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Oral history interview with Elisabeth D.
Model, 1977 May 19

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Elisabeth Model on May 19, 1977. The interview took place in New York, NY, and was conducted by William McNaught for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for the transcription of this interview provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Women's Committee.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

WILLIAM MCNAUGHT: Today is Thursday, May 19, 1977. This is William McNaught talking to Elisabeth Model in New York City. I thought we'd start by your telling me something of your background: where you were born, your family, where you studied, and so on. And then after that background, we'll speak a bit about some of the well-known art world figures that you have known personally.

ELISABETH MODEL: Now shall I start, yes?

MR. MCNAUGHT: Yes.

MS. MODEL: I was born in Bayreuth by the chance that my mother was absolutely crazy about Wagner; so we lived there for quite a few years, and my first school years were there. But when I was 16, I mean my parents knew of course that I didn't want to study the piano, and they permitted me a few months in Munich, where I started with Walter Thor [German portrait painter, teacher].

Before I go there, I want to explain that when I was 12 I ran around the corner, and there I ran into the arms of a very old, gorgeous man who took my hand and said, "Where is your father?" And I said, "There in the neighborhood." We went there, and he turned out to be Michael Georg Conrad [German writer, critic], an intimate of the family Wagner. He was invited every year to their so-called proben [phonetic]. And he asked permission of my father whether I could go with him walking and talking, which my father gave. And it was a fantastic friendship, because I met quite a few wonderful people. The first, conductor [Hans] Richter who also took me by my hand and took me out.

But later, when I was studying in Munich and 16 years old, he sent me all the opera tickets; he was a critic. And one day he begged me to meet him up at Prinzregenten, for which I did. He couldn't sleep the whole night, because he wanted to tell me something. And when I came there, and he started to say that he was there in Tribtschen [Switzerland] when this happened with Nietzsche and Wagner and Cosima [Wagner], and I got very mad. And I said, "I don't want to hear a word about the Wagners," because I was just fed up with Wagner, hearing nothing but Wagner, Wagner. He said, "Don't do that. I must tell you this story about Nietzsche and Cosima." He would have gotten mad anyway, but she was one of the reasons, and I said, "I don't want to hear anything." And then he said the classical words, which came true in my case. He said, "We hate him at one time, but we all return to him," and that was really true. But I was ever so sad that I could not take -- it was so silly.

MR. MCNAUGHT: You missed the chance to learn the whole story?

MS. MODEL: I missed the chance, yes, and to --

MR. MCNAUGHT: And to record it?

MS. MODEL: -- and to record it, but I just didn't want to.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Sad.

MS. MODEL: But to come back to Thor, Walter Thor --

MR. MCNAUGHT: And how is Thor spelled?

MS. MODEL: T-h-o-r. It was -- he died when he was 42, and he was a drunk. He was drinking all the time, but he was a fantastic teacher, and he liked me and my work very much. So when I came one day -- when he came -- when I came to the studio at 8 o'clock, I found my most beautiful drawing destroyed by his enormous handwriting, on which he wrote: "Where were you when I was here, not in a café house?" And my drawing was -- had disappeared. When he came I had tears, and I said, "Why did you do it?" He said, "If you can't make that again, then it's not the real thing." It was the first lesson, but the second one he gave me, which I'll never forget

and could, when I one day said, "It was so terrible. I'm so sad, because I was in the Pinacothèque, and I saw the France house, and how he did it; it looks as if he did it in five minutes." And he said, "Child, to do that in five minutes -- it took his whole lifetime." And this is something I quote, too.

MR. MCNAUGHT: [Inaudible.]

MS. MODEL: Yeah, then I also met [Thomas] Mann when I was very young, through a friend. But he was the reason why I never wanted to meet Hermann Hesse personally. I always said, "I never want to meet anybody whose work I love because Mann was so funny and boring," and so this was the reason. But of course I had a great friendship with Hermann Hesse since my 18th year, and it lasted --

MR. MCNAUGHT: How did you first meet Hermann Hesse?

