes a free for all. In most cooperative somethings, I don't care where it is, the—unless you have a guiding light, you see. Hofmann was a guiding light that summer at Thurn, for me. It was that extra something, which is that particular artist's gift to everybody else and Bill Hayter had it. He could inspire other artists, you see. And, he—it wasn't so much what he taught you; it was just the uh, uh the energy he, himself, generated. You see? And uh, he inspired other people to do their best, and that's a great quality. But I don't care how mean and nitpicky he is, in some areas, or how much of a [laughs] schlemiel he is in others, you see, or how much dirt he's done, how many people—he is a great teacher and a great artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well he, he's able to—I, I've seen him do this, you know, as a young student coming in, gives them a plate, and you sit down, and he goes through this whole thing.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, and you see, it's never—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And everybody gets all wound up!

SUE FULLER: That's right, and that's exactly what he did. He always did that. He always had that. All right, now, what does he do when he, when he gets somebody like Chagall down there? So he speaks to Chagall in French, you see, and uh, I can't understand what the hell's going on, and I'm standing by as his assistant. So, Bill takes the plate. Now this is what I couldn't stand. Uh, now Lipchitz, I liked, because he had a working man's, uh, artist involved in the ass [ph] and title [ph]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, but did the work.

SUE FULLER: —and he'd worry over what was happening to his plate, and he did it himself, you see. Lipchitz was—and I mean, Lipchitz got stars from me, see. Chagall? Forget it. Chagall is a tickler of the edges, you see. Forget him as a printmaker, because every decision which meant anything was made not by Chagall, but by Bill Hayter, because Bill Hayter could produce, you know, could help Chagall produce on that plate what he wanted. So, Bill kept asking him what he wanted, what he wanted, and then when he turned over these plates to me, which were illustrations of Biblical stories, there was an angel in there, and it had—it was an area which had been uh, I think burnished to a certain extent. And now, I had to print this. I would get every single print the same. I had to keep clean edges on those plates, you see, and, I had to do a trick wipe on the plate. In other words, uh, I had to give it a printer's wipe, and it had to be the same every time, [laughs] you see. And so I printed this plate with the trick wipe and uh, you know, the whole bit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean, a trick wipe? [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: Uh, I mean, in other words, it's a—it's a facility of your hand. In other words, your hand removes only one area of the plate. It removes the ink at the very last, one area—[inaudible]—it's akin to retroussage, which uh, you can, you can bump up or, or increase the depth of the color, of the ink in an area that's underbitten by retroussage, and, which is just, you know, dragging a piece of cheesecloth over it. Well there was no retroussage in this, but there was a place where you had to have—you had the plate all ready to print, and what you had to do was to take some talc and wipe it off and be sure that it was just right, and, and just give one area of that plate a quick, uh, twist. [Laughs.] I mean, what else, you know, I mean, it really was a wipe, it was a trick wipe, you see, and it was the palm, that—it had to do with the shape of your palm, everybody would do it different because of the shape of their hand, probably, but I had to do it so that it came out and looked correct. Well, so I printed these things as I said before, [laughs] and uh, in the meantime, I was carrying on terrific researches of my own. Uh, I told you about studying with Albers. Well then Albers spoke to these teachers who were back at the teachers'—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —Modern.

SUE FULLER: —bit at the Modern for the schoolteachers. He talked to us about texture, and it was the first time I'd ever heard anybody talk about texture. And I was into it up to my ears down at Bill Hayter's studio, you see. So, it was a Bauhaus approach to texture, plus the techniques of soft-ground etching, which I learned from Bill Hayter, you see. He was the man who showed me, "That isn't paraffin; it's beeswax." You see. So, I mean, that's all you need to know sometimes. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, right. One little clue.

SUE FULLER: Right. But what happened was that he either made—he made—he didn't even both with the beeswax bit on it. He did, he did a soft ground, which was made with Vaseline. And, of course, I mixed the soft ground in; I knew all about this type of thing and I mixed the acids and kept the acids in good condition for the entire group, you see, and I kept the, the press and the blankets clean and everything, and I was really his assistant, and I—when he wasn't there, I'd clue in the newcomers to the class, you see, and see that they didn't bumble around. And I kept the paper wet and this and that and the other thing, and it was really a working condition, that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a real job!

SUE FULLER: —a real job, you see. And of course, I wasn't paid. I got tuition free for that. But when you're living on what I was making, [laughs] that was a great deal! [Laughs.] But while I was there, as I said I was doing researches on my own, and since I was a scholar in, in the—I was a need-to-know person, you see? In other words, I, wasn't I'd say that I was a scholar in the fact that I would go and read what everybody else has said about everything, you know. I wasn't that kind of a theoretical type of person, but what I was was, I need to know, therefore I will see, you know, and I will try it out, and I'll learn that way, and that was the approach that I had to this Lumsden, and as I said, the book of Lumsden which I had made acquaintance with at—it was well thumbed, you see, and I wrote into my Lumsden all these things that had changed, you know, that I had learned from Bill Hayter, you see. And one of the things which was intriguing me was the brushstrokes, like, for instance, I did a plate in 1944 which was called *Cacophony*, and in that plate was a, was uh, an area where I wanted a heavy brushstroke such as maybe Dewalt [ph] would have used. See? I wanted a heavy—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really—

SUE FULLER: —brush out on it. Now you know, that in etching when you do that, if you're going to etch the area, the area has to be painted around. Well, in *Cacophony*, I painted around an area to get what would be the equivalent of a brushstroke. But it was a simulated black brushstroke, because it was not a real brushstroke, it was painted around, and there's a great difference. You see? And so, that bugged me, so I went back to Lumsden and I fooled around in Lumsden until I found out Gainsborough's use of aquatint. And it turned out that Gainsborough had used Direct Black's [ph] aquatints. Now this is known as sugar lift, but I want you to

know that I went home, and figured out a way to make a sugar lift ground without seeing anybody else do it, and it was, that since I knew all about the rosin powders, the rosins that you mix with the alcohol for stopping out varnish, what I came up with, from thinking and, and reading and you know, putting it all together, was, I took Karo syrup, which is the thickest, sugary thing that I could think of, and I let it set out and get good and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —sticky.

SUE FULLER: —stiff, you know, old. And then, overnight within ground, I painted with Karo syrup. And then, I poured stopping out varnish. You see, now the aquatint ground is rosin particles, uh, slightly melted onto a plate, just like, little hills they are. All right. I paint with Karo syrup over that, right? Then, I pour a stopping out varnish which is made of rosin particles dissolved in alcohol, and that is the stopping out which covered both the aquatint ground which was already on the plate which was rosin particles, and the syrup, you see, over the particles. When the thing dried, it was a perfect bond of rosin to rosin, with the alcohol absolutely gone, but over the Karo syrup, the Karo syrup had protected the little particles that were adhered to the plate underneath the brushstroke, you see, and when you put—let this thing dry and put it, immerse it in water, then what happens is, the stopping out, which is not—did not make the perfect bond, because the Karo syrup in between it and the other, you see—just lifted right off, and you had a perfect outline of your stroke.

I did this on a plate called *Cock*. It was a little tiny plate, and uh, I showed it to Bill Hayter, and Bill Hayter was sitting there, and when I showed him this thing, he said, "You know, you have made a great contribution." He then sat me down and had me show it to Masson, who painted in that—you know, whose work was in brushstroke, you see. And from then on in, sugar lift was in, you see? But now you ask Bill Hayter, and he'll say, "Oh, we did that in Paris long before at you know, school, you know." I mean, not—no Englishman can be beholden to an American woman God help him, you see? God help him, but that's the truth. So, what happened was, Wittenborn bought that edition, and uh, he bought one of Lasansky's and one of Hayter's at the same time. And uh, that was the way that was introduced into the atelier, you see, and then the other thing was that this thing, like, uh, other things that I did with nettings and things like that, it was really a time when I was completely turned on and attuned to this print medium, and it was my night and day business, you see?

And so I was really turning out things, and it—and the atmosphere at the studio, after Bill Hayter's business with the Museum of Modern Art, it got out of hand. In other words, nobody was there. He was too busy, and I was left with a lot of people who were coming to get in on the bandwagon. I couldn't get my own work done, and it became a dead end for me. On top of this, he comes around and tells me I can pay tuition now, because he'd had a run-in with the school on how many people were working there free, you know, like Chagall, and [laughs] Masson, and a few other people. They weren't on the register, you see. Oh, and there was some crazy, uh, marvelous woman from South America, Maria. I never knew her last name but they said she was a sculptor. And uh, she would breeze in and out, and of course, Miró shows up. He's in town for something. He shows up down there and he's the cutest little thing you ever did meet, with rosy cheeks and—little tiny man. And uh, mostly when they were around, they—it would be uh, we'd all disappear, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that? Yeah.

SUE FULLER: —Lasansky, and, uh, Racz and the rest of us, we'd get the hell out of the way because, it was so tiny to work there that they really didn't need people there, if they were going to get anything done. You see? And eventually, that was the end of Atelier *Dix-Sept* for me, because, uh, I had to have someplace to work. Well, Bill was great at getting uh, at getting studios for himself where he could work. And so I just took a leaf from his notebook, and started looking for a storefront to do my own work in, and that's how I ended up in Brooklyn. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Brooklyn?

SUE FULLER: That's right. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wanted to ask you, um, what about the lace and things that you were using, how—what provoked that, was the fact that you got them from home, or why did you want to use them though, in—

SUE FULLER: Well, all right, number one, the thing was that I really, uh, had tried to make a soft-ground etching up at Colu—Columbia, I told you, and that was, you know, in the time when I was here, and working someplace else, and going back up there. And then I got mixed up, I make—mixed up my thing with paraffin and it was no damned good; it didn't work, and nobody how to do it in the city of New York. It was Bill Hayter who introduced this, uh, this soft ground into the scene. Well all right, now, with soft ground, it's very easy to put and press any material, and uh, the—it was in use in Europe, you see. You'll see it in some of Käthe Kollwitz's etchings, but it's not as a texture in her things; it's the texture of the paper that she drew through, because she drew, she made drawings on paper which were traced onto a plate. But the, the tooth of the paper is visible in some of her soft grounds, you see, and there are many artists who've used it, and Cotman way back in the 19th century, and people like that, they've all used it.

But, it had special significance, uh, to me in this respect, that I had cut—I had finally gotten rid of that dead lead of the last part of the ’30s, what with those teachings in, you know, the academic teachings that had been such a terrible thing to me, and then I’d finally found a certain amount of release from them in the American scene, but then got bored to death with it because I was capable of other things, and I knew it. And so what happened was that it was the use of texture, really. It was hearing Albers speak of texture, you see, which put me in mind of what I was doing down at Bill Hayter’s, you see. And, it began to stimulate my mind in the areas of threads, you see, and cross thread. Instead of uh, instead of crosshatching—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —a fabric, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —you could use, you see, instead of crosshatching, you could use a fabric, and so it became uh, it became a—really a collage technique in metal plate, you see, for me, and oh, I stood on my head with those textures, I really did. I uh, what I did was, I figured out ways to starch and stretch them to hold them in certain configurations, and I did everything. And, I mean, since I had had an experience in the display field where your wits are your solution, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Any material works, anyway. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: That’s right. Then, you see, you are prepared for that kind of an experience, so, it really came all together down there, and that’s why it was a thread, and when I used threads, I used the lace from my mother, the you know, all this great stuff I’d brought back, and then I reduced it to, finally, to one thread, because I couldn’t get the manufactured textures to look like I wanted to, so then I made drawings in thread.

[END OF TRACK.]

SUE FULLER: [Inaudible.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Say, this is side five, and it’s eighth of May, 1974—[’7]5—

SUE FULLER: —[’7]5.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —[’7]5 still, isn’t it? Anyway, we finished the other side and you had mentioned at the beginning of making um, drawings using string.

SUE FULLER: Uh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And, how did that—that evolved from the printmaking, right?

SUE FULLER: It did. It evolved—it’s always very complicated to figure out exactly what the sequence was on the, uh, influence that brought this thing to pass, but, as I said before that uh, Albers, the conjunctions of Albers and Hayter at the same time, you see. Now I mentioned that Albers had talked to this teachers’ group at the uh, Museum of Modern Art. And then, I didn’t say that later, all these people who couldn’t get into the courses over at Pratt Institute—and then a motley crew they were, people who wanted to learn more about the Bauhaus or something like that. And, uh, I talked to Albers at the time and he said that there were—I said, “Is there any way I could study with you?” And he said, “Well,” there was this friend who was something with a photographer, something like that, and so he got together about oh, I’d say 20 people, and we had 10—uh, no, let’s see—eight sessions with Albers for a certain amount of money, and they were held over in the Camera uh, Camera Club, over—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really, on the West Side, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —on the West Side, you see, and Albers did a quick run-through of many of the pro—uh, I mean, of key problems, which were thrown at people. Now, this, I’m not exactly sure of the date, but it was when Al—it was between when Albers was down at Black Mountain, and when he was, you know, up at Yale. He wasn’t up there yet. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It might have been a sabbatical—

SUE FULLER: No, I think what it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —period, no?

SUE FULLER: —was that, that he was out of a job from, Black Mountain, and uh, he had a small teaching job over at Pratt Institute, but you couldn’t get in because of the curriculum—[inaudible]—you know. So that’s why he held this special class for people who were—who had specifically asked him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were some of the people in it, do you remember anybody?

SUE FULLER: I don't remember, because they were such a motley group, and they were all ages, you see, and I didn't know a single soul in the group. But, everybody was there for one specific purpose, and that was to hear what the Bauhaus was about firsthand, and that had a tremendous influence on me, and as I said before, I was already into textures, because of the soft ground, and then, you see, the Bauhaus—of course, Anni Albers, Albers's wife, uh, was a weaver, and so, that there was something about that in threads that had to do with a problem that the Bauhaus gave, you know, threads, you see. Well, so, it was related in that way because immediately I was aware of this.

The other thing which was important at that time—and this was the early '40s—the Museum of Modern Art had a show of, of Gabo and Pevsner. Never have I been so turned on in my life as when I saw that show. You can have Picasso; you can have everybody else. I mean, for my money, this was really a major uh, event in my life, and so, uh, I was absolutely fascinated by Gabo, and of course, I didn't talk about these things; I felt them, [laughs] you know. That was the difference between uh, my approach to things. In other words, I don't—I'm not very good at talking about uh, art, because I feel it, and the thing that happens with me is that you can't put some things into words, you see? But there was a great—I had a great response to the show, and that also was an influence, so that, eventually, I got what I was doing down to one line, you see, one s—one thread, you see—in other words, the uh, textures that I had been manipulating, and trying to get them to do what I wanted to do. I couldn't get the—and the other thing was that when I finally got it down to one line, I made what would be equivalent of a scribble in all different kinds of threads, anything, any kind of thing I had around. And I made a plate called uh, *Sailor's Dream*, and all it was, was a [laughs]—you know, it was sailors' knots, it was everything as far as I was concerned, you know, but it really truly was a scribble, and it was all in thread. And so, I made a plate of that in soft ground, and uh, Hayter at the time was surface printing some of the plates that were there. And so, he was—that means that you just roll, uh, you print an etching plate as if it were a block print. In other words, the ink is on the surface and not in the grooves. So, um, that image which came from that plate, was really quite good, but I loused it up by carrying it further, you know, and making an etching out of it. Sometimes you should be hit on the head, you know.

But anyway, what happened is that I did make an etching out of it, and I did, you know, uh, print a few copies of it. But um, that was the first time that I had figured out how to make a thread—uh, how to make threads stay in place, or for putting them onto a soft ground, you know, a type. So, then, I began experimenting. Having seen the Gabo-Pevsner show and not knowing a thing about [laughs] their approach—I'd never read a word about them [laughs] or anything—I started trying to—I was fascinated by the curves, which are of you know, geometric progression. And they're all straight lines, and that was, you know, that was a big deal when I finally figured that one out, because I did it from scratch, you see? And then I went around looking for support for the rest of my time, you see, but what happened was that it was a very exciting period, and when I got to making these thread pictures, uh, constructions, you know, to the day I really designed, it's two-dimensional construction, because after all, I was a painter. You know, I mean I'd been —*k-r-r-r*—uh, put in that groove. So, um, it was—they were flat, and I would have these nice, vacant frames of cardboard around my uh, studio with these threads on them, and believe me, if you don't think that was much more exciting, visually, to see these things, than to see a pencil line drawing for me at the time, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now the—were you using colored threads and everything?

SUE FULLER: No, I was using, I was using anything. It, it had no relation to it, I mean to color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was really just a line.

SUE FULLER: It was, it was what I was looking for. I was looking through black and white eyes, you see? And my black and white eyes didn't care what color it was, [laughs] you see. If it had a nice, uh thickness or a thinness, or a type of—it gave a type of an effect, which was uh—for instance one time I used some kind of ribbon that they used to—a very thin paper ribbon type of thing, and it gave a marvelous sort of, you know, tread look when you, when you used it, and all kinds of things like that. I was really, oh, I was into everything. [Laughs.] But, I didn't—I then uh, began to be not interested so much in my printmaking, and in the technical process. You see, if you have a disappointment as I had with Hayter's studio becoming a great, monstrous nothing, you know, be—because you couldn't get any work done—it wasn't that it was a nothing, but it was that, because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It didn't serve a purpose anymore.

SUE FULLER: It didn't serve the purpose, you see? And then, so I set up my own place and I did some plates on my own. But then, as I said before, it, it was this—the looks of the construction before it got on the plate became more and more intriguing to me, so I devised some frames, and I made some big ones, you see, so that the intermediate step which I had considered it, became the major step. And the funny thing that happens with any of this sort of thing with an artist is that you never get a Guggenheim Fellowship or anything like that until after, [laughs] you know, and, and the problem was, nobody would be interested in my string compositions, you

see, because I started making—I made the frames, and of course, I didn't—knew from nothing about making frames so yeah, everything you had to learn from scratch, you see. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you had—I'm just curious about one thing. Had you used the constructions then on the soft ground etching plates or—

SUE FULLER: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

SUE FULLER: In other words, what I would do would be to make these uh—make an open frame which fit over the soft ground plate, you see—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. And then used it—

SUE FULLER: —and the threads would—were then pressed into the soft ground, and when you raised it, naturally, you have the traces of the soft ground on the thread. Well, uh, since etching is an involved process—you see, I'd had my juicy period in etching, you see, and I had produced what had the interest of—and, it was in that period that I began, experimenting too with trying—printing in color, and it had, it—in an etching media, it has its problems, and Hayter's solution for placing the color by stencil on the surface of a plate was what I had mostly utilized.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you did a—some prints in, in carved plaster or something. Was that—

SUE FULLER: Well, you see, uh that was something which I think John Ferren uh, figured out, and it became public property in the Hayter studio because—now Hayter mentioned that what happened was that if you were in some place, and I don't know whether Ferren originated it, or whether Hayter originated it, or anything like that, I don't—wasn't in on that type of thing. But the problem was that, you see, if you are in an area where you don't have an etching press available, it's one way to get a print of your plate, is to pour plaster on an inked plate. And, then what happened, what Ferren did was he then carved, you see, and this was what I—I had made a couple of these because I wanted to try everything out, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, because I couldn't just figure out where that came into the—

SUE FULLER: No, that, that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the scene.

SUE FULLER: —that really was uh, the gist of that era. And then uh, I did get into color. As I said, my mother was a great sewer, and she crocheted things; she did everything. So I can't—[laughs] I don't know; there's something about a whole lot of colors that'll turn any artist on, and mine just happened to be colored threads. And so, I started using any threads that I had salvaged from my mother's things, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then these were going over the frames.

SUE FULLER: And these were going over the frames, you see. And so, finally, I think it was in uh—I started—by this time I was accumulating a body of work, and I started to try and get myself a show someplace. Now Marian Willard had already handled some of my work, my early prints, as part of Studio 17, that was in the '40s. And she also had somebody that was going around the country, one of her assistants. And then there was ano—there were people who, at that time, did take folios of prints around and sell the various collections, and one of the men approached me, and he went all over the country and sold my prints you know, on commission to wherever, you see, so that I don't know where, uh—[laughs]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —where things are? Yeah.

SUE FULLER: —things got to, you know. But he did so—and he was a very nice man, and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you remember who that was?