MS. MODEL: I didn't. A friend of mine who knew about him -- I loved for that first one novel, *Klingsor's Last Summer* [1920], which I still adore. Though, there are some of the things I don't anymore -- wrote to Hesse that he should give me a luxury edition, which was in front of that book; the luxury edition is to be had by the writer. But -- so he sent me one day a big package, and I don't know where it came from. And I opened it, and it was an unpublished novel by Hermann Hesse; it was *Innen Und Aussen*. Strangely enough, I got once this encyclopedia here in America of that this is my best, and Hermann Hesse had chosen that novel. And I still -- it's marvelous. It's sort of metaphysic, a forerunner of the *Steppenwolf* [1927].

MR. MCNAUGHT: [Inaudible.]

MS. MODEL: And ever since, he wrote to me. And my husband used to tease me, because I took off months sometimes not to write; I immediately got a response, and I got papers, and I got books. It was the strangest friendship.

One day he sent me his -- in Holland of course when I was married -- his so-called girlfriend whom he later married, Ninon, and I wasn't there. And he said, oh, he wanted so much that she meets me at least, you know. This was the strangest friendship. And on the day when they had just said that he was dead, I had already -- I had still gotten something from him and his wife, of course.

MR. MCNAUGHT: On the very day --

MS. MODEL: Yeah, on the very day.

MR. MCNAUGHT: -- that he died you had received a letter?

MS. MODEL: Yes, and his wife --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Marvelous.

MS. MODEL: -- sent me later an unpublished poem, which was the last one, and she wrote very charmingly to me. And when I then later asked his son, Heiner, I said, "Heiner, how come I got all those things? He must have had hundred thousands." And Ninon wrote to me he said, "My father had three lists." It was very interesting, yeah? He had a list for friends, and for people he wanted to get in touch with, and someone he was going to get; I don't know, but in any case I was on the number one list. So that's why --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Marvelous.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: Yeah, interesting thing about Hesse was that one day I got a marvelous watercolor, and I didn't know that he was also painting, but he was like so many, like Berlioz, like Hugo, a man of dual talents. And they were just beautiful. And I got a few. But then one day my husband asked him to send a few more, which he did. And then I got the most beautiful book, hand-written with poems and hand--illustrated. And I just -- of course the Nazis have it --

MR. MCNAUGHT: When was that done?

MS. MODEL: -- like all the other things. But this was so precious and so beautiful; I was just delighted. And so our friendship went on and on.

I was in -- I was in Switzerland; I didn't go there. I talked to him on the telephone. I didn't go. I just didn't--

MR. MCNAUGHT: Did you never meet him?

MS. MODEL: Never wanted to go there. It was very near. I just didn't want to. It was all my childhood charm, or so to say, with Thomas Mann. So that's one of the things.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: It's very important that I come back to something which leads me to sculpture. I never wanted to paint. And one day Thor came and said, "Now you are going to paint," and I said, "Oh, no." He said, "What? Don't want to paint?" "No," I said. He said, "You are the strangest child." In German he said, [inaudible], which means all women jump at paint. But I didn't want to.

MR. MCNAUGHT: How old were you at the time?

MS. MODEL: I was 16 at the time.

MR. MCNAUGHT: 16?

MS. MODEL: I ought to have known that this was leading to sculpture. I just didn't want to see color, but I painted. I made fairly good portraits. But my passion was always drawing, and that leads me to the sculpture. It was, in a way, Martha Sirkin [ph.] who gave me a push to do something. She was the artist in my family's earthenware factory and she begged me to pose for her -- in the nude, which I did -- the day she left to marry a pastor. She left clay; she left everything. That was all, and I was locked into the factory, forgot to eat. They looked for me everywhere. I had found the clay, and I made a figure. And suddenly the door -- knock on the door --

MR. MCNAUGHT: You were a sculptor?