SUE FULLER: I can't remember his name. You see, this is why you should be interviewed when you're young and it's all fresh. But uh, [laughs] he was a dealer, and he was a very nice man. Uh, so then, I also was interested in all the collections of prints, and I used to go around to various places, and I went out to see Lessing Rosenwald and he, and Betty Mongan bought some of my prints. And uh, then I went to the various places, and I can remember going to the Philadelphia Print Club and what I did was to write a letter ahead, and it was a polite and ladylike letter, you see, [laughs] to the director. And the direct—I didn't know who this director was but she had a big long name, which I couldn't pronounce. And so, [laughs] what happened was, I got to Philadelphia; we made the appointment and I got to Philadelphia to show my prints, and I called her up on the

phone, and I pronounced her name atrociously, and I said, “Is that right?” And she says, “Not quite.” And I said —[laughs] I thought that was the most beautiful response to a garbling of a name. [Laughs.] But anyway, that was Berthe von Moschzisker, [laughs] and when I saw her, that she was a young woman, you know, at that time, and that she was really a delightful person, and uh, I said to her, “You know, I thought you were going to be a stuffed shirt, and I’m—it was going to be uphill all the way,” and it wasn’t. And so I then began an association with the Print Club, which, although I haven’t made prints recently, I’ve continued, because there’s something about that Print Club in Philadelphia. It’s been going forever. It’s sort of intrinsic [laughs] to the whole field.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, yeah. It’s one of the great institutions.

SUE FULLER: That’s right. And well, I did win uh, the prize there for one of my prints, and there were an awful lot of wonderful people on that in the print business, you know, and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, before we get into all of those, why don’t we keep on the co—

SUE FULLER: —on the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —on the string—

SUE FULLER: —string.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the threads and the colors.

SUE FULLER: All right, well so, we’re, we’re back with me making string constructions. Now, as I said, I was using these threads, and because I had had good color training at uh, Carnegie Tech, and also because I had been updated by Albers, you see, even though I’d had just a little bit of it, it was enough to awaken me again to the color problems. But the way I attacked the color problem was, because I had strands of thread which were constant, I then achieved the color effects I wished to, by overlapping the threads, which is a visual mixture, you see. In other words, the, the colors overlapping will make a third color where they overlap. And uh, I did quite a few of these constructions, and I then started trying to get dealers interested, and I wasn’t doing very well. So uh, [laughs] you know, nobody at—the ’40s, you’d be amazed how backwards [laughs] things were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it must have been very difficult, because you know, these were totally non-image, you know.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, non-image and non-non-objective, if you know what I mean, [laughs] because there was at the time uh, you know the Hilla Rebay and the—and Bauer with their circles and their spheres and, uh, I mean their—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kandinsky business and stuff.

SUE FULLER: —and—yeah. And you know, it’s strange, but Kandinsky never appealed to me. I—and I feel that this is a thing that you find something you respond to, then you know what type of person or what type of aesthetic interest you have, and that’s what happened to me with uh, with Gabo and Pevsner. I found out that I truly was more interested in a construction, you see, and of course, any sculpture I’d had and all the sculpture at the time, all the sculptor teachers everywhere, were still stone, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Direct carving.

SUE FULLER: Flanagan, Zorach—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —José de Creeft, all those people.

SUE FULLER: —Maldarelli, those were the people, and I had left that, aesthetically. You see? And so what happened was that there were no, there were no guidelines to this, so that it had to be more or less, something that you had to pull out of yourself by trial and error. And uh, finally, [laughs] I got a, as I said before, I got a Tiffany and a Guggenheim after I’d lost my [laughs] interest in printmaking per se, and was into string compositions. But I did not get my Guggenheim on string compositions, you see. And finally, uh, I guess Bertha Schaefer saw one of my constructions hanging in Hudson Walker’s home. And it’s a funny thing about dealers but, the minute it’s placed, they’re interested.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, then it’s different. It’s somehow—

SUE FULLER: It’s different, you see. So that was what happened. I had traded—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now that’s—yeah.

SUE FULLER: I had traded uh, Ione Gaul, who was my school friend, one of uh, one of my constructions for one of her paintings, and I think it has a real low number, like number 13 or [laughs] something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you number them? I mean, are there—[inaudible]?

SUE FULLER: Uh, yes. When I started making them, I numbered them. And uh, the—I have a whole system now for my numbering, but [laughs] but—I felt that in this type of thing to intrude a name—all my friends who are literary, you know, said "Oh, great, let's call this So and So," you know, and I said, "No! It's So and So to you, but it may be something else to somebody else." You see—and that rather than, than—rather than impose something which really wasn't there, I can't—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —or suggest something, too.

SUE FULLER: I had really left a literary—I had left a literal, the literary, and the representation, you see, and that was what made the difference, and the reason I numbered them was that uh, all right, it's easier to keep track of them that way. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've got to have some record, right.

SUE FULLER: You—yeah, right. So, uh, well, eventually, Bertha Schaefer took me on I think in 1949. Uh, she had a group show, and she permitted me to leave a few pieces to be shown in a group show. Now, don't ask me who else was in the show, [laughs] because I couldn't tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, it's all right, yeah.

SUE FULLER: But the uh—it was a turning point in my career, because I can remember after I had done all this printmaking, and had had no response, I did win my first one-man show though, in about 1945, I think, and I won it—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Village Art Center, right?

SUE FULLER: Yeah, I won it in a competition, uh, at the Village Art Center, and my first one-man show in New York was hung in St. James' Episcopal Church in the Village, that—which has since burned down, you know, but my work was hung in a room behind the church where the choirboys hung their robes. And, I was absolutely appalled because I could just see those doors slamming with my pictures whang-em, whang-em [ph] on them, you know. Oh! You know, that's something that you go through. So, [laughs] anyway, at that time, uh, Ad Reinhardt had *PM*, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —paper.

SUE FULLER: Well, he was writing for *PM* and doing cartoons and this and that, and I dearly loved his work, you know, his graphic work, which I knew—I didn't know his painting to—I wasn't terribly familiar with it. So, but I had—I wrote to him and I said how much I had enjoyed his work in *PM*, and I wondered if he would possibly come to my—come to see my show, and he did. And I thought that was the nicest thing anybody ever did. [Laughs.] And he was a living doll. And he was, to me, Ad Reinhardt was like a little hedgehog, because well, he was very tenacious, and he was nippy, and that was a marvelous thing to have in the art world, for the simple reason, so many people get away with so much murder. [Laughs.] And I could—you see, all this time in the '40s, when I started teaching at the Museum of Modern Art, I was teaching children, and I was teaching uh, I'd say, teenage, I mean preteens, and since I was working for D'Amico who had been one of my teachers, and it was during that time, too, that I felt possibly the thing which really turns me off of education, which is th—uh, that I really don't like to talk a lot of things and make committee decisions. And, during the '40s, I learned that I didn't really like that, and that's one of the drawbacks to education. For instance, if you have a good teacher, let them alone. You know? [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let him do his thing, you know, that's it.

SUE FULLER: And I think to a certain extent that D'Amico appreciated this, because you see, up till that time, uh, drawing and painting per se, in the education field, and this was children and teenagers, uh—drawing and painting had more or less stuck to the two categories in—that were available in the art world, which was, it either had to be a painting or a sculpture, and there was no experimentation going on. Well, since I uh, loved, dearly loved Alfred Barr's book, *Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism*, and I had bought it when it was *k-r-r-r*, right off the press, you see, that I felt that an awful lot of—what the richness of the art world was lost when you confined expression to only a couple of mediums. So what I did was, I got to talking to Victor D'Amico. Now, you see, as a teacher, I could—I loved, I loved children's expression, and I was fairly good at keeping my mouth shut and seeing where it was going, and then just giving the right remark, which would take it further, you see. And, it was uh—I loved children's drawings and, and their works, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm curious about, what um, what do you think those classes accomplished? Because of the—that's a very uh, oh, important kind of activity they have in those days with those classes for young people.

SUE FULLER: Yes, well, uh, as I said before, my family had had one hell of a time in Pittsburgh trying to find me anything, you see, and when they found it, it was a classical type thing, which was not particularly suited to children. And so, what with vo—John Dewey and everything, the focus was that if there were children who were above average in their abilities, in certain minds, that they should be given the opportunity to go further with what their natural inclination was. And so, the painting and the sculpture that—that, none of it looked alike, you see. In other words, you didn't have a whole group doing the same thing, you see. Now, I was very interested in the—in this whole thing, and as I said, this book of Alfred Barr's that gave the richness of what had been going on in the professional world, you see, uh, to me, it was a very alive and exciting time.

So, I couldn't see narrowing the education down to just two mediums, and so I talked, I had a nice, heart-to-heart talk with Victor D'Amico, and I said to him, "Do you mind if I start, you know, branching out and bringing things in?" And here is where my window display experience, with all its gauze and junk, you know, and whatever they used in that, that was exciting to me, you see, as a person, you see? So, I began to bring it into my classroom. And finally, what D'Amico did was—he was a discerning administrator. So, he decided that it would be a great idea if he got me a group of kids who would like to do this sort of thing. So, what he did was, with all his education, uh, you know contacts and everything. He got a group of students who were told what the—given an outline of what this class would be, and if they wanted to take it, they could. So, I got a handpicked group of kids whose natural inclination was exploratory, and I had one hell of a good class. I'll tell you, it was an adventure for them, and for me. [They laugh.] And, again, what this was was, uh, they called it mobile design. There wasn't one [laughs] single mobile built, I don't think.

But it was a more mobile [laughs] point of view, you see. It was more an exploratory thing, and because of this richness of texture, collage, everything, all these materials, and I was a great scavenger, and I would bring in—I would go through the trash baskets past factories and, during the wartime in the '40s, the—they were rich with stamped-out pieces and things like that. And so, I collected all the junk, toted it all up there. I, you know, I'd get things that were unusual things that people hadn't used especially in art classes, like feathers. I brought in a bunch of feathers, and I knew where to get all this junk. [Laughs.] And this, uh, also as I said, I had moved over to Brooklyn, and right around the corner up one of those streets was an old glass factory. And, I learned from children, as much as the—as I made it available for them to learn in my classes, because I found a group of, well, just ordinary, Brooklyn kids, who had had no art education, and who had had no advantages, no background, or anything like that. They had gone to this glass factory, and they had picked up little pieces of glass, and I said—that were very interesting in shape. And, and so, this—I questioned them, and I really did have good relation with those kids. [Laughs.] I questioned them, and they said, "That's right up the street." Nice thing about those kids was that I'd come along the street and they'd see me coming, and it'd be winter, and every one of those boys was a crack shot, you know, with a snowball. Do you know what they'd do? They'd be singing "Sioux City Sue," because I was wearing pants at the time, and in that neighborhood where I was living, no woman appeared in pants, you see. So, they'd, they'd sing "Sioux City Sue" across the street, and you know, sass you, and they would start firing snowballs at me. And do you know what would happen? They were such good chaps, and bless them, they never hit me. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fine.

SUE FULLER: No, but that, that was my relationship—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a great game, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —that was my relationship with the kids. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the classes go at the Modern, though? Did—d—you know, from the beginning of the inception of the class through to the development, did the students work—develop very much in that—

SUE FULLER: Well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —using all this stuff, or was it difficult to tell?

SUE FULLER: Yeah, I want to tell you that I—that the end of the story about the Brooklyn boys was that they—as I—they told me where the glass factory was. And, they had cob [ph], you know, to treat us, which they—threw out of the glass factory. And I went up there to see if these kids had used an aesthetic judgment in selecting the shapes that they did. And believe me, they really did. And this was unschooled, and that, to a certain extent, was really what triggered my questioning of the basis of, of education, that—that to assume that someone has no taste because they have no education is ridiculous, and that we were not reaching in the school system. We're not affording these people the ability to do this sort of thing to select, and it was on this basis that in talking to D'Amico, I set forth a plan for working with this type of material, and then he got me the students by

circularizing the public and private schools around for anybody who would be interested in that course. So they came up with a whole class of students, and as I said before, I did not particular—I had painted quite a bit, but that was not it. What it was was, it was all kinds of sticks, feathers, sequins, junk parts, and all that. Now, junk sculpture had not been shown officially in this country when my students were fooling with junk, you see? So, the end of the story about the—about this mobile design class of mine was that I finally said to D'Amico, "Why don't we put up a little exhibition of this, and I'll have the students place the pieces, design the thing, and you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, "do it."

SUE FULLER: —do it." And that's exactly—he gave—he extended my class another uh, year so that we could get together this exhibition. And then, the Museum of Modern Art gave one little room—I think it was on the second floor—to this exhibition of my students' work, and it was uh, mobile design. And it was the first show of its kind, and I think the last, because they didn't do it again. But, it made—I want you to know [laughs] that I heard rumors but I—from the august group of abstract artists in America, that somebody had piped up and said, "You shouldn't let high school students do this sort of thing!" In other words, that the kids were getting the jump on their seniors, you see. Well, that was neither here nor there, but the fact was that fi—uh, this thing was so interesting to so many teachers, that they had quite a few requests, and finally, D'Amico said, "Let's get a slide talk on this, and the museum will circulate it." So, I wrote a commentary to a selection of slides from that exhibition, and truly, that was the first, uh, modern, abstract, collage-type teaching which hit as an influence, the school system. Now, at this time, you see, I was very active in, not only in my own work, but also in sc—in these classes at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did you teach there?

SUE FULLER: I, it was only, oh, two and a half years. My tenure is never long. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I noticed this here, I mean, you know.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, right, but the thing is this—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: —I will do it as long as I can continue it, as long as I think it's in the—of some importance. But when it becomes a routine, then goodbye, because it has lost its zip, and if it's lost its zip—it's just as when I was painting those pictures. I had made it with—I knew what the jurors were going to say before they said it, you see? It was a dead issue, you see, so I laid down my brush and never picked it up again in that vein, and it was a good thing, because then I went into something else. So, that sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well—

SUE FULLER: —pulls together the '40s.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, um, from the exhibitions with, with Bertha Schaefer, which were quite—what—every year, every other year depending on—

SUE FULLER: In the '50s?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SUE FULLER: Well, I'm not that prolific, so that my—I don't think I had that—all that many exhibitions with her. If I had a—I think probably in the beginning, I had them closer together, but I—you can go five years without having an exhibition from me. And one reason is that uh, if you have a split like this that you have an unsettled, a financial uh, status, you do have to take jobs, and then your production goes down. And the other thing is that uh, in the '40s, I was serving on a lot of committees. I was the Society of American Etchers and when it changed its names to Woodcutters and Lithographers and everybody else, I was on that council, and although Bill Hayter resigned, I did not, because actually, I have the—although I felt that he was right at the time, that a strong blow for etching was the thing, I was still broad enough to include everybody, and I really truly admired the work of people like Stow Wengenroth, who is a terrific perfectionist, and uh, I never was over the board that anything that's European is in, and anything that's American is out. I always felt that America, it might be slow, and I was being part of the education for modern art, you see, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, it's interesting. Education seems to be a major undercurrent in all of your activities.

SUE FULLER: It is. I really truly—you know, as I said before, I think that a teacher like Arthur Young, who gets a motley crew of people from every kind of a background, and yet he feels that he wants to be sure that each one

of those people truly understands from A to Z what he's there to teach them, and that is what—I think that's a good teacher. When they have at heart, not a polemic, but the interest of those people who come to them, you see, and to try and get them to develop themselves, rather than to impose on them so—uh, a pattern which—well, it cuts off all their fingers and toes. You know. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, now how did the development, say, you know through the '50s, uh, because the—you've gone away from just the thin form at one time, didn't you, to larger—

SUE FULLER: Well, no. I'll tell you what happened. I think in the, uh—well, number one, these kids in Brooklyn with their pieces of glass, me with my transparent threads which would collect dust if they were not placed, you see, all this got me interested in glassmaking and learning about glassmaking. But remember, I'm the kind of person who wants to learn about everything, see, so that what happened was, even when I was doing those threads, I was going to Cooper Union and I saw these great things that were—uh, what do you call it—laced, somebody had done a chart of lace making techniques. Now, I knocked myself out to try and find out about lace making, and of course there was only little woman someplace up in Connecticut.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You'd studied with somebody, right?

SUE FULLER: N—no, at the time, there was nobody available that I could latch on to, you see. I mean, they maybe had been there but I didn't hit them, you see, but there was somebody who advertised a little kit of how to teach yourself lace making. This is a dreadfully hard thing to do, [laughs] you know. I mean, so—if somebody shows you how to knit, it's so much easier than [laughs] reading all those directions. So, I got some bobbins and I did try some little lace, try some lace making on my own. I made myself a lace pillow out of a roll of cardboard and this and that, and I, I was into that; I was into glassmaking; I was into everything. Well, all I could figure out to do with uh, glassmaking was to just bend it over a Bunsen burner, you see. And, that's just about what I did! And then, uh, I guess I either had had an exhibition or something like that, and some of my string compositions—it was a new thing, so one of the advertising agencies got interested in using them as backgrounds, and uh, so, that was—it gave me $1,500. So naturally, I have $1,500, I blow it, and what do I blow it on? I blow it on going to find out about glassmaking, you see. So I studied glassmaking in [laughs] England in about 1950, you see.

Now, uh, I was going there, fool that we are, you know—[they laugh]—the world you—[inaudible]—you know. So—here was—I went to England and I studied at the Starbrid [ph] School of Arts and Crafts, and, I had only $1,500 so I could only stay that long until my money ran out. Now, of course, uh, the costs of things had [laughs] gone up, and so, I could only stay a couple of—I think it was I stayed a semester so, but at least I found out. I went to glass factories, and I learned, and then I was dissatisfied because the English are very methodical, and they're, they're very, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: I have seen uh, the most beautiful hands on an English glassblower. A man was in his 70s, and he had the longest fingers, that have the most supple—because they were, they were a dancer's hand, you know, an oriental dancer's hand, let's say. But the way he moved that iron back and forth, you know, and, it was interesting because I went—I flew down to Italy uh, after I'd been in England, but to end this about the glassmaker: He was uh, making by hand goblets with a stem and a foot, and these were totally hand-blown, hand-cut, I mean uh, cut off by hand, everything was measured by hand, everything was done by hand, and from his assistant took the finished goblet from his iron and weighed it. It weighed to the exact ounce every single time, and you could watch that man do that, and that, to my mind, was true perfection. And they were beautiful shapes, as well, classic, but beautiful.

So, from this cleanly, measured, reasoned atmosphere, I flew down to [laughs] Italy to go to Milano, and again as I said before, [laughs] nothing stops me. I couldn't speak [laughs] Italian worth a darn, but I had studied enough with Berlitz. So, I went out there, and I got in to see uh, glassmaking by Banini [ph], and Banini is a master glassmaker. He's all, you know, what—everything that—the British people weren't. The only reason I went to England to study glassmaking was that I had written to every other country and they'd address me, "Dear Mr. So and So, it is not possible. You should begin as an apprentice. So and So." And it's all—you know. So, I canvassed all of Europe for a glassmaking school and the only place that had a school for apprentices was England, and it—the only reason they had a school was that the young men were not going into glassmaking, so the glassmakers of the area had gotten together and given incentives for, for uh, boys to train as glassmakers. So, that's why I went there. Well, of course, I was in my 30s by that time, and these boys were teenaged boys, you see, and of course they could hardly wait to get me aside and ask me all about the movie stars. [They laugh.]

But anyway, when I went down to Italy and saw the inside of one of their glassmakers, here were these—but now, in England, they fired their furnaces by coal, and it was all very circumspect and out of the way, and no

possible contamination. [Laughs.] It was a madhouse [laughs] in this, uh, Banini place, because what would happen would—people would—it was a center—the uh, the glassmaking furnaces were right out, were around, and they had various openings in them, and with the pots already hot with glass, and they had people running around like crazy. It was messy. There was dirt on the floor, and right in the middle of all this activity of making the object, you see, the—a man would come rushing in with a load of great, big hunks of wood from Yugoslavia, [laughs] that they were firing it by wood, you see. And, and, I can remember seeing this man coming by and all this clutter; it was just as if it was the biggest traffic jam you ever saw. Here was a man making a delicate little fish, when putting a tail on it, you know, [laughs] and I—well, of course, the pizzazz was in Italy as it is in the—you know, in many other fields.

But anyway, I couldn't really—you see, number one, I never accepted the fact that I was a woman and therefore I could not do anything. You see? I never accepted that fact. I was an artist and I was interested, so damn it, I was finding out, and I didn't care what anybody had to say about it. You see? And that's exactly the way it turned out, you know, that I got a lot of—you see, I felt that there was uh—essentially as an educator, I felt that there was a lack of communication between the juice of what makes up art, and the teachers who were teaching it, and I could've had a clue when I realized that, you know, you only had to have 130-some or [1]40 hours of uh, practical work to become a teacher, you know, in order to get a teaching degree. Whereas, I'd had 400 plus extra things, and that was in college, you see. But the thing was that the people who could—who should be alive and full of uh, new ideas and "let's try it" and this and that, were not, and so how—if they can't play, how can they teach children? If they don't explore, how can they capture an exploratory mind? You know? So, I mean that was, you know, my basic philosophy on this. Well, I didn't get very far in the glass industry, as you can well see—[they laugh]—however, I learned a lot. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, I just want to talk about Bertha Schaefer for just a couple of minutes. Uh, her gallery has represented you for quite a while now, 20-some years.

SUE FULLER: Twenty-five.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Twenty-five years. Um, did the—did they do a good job as a dealer for you, I mean in exhibitions and sending things around and selling things?