MS. MODEL: I was a sculptor, but I didn't believe into myself. And then when I was back in Holland, I asked a woman sculptor who has been even here in America, Louise Beijerman: "What shall I do? I want to sculpt." She said, "Oh, you don't know what you're getting into, but go where you get clay, and put some iron bar up." So she gave me a few things. And I made a portrait of a girlfriend of mine who was ugly, but interesting. When it was finished, I still didn't know what to do. Well, then I called her again. And this was terribly important, because I had that plaster-caster come, and I was very curious to see that. And that was it, and I had forgotten about it.

So then one day I -- my husband called me up and said, "Come to Visht [ph.]. A Swiss lady wants to see *Old Dutch Classes* [ph.]." So I went there; it was a lovely woman. And there in the corner was a man standing, smoking; he came over when I smoked and gave me a light. And that art dealer, Visht said, "Oh, this is -- you'd liked his work so much." And he said to that man, "This is the young girl who made that portrait of me" -- I had made a portrait drawing -- and so we came together. It was Moissi Kogan [Sculptor]. And while we were talking I didn't say a word about me sculpturing or so --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Who was it?

MS. MODEL: -- the door -- Moissi Kogan, the -- he lived in Paris. He was a Russian born, and he was adored in Holland with his small lovely nudes. Everybody -- [Aristide] Maillol, [Charles] Despiau, they all adored him, because he had a certain way. And I can show you later something.

In any case, the door opens; in comes a Dutch sculptor whom I knew, and he said, "Ha, I heard that you are a sculptor." I said, "Who told you?" He said, "Louise Beijerman." I said, "I'm not a sculptor." And when Kogan asked me, I said, "No, I'm not a sculptor." And I left. When I was home in my studio a few hours later, the maid called and said, "There's a gentleman to see you." And who came up? It was Moissi Kogan. He said later because I did not want to talk about myself, he was curious, and Visht gave him my address. And when I showed him the bust, he said the unforgettable words. He said, that "Miles Despiau [ph.] couldn't have made better." And this was the start of my believing that I really could do something.

MR. MCNAUGHT: That you really could do it?

MS. MODEL: Yeah. And he was fabulous for me. And I went to Paris and studied with him, and he came to Holland. And he was not a great craftsman.

MR. MCNAUGHT: And how old were you when this happened?

MS. MODEL: Oh, that was about 26 and 27.

MR. MCNAUGHT: I see.

MS. MODEL: But I always drew and drew and drew, and he loved my drawings.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Had you been studying art the whole time from age 16 until then?

MS. MODEL: No, I -- no, not all the time, not all the time. I went back to Munich, of course later then, but it was not -- and then in Amsterdam, after this happened, I went to the academy and got into --

MR. MCNAUGHT: You were married by this time?

MS. MODEL: Yes, yes I married very young.

MR. MCNAUGHT: And then you were living Amsterdam?

MS. MODEL: Yes, and this was very important. I went to the academy, because I wanted to have a few points. Kogan was not a draftsman, or a craftsman. He just was the ideal teacher because it was talk. And he showed me how to make a plaster-cast, of course, that was all. And so I went on and on, and that was it.

But the funny thing happened -- and it's typical when you see here in America everybody has to have an exhibition; after they made a few things, they have to have an exhibition --- one day I walk in the street, and I see a very well-known sculptor. He said to me, "I heard you are a sculptor now?" I said, "Yes, I hope I am." "Kogan talked to me, and Kogan said I should get you in the sculptors' [inaudible]," which is -- was a circle of sculptors. I said, "I didn't ask." He said, "No, but I'll tell you one thing, how long do you work?" I said, "Four years." He said, "We can work another four years, then you can become [laughs] a member of the sculptors' [inaudible]." That was typical for the Dutch. You know the apprenticeship was the one you have to have, and it would be eight years. But I'm -- it was very funny. I never asked for -- to be a member, but they had very good -- we had quite a few good sculptors.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Why don't you now, in order to get the chronology right, just say when you got married, and where you lived, and when you went to America --

MS. MODEL: Yeah, I will come to that --

MR. MCNAUGHT: -- and so on, and then we can --

MS. MODEL: Yeah, in any case, I come back then to Paris. One day Kogan took me to Maillol; and to Despiau also. And I saw Maillol quite a few times.