SUE FULLER: Yeah. Bertha was great. Bertha was a very difficult personality to get along with, and the reason for this was that she was an extremely busy woman. In other words, she had come into the art gallery business, sort of backed into it, because she was really truly a decorator, and she had a marvelous sense of color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And furniture designer, and everything.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, everything, like that. Now, there was a great movement in the '40s of uh—it was the opening up that the decorator shouldn't be on—solely interested in period furniture and selling antiques, and that type of thing, but that you—they should recognize the artists in their own uh, time, and so this was what Bertha Schaefer espoused. She espoused this cause of representing American art, you see, and, she really tried to sell her clients unknown American artists. And of course, she also tried to sell them known ones, which she had access to, you see. But, the thing was this: there was a noble idea, and I think the reason I stuck with Bertha was that essentially, she came out for American art, you see, and she came out for living American artists, and that requires a commitment. She could have made much more money doing the other thing. Well, no gallery business is all that profitable, and uh, so, she would have these shows, but she'd also have to hustle with the decorator, and she kept in business pr—because she had two things to do, I'm sure. Now, as I said, my type of work was really not in, [laughs] and it took somebody with that type of, of you know, overdrive in order to really—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, it—

SUE FULLER: —take it up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —it's fascinating to, to think that you know, you started having one-man, one-person, one-woman, however you want to say it, exhibitions with her, in, in 1952, which was—you know, these were now the great days of Abstract Expressionism with throwing paint around and all this, and you're doing all these nice, cool, refined things, you know.

SUE FULLER: Right. Well, now—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What—you know, what kind of reaction did you get? Did the people say, "Yeah, what are you doing?" [They laugh.]

SUE FULLER: Well, uh, I don't think I paid much attention to what people said. I mean, I'm sure that as a young woman, I was terribly sensitive and everything like that, I'm sure of it, but the, but the fact was that I had an

overdrive, and if it didn't go that way—[they laugh]—you know, I had had enough experience in enough various fields in this and that, and also in education, to know that there certainly was something, just as in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, you know. They could not see the modern art that was shown in the '20s. They were still scoffing at it, they were writing nothing for about it, and that even as a young person, this was seeping into me, so that I knew this background, I knew that I was on a right uh, tack, and if I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you just kept going no matter what happened.

SUE FULLER: I just kept going no matter what happened. The other thing was that, I told you that Ad Reinhardt came to my—my show, and Ad Reinhardt fooled around with the group, you know. I mean, they'd go and they'd blast off. To tell you the truth, I had it up to hear listening to all—look, I had to listen to the etchers at their council meetings. I had to listen to the educators at the Committee on Art Education at Museum of Modern Art. I had to listen [laughs] to, to lectures. I listened to everything. I was tired of listening, and I didn't want—I didn't give a damn what any other artist said at that point. I wanted to find out what I had to say, you see? And if my—what I had to say, and my whole—look, that impact of—for instance, just like a musician has to be exposed to, to very good musicians, I have been exposed to three scholars, each in their own way: Hofmann, Albers, and Hayter. Now that can't hit you, and you'll be a milquetoast to go along with anything, because they all—they [laughs] don't agree! You see. So, the thing is this, what it does is give you—it gives you balance. It gives you your own balance because you find your own balance, you see. So what ha—what, what do I care if it's Abstract Expressionism from here to there? I never joined the Abstract Artists in America. I never joined the American Wom—National Women's thing. I never joined [laughs] many of those things because I did not feel there was a need to, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From your point of view.

SUE FULLER: From my point of view, you see. And the—I was more interested in sifting what was going on, and even so, I could ignore a lot of it, you see. Now, uh, the funny thing about it was that I, in the '50s, I went to Japan, and when I came back from Japan, I understood Jackson Pollock. But why? Why was that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, why?

SUE FULLER: It was because I had gotten turned on by Japanese calligraphy when I was there. In other words, the painting, although I came in on the ship and when I saw the harbor, I could only think, Hiroshige [laughs] you see? I saw Japan through the eyes of Hiroshige, but I've—always I have seen any place that anybody's painted through the eyes of their greatest thing. When I was in England studying glassmaking, I saw Constable. I was in the Midlands, you see. I saw those skies just as Constable would catch them, you see. And so when I got to Japan, it was not Hiroshige; it was not the printmakers. What turned me on? When I went to one of the temples and I saw calligraphy, [laughs] honest to God, gutsy, beautiful calligraphy for the first time, that was it, and although I was in circumstances where it was not terribly easy for me to uh, really find who I wanted to talk to in Japan, because I didn't speak the language, eventually, I got to study with a man whose work I had admired, you see, and he was good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

SUE FULLER: Uh, Terawo Tokuno [ph], and uh, he, uh—I went to his uh, studio, and I had, had studied haiku. This was at the end of my trip to Japan. I had studied haiku in translation, you see, because I'm a literary kind of person in, in love, you know, the love of words and images and things like that, and so, uh, I studied with this man who was more advanced than many of the calligraphers in Japan. They have a classical as well as a free form, and he was one of the free-form people. You see? And uh, I went with the—with a woman who was studying to improve her handwriting, because you know that the higher up in so—in Japanese society you are, the more you have to have the graces that become that position in society. So her handwriting had to reflect—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —her status.

SUE FULLER: —her status, you see? In other words—and I think this is a great system! Wouldn't it be great if that would hit the United States? Can you imagine somebody who had uh, you know, president of the U.S. Steel or something, going one hour to his master calligraphy to study—to practice calligraphy with his master? Can you imagine what that would do to this country? Well, it was—[inaudible]—[they laugh]—well anyway. So that—so it was the calligraphy, and for instance, the kind I was doing was, you get down on your knees on the floor, and it was a long strip of paper, and because I was an artist, this was easy for me because it's a brush. I knew brush techniques. And, I was there utilizing all this part of my body. Now, I'd been taught watercolor from my wrist to my elbow, English watercolor style, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tickle, tickle, tickle. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: Tickle, [laughs] tickle, tickle. All right, so, here was—I was, I was using all of my body say from you

know uh, on the—[inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: —adjunct of a brush. But when I came back and saw Jackson Pollock, he had used the whole span of his body, and the hell with the brush. You see? He had become—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —did the whole thing.

SUE FULLER: —the brush. You see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, th—

[END OF TRACK.]

SUE FULLER: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side six. How did you come to go to Japan in the first place?

SUE FULLER: Well, um, the early ’50s was a very difficult time, because as I said, I was into all these organizations, and the organizations were having the jitters [laughs] because of the McCarthy thing, and I’m sure that the McCarthy thing sideswiped me. [Laughs] but anyway, what—because I was—I’m a liberal-minded person, uh, but very, you know, convictions along these lines, so that I’m sure that it must’ve taken place. Well, it became a very disturbing time, and another thing is that if you do not have a steady job, it’s harder, because for instance, I was yanked back and forth. I did a visiting artist stint at Minnesota. I did a visiting artist stint at the University of Georgia, um, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was one place after another.

SUE FULLER: —one place after another, and uh, trying to keep three places going, it was a terrible financial thing. So I finally moved into my studio in Brooklyn because I couldn’t afford to pay rent three places, which was an apartment, my studio, and the place where I was going to teach, you see. I mean, that’s a dreadful thing, so that whatever advantage you have in being a guest artist—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —that’s just all gone.

SUE FULLER: —was wiped out—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paid the rent.

SUE FULLER: —you see. And so, why should I, you know, uh, take this type of thing? And uh, it was an extremely disturbing thing. Well, years ago, when I first got out of college, I was—oh, I was absolutely sold on the idea of getting to Japan, and I wrote and I tri—even tried to get a job with a man who had worked for Frank Lloyd Wright, you see, in his architectural office. Well I was green, I—you know, why should he take me on? And later I met the guy, [laughs] you know, so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? [Laughs.] Happens, comes around!

SUE FULLER: I know. But anyway, what happened was that I had spoken to my Japanese friend, who lives in this country, and um, I had said how much I wanted to go to Japan because, you know, I was really sold on the place before I went, you see. And um so, it just happened that after the war, things opened up, and in 1954, I believe, or ’53. I can’t remember. Oh, ’54 I guess, ’54, I was in Japan. I went with them, with my Japanese friends, and uh, there was the mother, and the—my friend and her husband, and they were concerned because they wanted somebody to share a stateroom with their mother. They didn’t want to, you know, have her rattling around. So, I was elected. Since I was so willing to go, they said, “Why don’t you come along?” So, exact—that’s exactly what I did. I got out of an extremely uh, convulsive time for me personally and for the period. The period was one of seething fear, and, I was just picked up and put in heaven out of that atmosphere. I sold my studio, and took the money from the sale of the studio and went to Japan, and I was there for six months as the guest of my Japanese friends. Now, what that meant was that I stayed in their home as a guest, but I paid all my traveling and, and all that sort of thing myself, and I paid my own passage over and back. But, I can’t tell you what a big delightful gift that was, because they—I was part of their family, and it made all the difference in the world, because I was exposed to a side of Japanese life, among their friends, that I would never, never, never, as an individual, have encountered. And, I had the most beautiful time there in the whole world, and I spent a month up in the—when I got so that I just couldn’t stand having people around me, because after all, I live alone, and I can adapt to a family situation, and it’s not the family situation, but it’s just the fact that an artist requires peace, quiet, and un-interruption.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Their own space, yeah.

SUE FULLER: And you see, the—the thing that happens with an artist in Japan is that to be an artist or a teacher is of the most beautiful kind of status you could have, because a teacher is respected and honored. An artist is respected and honored. In other words, they, the whole society, values two basic things, you see? Believe me, I never felt so much calm in my life. You know? To be loved abstractly for what you are, and not looked on, "Oh, he's an artist," you know, or "Forget it, she's a—she's a kook; she's an artist," you know. You see? There was none of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they know—

SUE FULLER: They always wanted to see what was I doing, you see, and of course, I didn't have any place to work, [laughs] so I got myself a big piece of board, and put it on my bed, and, and when I wanted to work, I'd put it on my bed, and I'd put it underneath my bed when I—[they laugh]—when the family wa—was, you know. But they were, they were just darling to me. They couldn't have been nicer, and all their friends. They included me on things which should have been just the personal family thing, and at first, they tried to make me feel at home by translating the conversations at the table, but I said to Yuri, I said, "Forget it. Look, it's just enough for me to be along. Forget I'm even here." And, and of course as I said before, I felt everything. I didn't have to talk. I didn't have to know the chit-chat that was going on, and to tell you the truth, I was glad I couldn't read a single sign, because the signs took on a magnificent character, and I don't know what they said, but that was it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a great visual experience!

SUE FULLER: [Laughs.] That's right. So, what I did was to, I made a lot of collages in Japan, and uh, for instance, a little thing like the meat they—Yuri would call up and order meat from the—from the butcher, and it would come to the house in a little, [laughs] in a bamboo leaf tied with raffia, and if you ordered a chicken, it would be all de-boned, you see. So you got this nice neat little package, but the bamboo leaf itself was so gorgeous, you know, and the things, all kinds of things, you know. Uh, Japan was a textural delight, [laughs] and—and of course, the love of the stone is what comes through to you, and everything like that. So, all this uh, built up so in me that my friend—I said to my friend, finally I said, "I can't be social anymore." I said, "Please, I've got to get away by myself," and so, they solved that one. They got—uh they—some friends had—were leaving their country place to come down. The children had to go in school, so they had a vacant little cottage up in the mountains. So I had this cottage in the mountains by myself for a whole, you know, month or better. And I couldn't speak any language, but I never felt alone in my life, [laughs] you know I mean all this sort of thing. I really felt just as though I had always lived there, and then the funny thing was that uh, the—in the family, as people would come and visit, they'd speak of their native place. And so I decided that Karuizawa was my native place. [They laugh.] And uh, and it was great because I really was getting into old Japan, you know. The Japan I saw was not the jazzy Japan; I couldn't care less about that. But that I really took the trouble to go to every single temple that I could get into, and see as much as I could, and I just loved it. And uh, I had a terrific time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, wh—I want to go back to the work again, because we come to the beginning of the use of plastic—[inaudible]—and the—you know, all of that kind of thing.

SUE FULLER: Well, now—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did it begin?

SUE FULLER: Uh, you see, plastic was used by the Museum of Modern Art to uh, to clothe its—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —between some things, right.

SUE FULLER: —its uh, traveling exhibitions in there—in the '40s. Well now plastic was not all that old, you know, in the '40s, and when I uh got to Brooklyn, I was in a little hardware store down there and I tripped over [laughs] a window screen that had a thread. I was very thread-oriented still, you see, and, it had a plastic—it was made of plastic. They had used plastic thread to make the screen, and the little hardware man had pointed it—uh, you know, had—I said, "What's this?" You know, because I had to have screens for my house, and it was a plastic thread. So I traced down that plastic thread, and I think it was put out by Chicopee Mills, but it was the first use of plastic as a thread, and then eventually what happened with the plastic thread was that it became—it usually was used for seat covers, on automobiles and things like that. So I finally got to that, and the reason I left all my linens and cottons and these wild colors that I had used before was that it uh—became apparent that these things would fade, so I thought that so—and they would also sag, you see, if they were—it was put in a humid place, the threads would sag, and they'd tighten up again, but I decided to take some of these variables away from it. And uh—and to a certain extent, the business of—you see, when I saw these pieces even in the '40s sitting around my studio, they were transparent. You could see them from either side, you see. You could see through them.

Well, as you know, we were not that far advanced in the art world at the time that you could show anything like that, so I always put a backing in it and hung it as a painting because it fit a category. You had to fit categories at that time, and you submitted to an exhibition, you submitted in paintings or sculpture, you see. And, it did—things weren't all that, you know, liberated. So, uh, I was—I started working with plastic thread to get rid of the shrinkage, or expansion factor, the moisture absorption, and the—and then I found that I couldn't use certain types of things together for the simple reason they had a different shrink ability, and so you'd get into all that. So what happened was that uh, I finally got some of this plastic thread, and I used it, and I can't remember when I first started using it, but it was in—during that early '50s, because you see, it would only, it would only be on the market, and I would always—an artist always gets the leftovers from the market, I mean, unless you want to buy a car load of it and go order it. [Laughs.]

So, um, the plastic threads were a delight to me, and I did quite a few of those things, and by the time I was uh—like for instance, I had a show of my prints at the Smithsonian, a one-man show, oh, early '40—uh, I mean late '40s or early '50s; I can't recall exactly. I also had a show at the Corcoran of my string compositions, collages, and prints, I think—no, I guess no collages, just prints. Now, when I came back from Japan I had a show of my uh—I left out the prints; I had collages and watercolors—from a—uh, completely different watercolors than I had ever done before, because of the enlargement of my vocabulary in brushes, you see, and in free—a country that writes with a brush, knows about brushes, believe me. So that's the kind of thing I did, but my string compositions were uh, getting into plastic threads.

And about that time, uh, in the early '50s, I also found out I was no good as a carpenter, and let's do it right, and let's get somebody that knows. So I went down to—I used to—I would experiment trying to make up frames, you see, in metal and things like that. And finally, uh, I asked the, the man—Patterson's Hardware Store on Park Row. It was a great place. It's out of business now, but I asked a man there if he knew anybody who could do something for me in metal. And of course, by that time, the guys were coming back from the service, and they were available again, so, I went to a little machinist, and I said, "I'm an artist. I want a frame made up." So this was a new one for him, but he gave it a try, and of course, I experimented in the design of the thing, and uh, I would take a flyer, I paid $15 to have a whole bunch of wire crimped to make little things like hooks on the back of a dress, you know, and I thought that would work. And then I was trying to get an alternative to my pegs, you see, and uh, so, finally I went back to the pegs but had it made in metal, and from that time on, this man has been my machinist. He has made my frames—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was he?

SUE FULLER: —to my specification. What was his—Matheson [ph] Tool Company. Now, he was down on Fulton Street in the early days, and Fulton Street was demolished for the Twin Towers, and so he had to move, so he's now on 23rd Street. But uh, he's a beautiful machinist. He does things preci—he can go to oh, oh, point one, da, da accuracy, you see, so. Uh, then, and so, between the two of us, he would—I would ask him what was possible, and then I'd try to design within it, and then we'd pick the bugs out of it, and in the making, and so, it eventually became that, that he made my frames to my specifications, and what I did was to take stock molding, stock uh, piece—pieces that are—lengths that are available, and utilize them in the design of a frame. And I got transparent frames that way. Well, before this was uh, realized that I had a transparent frame, I had submitted to one of the Whitney shows, um—I think they had a selection of American artists, and every artist was to have five pieces. Well, I had done a big piece which was uh, 48 by 72, and it was glazed on both sides, and I'd made the frame, you see. And the Whitney told me that they couldn't make an exception for an installation of any individual, you know, special installation for an individual's piece in a group show of that sort, so I had to glaze it so that it would fit on the wall again, you see. Uh, but, when anybody says no, it's always yes to me. [They laugh.]

So, [laughs] so, I did continue, and I did develop these uh, transparent frames. Uh, but the Whit—I, I began to get people interested in my string constructions rather than in my prints, you see. First, I rode away—I had a whole career in printmaking by the time I'd gotten a yes from a gallery, and that was in the end of the '40s, you see. And then, uh, the Museum of Modern Art, Andrew Ritchie, put together uh, a show called *Abstract Art in America*, and he chose one of my string compositions which I'd made the frame on, and then, and had done this uh, a composition. And uh, later on, years later, Harvey Arneson said, "I was looking over that catalogue," he said, "and do you know that there are only 12 totally abstract artists in that sh—represented, uh, you know, pieces represented in that show?" And I said no, you know, because people were still abstracting from nature, you know, and doing things like that, and this was abstract art, uh—well abstract art has many facets, but he said that mine was the only one that, you know, I mean, mine was one of 12 that were totally abstract. Well, I don't think of things like this. Let somebody else think of it, you see, [laughs] so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you know, I, I remember now seeing some plastic pieces that are not the flat as that one; they're much more three-dimensional in the cubes. How did they come about?

SUE FULLER: Well, now the problem with that was, you see, with this business of studying glassmaking: All

right, so, my brother had a glass, uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —a—[inaudible]—table.

SUE FULLER: —marble, marble, marble, that had little threads in it. Well of course, this was Latticino glass. This was one of the things I looked up in Italy, you see. This was one of the things I was on a search for, because I would translate my threads into glass then, says I, not knowing a thing about it. So that's why I went and found out about the glassmaking, you see? It was to get it transparent, you see. And so, I eventually wrote to people and tried to find out about the uh, plastic industry, because number one, I was into plastic threads, I wanted to know more about it, but the plastic business was not all that great at that time, you see. I finally found a man; I made contact with a man who had, he had been a big shot in uh, well, one of the enormous companies, and he knew the whole history of the glassma—uh, plastic business. And he said, "The first piece of transparent plastic that we ever made was in nine—in the 1930s," and he said, "Here it is," and he showed me an ashtray that was absolutely totally brown. [They laugh.] And so this was it. In other words, they had gotten a transparent uh—they had gotten a transparent thing, but it—but they had no way of controlling it from turning brown within two years, you see. And this was also—well, I learned later—what was going to happen to some of the threads that I used to—early plastic threads, you see.

So—uh, I didn't know this until much later, and I went to a symposium that the—I think the Whitney and the Museum of Modern Art put on—and they were talking about—they'd had an aw—they'd bought a lot of pieces; the museums had bought a lot of pieces, and they were falling apart, you see, of modern artists, you see, so that the workmanship in unconventional materials is a hazard to a museum. And so they were trying to get people interested in uh, permanent palettes in this, and they were talking mostly of paint and the man who was talking was speaking of plastic paint, and talking about this and that. Well, I sat through the bit on the paint because I was not wading around in paint; my problem was something else again. So I wrote to him, and uh, this was a physicist at uh, Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh, turns out. And uh, he has done work on the Old Masters, you know, or restoring, by analyzing the pigments and things like that, so he really knows what he's doing. And I said, "This may sound pretty far out of your field," as I wrote to him, and he sa—uh, I said, "but my problem is that I'm a modern artist and I am using plastic, and I am using it in this particular way." And I said, "I use certain kinds of threads, you see." And so, he agreed that this was an interesting project, so, but I just made up a series of strips of uh, the colors that I was using, and he put them through what they call a fadeometer, and he got a countdown for me so that I found a permanent palette of threads that I could use, whose colors were fast.