MR. MCNAUGHT: So it was Kogan that took you to Maillol?

MS. MODEL: Kogan took me there. He had told Maillol, and Maillol invited me to Mar [inaudible], which was the country house where he lived. And I never can forget; he was charming to me. But on the way in the train -- on the train -- in the railway station Kogan said, "Oh, my God. You are such a pretty girl. You will have terrible trouble with Mrs." -- it was my first thing; I was very pretty then [laughs] with my -- "with his wife." And on the spur of the moment I went to a flower thing there and bought a bunch of sweet peas, out of the spur -- on the spur of the moment. And when we arrive I come there, and he -- she opened the door. And I gave her my flowers, and she embraced me. And I was in, because she saw now that I did not, you know, come for him alone, and for her. It was lovely. He gave me wine. We had a marvelous time.

But the most important thing was the second time when I came. Kogan and I we came up that garden path and we see that old man -- he was in his 70's there -- in front of the door and working on something; but he didn't hear us. He stood there with an enormous plaster-cast -- one of the three graces I think it was -- and a leg in his hand, trying it on and off. And on the floor, on the garden floor, were drawings of his. For 20 minutes, I looked at that man trying on the leg, taking it off again. I mean it was-- he had cut it off of course, and he wasn't satisfied. And then finally he saw us. And I came over and I said, "Messieurs Maillol, you have made so many nudes in all your life, do you need your drawings?" He said, "Yes, I need it," which I never could understand.

MR. MCNAUGHT: How fascinating.

MS. MODEL: I never could understand it because, after all, he was not satisfied with the leg, but that he had to have his drawings to try it on; but he did. That was it.

And then of course he did not carve anymore. He told me that for 15 years he worked on that big lying figure in the [inaudible] de Luxembourg, which is a beautiful thing. Fifteen years of his life went on. And then later, when he could afford it -- because he started to be a sculptor only when he was 42 -- when he could afford it, he had pupils -- and one of his pupils, here I have a photograph, made the photograph which he gave me -- then he had them do it. "Because," he said, "after all, I can't work 15 years again on something." The interesting thing was that he made little maquettes and he had -- of course, like all do -- but he made them himself -- I mean the plaster-cast now -- but he made these little things. And the figure, which you see here, I saw when he came out from the plaster-cast.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Oh, really?

MS. MODEL: Yeah. Stop a moment; I wanted to say something.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: He told me also that -- first of all, I told him that I have such trouble not working in big. And he said, "Now, if you can say what you say in small, go on saying it in small. It's not necessary." And I understood it because -- he said then, "The first success I had" -- because he made paintings for embroideries to make a living at that time, I mean before he became famous. And he made that one little figure, the *Leda* [1900], which is just beautiful. He exhibited it and this was his first and big success [Galerie Vollard, 1902]; this was when he started. So, it was with a tiny little figure that he started to be a known sculptor.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Fascinating. What year was this when you went to Paris?

MS. MODEL: Oh, I went to Paris all the time. I went to --

MR. MCNAUGHT: But, first met Maillol?

MS. MODEL: Oh, it was in the 20's, I think.

MR. MCNAUGHT: In the 20's?

MS. MODEL: Yes, it was in the 20's.

MR. MCNAUGHT: And did you see him after that?

MS. MODEL: Yeah, I saw him a few times, of course, whenever I was in Paris. And Kogan went with me -- I went there. I --

Very interesting was also that he had an enormous drawing there. And he took it out because Kogan asked him, and Kogan talked about prices. And then I said, "What's the matter here?" He said that very well-known critic, Claude [ph.] -- I think something with Marx; I forgot his name -- wanted to buy it, but Maillol wanted a certain price and the man said, "You have to give it cheaper to me." But Maillol said, "No." He did not sell it.