Now, it was—remember, I was in the time when people didn't worry about this sort of thing, [laughs] you see, so that what it did was to restrict my uh, palette considerably. And the next thing was that uh—the search to get this thing transparent, it's almost—it's parallel. You know, you do a lot of things at once, and they do run parallel, so that what happened was that uh, I wanted to get a piece of transparent plastic, and I wanted my thread to be seen through it, you see, not glazed, but embedded, you know, scrinched. They can make uh—they were making embedded little junk pieces that you could buy in any junk store, uh, of something inside a piece of plastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, coins and—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: Yeah right, that's it. And flowers too. And, and so, I thought this is the thing I should be getting into, so I started writing around, and the biggest piece that they could make when I started writing, uh, they—it was a piece about two inches by two inches, you see, and about an inch thick, that was it, see, and I said, "I want them 30—24 by 36, [laughs] and I want them an inch and a half," you know, or something like that, and of course, they didn't have it. It wasn't possible at the time, you see. So, I just fiddled along and I made my metal frames and glazed them, so that they would become to intent. Well, so, it wasn't until much later in the development of the plastic industry that they finally found stabilizers which they could put into their batch, to make the—it transparent stable, you see, and also they started fooling around with ultraviolet rays and um, you know, getting things so that they—it would block the ultraviolet rays, which has a great fading capacity.

But all this type of thing you see shows the broad range that—of subjects that an artist, if they're going to be an artist, gets into. In other words, if I were giving advice to a high school student who wanted to be an artist, I'd say, "Take every trade you can; learn to be a good—uh, learn to be a good, uh, user of your hands in anything that is offered. Don't care what it is. If you can't find a future use for it, forget it." I never had a job that I didn't learn something in, you see, but I would say, "My gosh, if you only had a reason for taking chemistry." I mean, you avoided it like the plague, you know? But, it would be an edge—[inaudible]—and the, the thing that I wrote to Carnegie Tech, I remember at one time, was that I wished that—that—that my uh, technical education, and I mean really technical, like about pigments and things like that, they gave you—the artists who taught you always shared their know-how about using uh, materials and things like that. But for a technical school, that gave us plenty of theory, color theory. I know Munsell color theory backwards and forwards, and thanks to Albers, I know as well Osterwald. You see? But, you need more than that. Uh, you need, to a certain extent, to be, uh, I will not say a great chemist—[laughs] you don't. But what you need to know is how to get information

which you will have to know about, if it's to help you in your career. You see? And that's the kind of a course, a chemistry course, you need, you see? And to a certain extent, I feel that the Bauhaus, in that day, felt these very needs, and that's why they were getting down to, uh, actually using the threads and things like that, and they felt that there was a great technical um, bit coming, and that you should ride it, not fight it. You know? And uh, I think that's what uh—you know, because I had to learn chemical [laughs] terms—[inaudible]—in other words, I read things like the uh—I belong to the Plastic Engineers, you see? I'm no more an engineer than the man in the moon, but my basis for joining the Society of Plastic Engineers was that I needed to, to get at their literature so that I could dig out facts relevant to my business, but of course, uh, to my use of what they produced, you see. And what happens is, it's enormously complicated if you do not have an engineering training, you see. And not that I'd ever want to be uh, a plastic engineer, you see? What I'd like to be is just an artist who knew what he was doing! [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, one, one thing that this all leads to is, uh, not so long ago, 1969, you got a patent on—

SUE FULLER: —plastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —plastic. How, how long did that take, and what exactly—

SUE FULLER: Well, what pr—what—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —leads up to that?

SUE FULLER: What leads up to that? [Laughs.] I tell you, no artist in the entire world is more aware of how things can be slipped right out from under you. You see? Now, to tell you the truth, there—if you deal with industry, you're also dealing with business. Business thinks different from art. An artist is a learner, and a sharer. Business is a grabber and an exploiter, and never the twain shall meet. You know? And it was in dealing with this aspect, the grabbing, the exploiting aspect, which I tried to protect myself. Now, I think no business organization, no group of artists alone will solve the problem of the pilfering that goes on for an artist, you know. And my first experience in the business world was, I'd take a beautiful portfolio in, and they'd say, "Sorry, no," and a couple of weeks later, it's in their line, you see. They'd swipe the ideas right out from under you. The—one guy even went so far as to—I took him 12—I was trying to make a buck and you know, paying my rents, and my taxes, and whatever, [laughs] and so what happened was that I took a whole series of designs for scarves to a man, and he was gracious enough to buy a couple. All right. He bought two of my designs. He swiped 10. [Laughs.]

I mean, it's a whole era, you see? I mean, the same thing happens in any of those fields, you see. So when I was about to get—when I got involved with these plastic people—soon I was getting these vibes of, somebody has an eye on something for some other reason, I might as well protect myself to the extent that I am capable of doing. So that's why I applied for a patent, so that it gives me clout to fight any of these encroachers on something which was a totally aesthetic consideration when I—when I put it together, this was not something which was—had anything to do with how much money you could make on it. It was an aesthetic thing, and the aesthetics of it were, all right: uh, transparency, translucency. I have lived through Park Avenue from being, between say, Grand Central and 57th Street, Park Avenue was nothing but brick buildings and, and big stone facades. The sculpture that was done was big sculpture hunks, dreadful, opaque, shutting people out, and from 57—from uh, Grand Central to 57th Street now, the buildings are nothing but glass, transparent. They welcome you in. Even the banks show you where their vault is, you see?

Now. That, I attribute to, well, Mies van der Rohe and all the, you know, Bauhaus—Gropius and everybody like that, the international—on that. But of course, I didn't go into that. I had it inside me from another angle. It was the visual bit of seeing these things in the '40s sitting around my studio. Look, Calder said, and bless Calder, you know, he—I don't know that he said it, but he said it graphically to me, when he took the lead out of the bloody sculpture. In other words, sculpture does not have to be something that weighs 10 million tons and is oppressive. Calder said to me, by his work: look at the aspen tree. You see? Calder said: there's air; there's movement; there's space. And to me, that took the, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the lump.

SUE FULLER: —the lump, forget it. You know, jettison it; take it out; throw it out. You see. And so, I was into this thread bit, and it's transparent. You can see through things, you see? We see through things with a microscope, with these photo microscopes, you know, I mean these, these electronic ones. My gosh, you can get right down to anything you want, or right out to anything with the space things. And it's interesting to me that the time of the first launching of the astronauts, I did an octahedron, which had a simulated—uh, I don't know. It just reminds you now—now this is retrospective. This is, this is a retrospective literary literazation [ph] —literalization—all right, you make it up—of what I did, after the fact, you see? Because when I did it, I didn't think a thing about it. But it's interesting that the very time that they were going to the moon, I had a little

space thing that was flying around in an octahedron. You see? Now, that thing was no—it's a piece of sculpture, but you see through it, you see, that the supports of what makes that form are not visible. You see? Now. Here is a weightless, no visible means of support thing, which is nearer, nearer, to the feeling of these things in magnetic fields and everything else. You see? In other words, the expression of an artist expands subconsciously, perhaps, to echo what is going on, and that's about all I could say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, to go back to the patent for a minute, what did you observe that people in industry were uh, fascinated with, the fact that you had enlarged the uh, this, you know, the laminations or the sizes, the —

SUE FULLER: No, it's just as in anything else. They're looking for a product. They're making a bunch of junk. They make their living making junk. Somebody comes along that does something that's not junk—it looks better, so why not rip them off? And they have, in certain, you know, ways. I had to learn a lot from those men in industry. They had to be good enough for me to leave my stuff with them, you see? I'd get in fights with them. They said, "Oh, forget it." She said, "We can't be bothered doing that kind of technical work." You know, they ruined a half a years' work for me, and when I call them up to tell them about it—I'm paying $750 for a batch of stuff which is unusable to me. I can't sell that stuff; I take a great loss, and I tell them so. They said—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: —"Well, we really don't want to be bothered doing this." So it's a question of—you've got to live with them. So I said to them, "I'll play ball with you if you'll play ball with me," and that's just about where we left it. Now the problem is that I tried to maintain good relationships with these people in industry, but they can't count on everybody that works for them. They can't count on uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —somebody way down the line.

SUE FULLER: —the, you know, and so, you're in a jungle. You're in a jungle, and everybody's out to rip off anything they can rip off. So should you worry about it? So should you shut up? So should you stop working? You know? Should you get ulcers? Forget it. You keep going, and if you come up with a great idea and you're ripped off, that's just too bad. You know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Proves how good it was. [Laughs.]

SUE FULLER: Well, maybe. [Laughs.] But the thing that happens is that uh—it was an attempt to deal with the business world, because artists are boobies. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's a different kind of activity. Um, have—now, for example, the one leaning against the wall, uh, with the light shining through it, is that something you do frequently, or is that just this?

SUE FULLER: Well, you see, this was the first format that my work took. In other words, I took a sheet of plastic and I tied threads around it, and I had it embedded. Now, what it does is to make a floating composition of threads in a transparent frame, you see. In other words, it's a flat plaque. Philip Johnson bought one when I first showed them out of my show in, I think it was 1965 or ['6]6—[inaudible]—I can't remember. I think it was '65. But anyway, you see, people began buying my—well the Metropolitan and the Whit—uh no, the Whitney was the first one, then the Metropolitan also bought my constructions that were on metal frames in 1955, that they—when I came back from Japan. It really got me my apartment, really, you know [laughs] and the thing is that it was a great boost. However, I still had problems trying to get jobs, you know, because I had spent my wad in Japan, and I wasn't established enough even with the boost of having something in the Met or in the Whitney, you see. Uh, but, Bertha was a—Bertha Schaefer, was a good scrounger for people, and if you had a possibility, she, she really did—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —track it down.

SUE FULLER: —she would really try to get people interested. And as I said before, I was never a pal of Bertha Schaefer's, but I admired her considerably. You know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, she's very difficult.

SUE FULLER: Well, so who isn't? She puts up with me, and I put up with her. [They laugh.] You know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Playing ball again.

SUE FULLER: [Laughs.] Playing ball again. I mean, it's a—what are you going to do? And so, I stayed with Bertha, although I felt—I chafed under the association, and uh, Paul Kramer [ph], her assistant, was always my intermediary. [Laughs.] Because—and the nice thing about Bertha was: You were the artist. You made the work, and she didn't tell you what to do. And you presented it, you showed it, and she would tell you if she

wasn't interested in something, and especially in the early days when, to tell you the truth, I was a beginning artist, and I wasn't all that good, in my batting average, you know. But, as I became more and more proficient and more demanding of myself, why then it became a better piece of work, you see. And uh—but, as I said before, I felt that I really had—I needed another—well, poor Bertha was probably an ill woman and I didn't know it, but I felt that I needed somebody. For instance, I had written to Anni Albers about 1955 or so, saying that I wanted a friend in strings. You see? I really did. I wanted to find out about threads and I knew a weaver would know, you see? And so she was real cute about it, and she wanted—so we could begin—[inaudible]—uh, friends in threads, you see. Well of course, she wrote a beautiful book, which was great.

Now, Albers had been a teacher of mine. Albers is a great man, because the—the fact with Albers is, he remembers his students. I mean, that's a lovely thing. And, big an artist as he became, if you write—and see, he was one person. Now remember, I didn't fool around with the Abstract Expressionists with the abstract artists' group or anything like that, because I'd had it up to here with organizations, you see? All right. So I had to be my own—on my own, but it's a lonely bit. The only person whose opinion I really valued was Albers. You see? So I'd ask him—he'd come to my one-man show, and this was—how many? The umpteenth, you see, that I was having. And I asked him for a crit. He came to my show finally in 1969. And it was no crit. He wanted to exchange—Anni let me know that he wanted to exchange a piece of work with me. And that was my big moment. Because, he saw my octahedron, and again, the little figure goes up to the head: you got a good idea there, kiddo, [laughs] you know. And he exchanged a piece, and I was more than pleased. [Laughs.] So, that was my big moment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, one of the things that, that we haven't uh, talked about, a point of—have you ever developed any theories about your work or any abstract ideas about it, or, or don't you think in those terms about uh, the work as it progresses, or go back and review it in any way, or is it just a kind of ongoing, uh—

SUE FULLER: I think it's an ongoing thing. I think, for instance, that as you're forced into various uh—as you're forced—for instance, like, I had to know about the threads, so I'd get into a physicist. What's a physicist got to do with art? You know? And this and that, you know, but you have to get into that. So I'd get interested in these engineers, and then these electronic engineers come along and you find out how many new ways there are to see and all that, you know, so that it's a very exciting time. And so then, you are always reviewing your work. You are, for instance, you're searching and finding new types of things to get into, is what it amounts to, you see, and it's not that so much that the format of your work changes. I doubt it, if it does, because once you're in depth into something—like for instance, I had a very good career in printmaking, you see. But printmaking was such physical hard work, and even though I had my—you know, I'd gotten—gone over and seen how they plate—they print big steel engravings, and they had a huge machine and these were husky men that had sense enough to get a huge machine to run their press, you see. So, what happened [laughs] was that—and that was another silly thing that happened to me, because I bought a press, a piece of junk, you know, it was, nobody was doing etchings, you know, especially in the early '40s, you see. Presses were scarcer to find that anything, you know. So, I finally got a press from, oh, something—as I said, this company that had printed these big old, steel engravings, and this was a press with a big wheel on it you know, and you always see that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

SUE FULLER: —logo of the Society of American Etchers with the guy—*rrrrn*—with his foot and everything. I'll tell you what happened with me. I bought the press for something like $500, or maybe $300. I can't remember, but anyway, it was a lot of money for me at the time, so I bought it, and I then went to a guy who was a mechanic, and he knew about presses, and he probably worked in the printing industry, you know, for real, you know, regular work-a-day printing type thing. And [laughs] I said to him, "I want this thing mechanized." And he came over; he took a look at this thing and he says—he was chewing on a cigar and he says, "You know lady," he says, "if you would say to me, 'Chris, I got a press here,'" he says, "I'd even charge you to take that piece of junk away." [They laugh.] And I said to him, "All right, so that's your point of view," I said, "but the—my point of view, this thing is positively solid gold, and I want it to run on a motor so I don't have to turn that big wheel," because when I'd get a plate in there, the press, the pressure adjusted, and I started to pull—if I ran and jumped on it, I couldn't move the wheel. You know, so I mechanized, and he gave me a lovely little stop-start thing that was like a little streetcar. Remember how the streetcars used to go this way and then that way? [Laughs.] And that was how it stopped and started, and he put a reducing gear on it so it wouldn't fly out the window and knock over [laughs] everything so, it was, it was a good press, and it really stood me in good stead, and as I said, I got my Guggenheim, and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you know, one of the things uh, that's interesting is, you've talked about Albers, and the various color systems, and, when you work on a piece like, say the one back there as just an example, um, do you plan the colors ahead of time, or do you just arbitrarily—

SUE FULLER: No. I told you that, that as I got into these things—all right, number one, I had to go to the physicist to get my—I had to get my—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —get your palette.

SUE FULLER: —palette, you see, then the thing is this: you have to find that. You have to find that thing; you have to—and when you've found it, you select a palette from permanent threads, you see. Now, those same threads that will be permanent in a piece on the wall may be absolutely the wrong thing when you embed them in plastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does that change the color much?

SUE FULLER: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It does.

SUE FULLER: It does. Now, see, it's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm, so it's another little factor.

SUE FULLER: —this is all I had to learn, you see. I had to learn, and what I would do was, I got so that I was—I would make little test pieces and send them up, if I had new thread that was—you know. And when I got into this business of embedding plastics, then I also sent, I sent—a very great—this was a good step, too. I sent a set of threads that I was going to use in my plastic things. I made two sets. I embedded one in plastic, and I put the others just uh, so they'd be exposed without the protection of plastic. Now, in the testing field, a factor of 80, as I understand it, and this would have to be—if anybody was doing any research on this, they'd have to talk to the physicists, rather than to me. However, the factor of 80 in uh, sound-proof, boil-proof, that type of criterion which is in the commercial world, that was considered good, you see. But what I wanted was not good. I wanted better than good. Be good, make it the—practically impossible for it to fade, and then it's in. You see? So that actually what I began doing was uh, art. He took these strips, and he covered one half of the threads down each strip with—so that they would not receive the light, and then he exposed them, and he had say 500, a factor of 500—not 80, 500. Some of these threads would fade, you see. All right. When he embedded in plastic, these threads were going a thousand and better, and the problem was that there would be a surface rumbling thing—there would a surface burn—but the threads themselves would not be touched, you see. You see? Now the surface burn on the plastic would turn it slightly brown, but plastic can always be re-polished, you see. So, the thing that happened was that these pieces that he—that—in other words, my pieces, that are embedded, that are in color, are permanent beyond anybody's dreams.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For a long, long, long—[laughs]—

SUE FULLER: Yeah, you see? And it was, really truly, that—I have respect for the museums. I have respect for uh, you know, serious collection. After all, art is my life. I feel—like for instance, if I get down, I can go to the Met and I can look at one of my favorite objects and it'll bring me back. You see? Now what happens is, you get slapped around so much in society that we have to have places like the museums, you see? I have learned from the museums. I have enjoyed the museums. I am not fighting the museums. I couldn't care less whether the curator is in or out, or this or that. I don't care—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The institution goes on.

SUE FULLER: I don't care what's going on. I can remember when there was no Museum of Modern Art, and it was a big loss. So, therefore, I am one of those artists who, though I don't make an awful lot of money at my artwork, I believe in supporting worthy organizations, and I couldn't care less about infighting, outfighting, upside-down fighting, or any other thing. I am not against what is my lifeblood. I therefore support them to the tune of a contributing member when I can afford it. And of course, the Whitney, which is my favorite, favorite museum, they gave me a permanent pass because they now own several of my works. But, that is a great honor, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, uh, going to bring things up to date? Recently—[inaudible]—

SUE FULLER: Well, uh, Bertha Schaefer died in—I think '70, wasn't it, or '71, something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Thereabouts, yeah.

SUE FULLER: And I then went with the Chalette Gallery. Madeleine Lejwa and her husband had come down to my studio, and they were interested in my work, so I put—I had then transferred my work to the Chalette Gallery. Uh, now, I have been, in these past times, I mean in—since 1969 when I had my show at Bertha Schaefer Gallery, I had a movie made of that show by a young filmmaker, uh Maurice Amar, and he was really very in— intuitive about—he gets into your work. If he can get into your work, he's very—um, he's creative himself about the way he presents it, and he's a good filmmaker. He's a sensitive filmmaker, so I think he's a

good one for artists, you see? And he takes the trouble to get into your work. Well, he came down recently and has made another film of my work, and this time it's going to be a cassette.

Now, what I'd been working on was larger prismatic shapes. In other words, the octahedron, which I had worked—which I had in my—was really the beginning of the next phase, which was a series of prisms. And I got into these prisms, and they—and I found wonderful things that happened in a prismatic shape, and also with the inserts, it takes me a long time to thread an insert, a three-dimensional—insert for one of those tubular—they take the form of a shaft, in other words, uh—yeah, shaft. So, it—I then work in a tubular shape, [laughs] and if you don't think you have to really be an inventor of methods when you try to go back and forth in a tube, inside of a tube, you know, that's really—but what this gets into is, to a certain extent, although it was not conscious—remember the whole story broke about the men with their—uh, the biologists with their DNA. You see? All right, so you think in spirals. So I come up with spirals, except, it's not conscious. I'm not going to say, "Now I'm making DNA." No, that's not the way it works. It's in the air. It's also because I finally—you know, I have—I read in other fields than my own. My favorite magazine is not any of the art magazines. You know what it is? *Scientific American*. You see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: And all your books on mathematics up there.

SUE FULLER: And my books on mathematics, because I'm annoyed making mathematics. I cannot read—I cannot read a formula. I cannot do anything of that nature. In other words, my mathematics is totally visual. My feeling for mathematics is a spatial one, you see; it is not a numerical one. You see? Now, the reason I read in mathematics—is, that I enjoy being a peripheral viewer of a field. I don't have to know it, but I can feel it again. You see? So, I mean, this is about what sums up in, uh—as far as I'm concerned, I'm not a mathematician. I'm not into computers. I love what the kids can do in computers and things like that. In other words, computer art, uh, X-Y plotters and things like that, which I learned from the Institute of Electronic Engineers, I never saw one of those things before, you know, terrific, you see? And I think that somebody who is attuned to a computer—we have not yet had really truly computer art, but we may, and I say this because you throw—Jackson Pollock epitomized, to my mind, the idea of throwing out the brushes, [laughs] you see? All right. So maybe we'll throw out the whole mess, and we'll get down to something which will store knowledge and feed it back to us, but, it's got to be somebody who's sensitive to that. It cannot be just a rehash of what has been. I think the most asinine thing to do is to draw a picture of a canary bird on a computer. I mean, really! Ridiculous!

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know.

SUE FULLER: Yeah, I mean, that's asinine. But I have seen computer images, which are—just the way that the computer—uh, I mean the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —printout, yeah.

SUE FULLER: —printout, or for instance, just the view that you get as uh—where you can take a distortion which happens in the mechanism, and do something to it. You see? Or you can actually—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or then probably—

SUE FULLER: —plan it, but I'm still in the horse-and-buggy era, as far as an artist is concerned. Uh, I am not a computer person. I think you learn this. It's just as—I'm not a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the next generation.

SUE FULLER: It's the next generation. You see? It is not my bag, let's face it, as the kids say, because, I still am writing, thinking. I don't even type, that's how backward I am. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You'll have to end on that line.

[END OF INTERVIEW]