And later, Kogan told me that he needs so much money because his son -- and I saw paintings, football paintings of his son -- needs -- I only have the Dutch word -- he needs so much money for "Christas" [ph.], the Dutch said. He shows money out. And he founded that paper factory that the son earn some money, but he also -- you know Maillol's paper was very beautiful; I loved to draw on this -- and then, he said, the son just used up so much money. And this is maybe the reason why he waited, later -- gave -- sold figures to [Hermann] Göring [Nazi leader], which of course the French hated at this high age. But this was the son, probably, who needed money. He needed money. He for himself, he didn't need much money. He lived very modestly and his wife -- was that *Flora* [1910], by the way. She was the original *Flora*, which is also here in the --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Oh, really?

MS. MODEL: Yes. Beautiful, powerful, Basque woman. Marvelous. But, of course, I was in her favors with my flowers --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Which was sweet.

MS. MODEL: Yes, it was very funny. But this was -- ah, he was a lovely man. I adored being there. It was wonderful.

And the other man was Despiau, I met. But there I only was one afternoon. And this was also very typical for thinking about sculpture: He had two busts there in clay which were both cracked, both. A woman and a man. And I asked him and he said this was the Greek beauty queen and she didn't come, so he let it go. And then later she came back because it was an order from somebody. And this man's bust was also by a big industrialist who was sitting there looking at his watch all the time and he sent him away. He said, "I can't permit myself now to do this. When I was poor I couldn't." So the man came back, too. And I said, "Now that's very interesting for me because I work so long on a bust, as quick as I draw." He said, "Ask 100 sittings. That's what I do when I need it, fine, but I ask it. People have to give in to me for 100" --

MR. MCNAUGHT: 100 sittings?

MS. MODEL: 100 sittings. I said, "I don't need it most of the time." Isn't that interesting? So I was very glad to hear that. I asked a lot of -- I said to the people when I made busts at that time. I don't make them anymore,

but for my little granddaughter now. I don't want to do it because I also am a perfectionist and that; everything has to be right. And he was the same way. But his busts of course are just absolutely the most beautiful busts.

I didn't like him personally very much. For example, he wanted to make -- yeah, there was a figure there in small of a sitting woman, and he asked Kogan, "Ah, what do you think about this, Maestro? What about this?" And Kogan talked to him. And then later Kogan told me that his fiercest wish is to be as good in figures as he is in hands, because he was known as the portraitist who got an enormous amount of money for that. But he never could really do it. I agreed with Kogan. And he knowing that Kogan made such beautiful, dreamy, marvelous nudes, he asked him always for advice; every time. But you can't give advice. And there is one [inaudible] that is quite good, but the others are very stiff, and not good. He never made it that way.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Huh?

MS. MODEL: It was very interesting that man who never understood. But I was not very keen on him.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: Yeah, I also think that my visits with [Jacob] Epstein were very interesting. A friend of mine -- George, let's say -- George was a great friend of his, and he said, when I was in London, "I'll take you to Epstein." And I never can forget. I had a beautiful [inaudible], the first and only one in Holland at that time. And I came there, and he was gruff and nice. And my friend warned me. He said, "Don't talk about yourself. Don't even tell them that you are a sculptor, because he's very funny that way." I said, "Fine." So, I didn't talk about it; we talked about everything else. And he -- the whole time he was going over that [inaudible]. He loved it. It was such a beautiful drawing. It really was, and I had it for ages. And then he said, "Okay let's go." And -- to the studio, which was to my friend a very surprising gesture because he said to me, "He never --"

MR. MCNAUGHT: He didn't hardly do so --

MS. MODEL: He never does such.

MR. MCNAUGHT: -- nice for you to be able to do that.

MS. MODEL: He never does it, but he did. And we went to the studio. And there I saw -- the first thing was the bust of [Jawaharlal] Nehru. And I was just thrilled. It was *fabulous*. And I said, "Oh, how beautiful." "Oh," he said, "this is one of the many which were paid for and never taken." Lady [Edwina] Mountbatten had given the order for him, you know, to make a bust of Nehru. And when she saw it she said, "Oh, this is not Nehru. He's so stern. He doesn't smile." And he said, "I got mad, and I said, 'Look -- a leader of India has no reason to smile. And then, you were not there that he could smile at.'" So it was there.

The other one, which was not taken, was [Gabriel] Pascal, the Hungarian filmmaker whose wife had ordered the bust. And she didn't like it, so it was also there. So, he had quite a few of canceled deliveries. I mean he made them. And there was a beautiful bust of Haile Selassie [1936], but I think this was only a question of that nobody paid for. But it was gorgeous, and I think everybody knows it's marvelous. I mean it's a bigger thing. It's half, the half body, and it's a fabulous. And he had --

Then I talked about -- on my second visit, I talked about *Adam* [1939]. There was a big controversy. That big granite, I think it was, *Adam*, which he made and was a sort of ape-man. And he was attacked in all the papers. All over they attacked him: "How can he do such a horrible thing to make the first man into an ape?" -- so to say. And he got very mad. And then I asked him whether it was true that he had given that *Adam* to a wandering circus. And he said yes. He couldn't have it in his studio all the time, and they paid him money; so he did it. He said, "Nobody wanted it."

MR. MCNAUGHT: How fascinating.

MS. MODEL: It was really true, and he said, "Why not?"

MR. MCNAUGHT: When were your visits with him?

MS. MODEL: Oh, it was in the 30s.

MR. MCNAUGHT: In the 30s?

MS. MODEL: Yes, it was in the 30s. And of course I -- he was always very nice. And the funny part was the first time when I was there. He took me to his -- to have tea in a very big living room, a long, long refectory table. And on each end was -- I never can forget this -- a big glass bowl with different -- on one side with green bulb-balls, and the other side was red or something. In any case, it was very colorful. And on one end sat a big, fat, red-haired woman and it was Mrs. Epstein [Margaret Dunlop]. She was very nice; she was very quiet. And --

yeah, I forgot to say she was the educator of his illegitimate children. She had no children. She educated all his children.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Really?

MS. MODEL: Yeah, she was a fabulous woman. So when we left I said to my friend, I said, "You know, George, she looks -- I don't know what she is, but she looks like a big, fat Polish Jewess." And he said, "She's neither Polish nor is Jewish. She is from Ireland [laughs] and she's Catholic."

MR. MCNAUGHT: Ireland?

MS. MODEL: It was very funny. But that was the only time; the next time I didn't see her. And then the third time I saw his friend, whom he married later, who is now Lady Epstein [Kathleen Garman]. And, I must say, he was always very nice and very -- in his gruff way. I enjoyed very much to be there. It was one of the important things.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: Now one of the things which then happened afterwards -- was after the war when I came from London -- I saw him. But not before I had talked to him on the telephone.

MR. MCNAUGHT: You saw --

MS. MODEL: I talked to him on the telephone.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Who now?

MS. MODEL: Epstein.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Epstein again.

MS. MODEL: I talked to him on the telephone, and he said, "Oh come, of course," on this and this day. He had that beautiful house next to Winston Churchill in Hyde Park somewhere; gorgeous house. And he said, "But please, do tell me -- ask George for the bust." And I didn't know what it was all about. So, when I saw George, he -- I was in his fantastic apartment. He said to me -- I said, "George, I have to ask you about the bust."

MR. MCNAUGHT: Who is George?

MS. MODEL: That's my friend who introduced me.

MR. MCNAUGHT: I see.

MS. MODEL: He was a collector. He was marvelous for Kogan, by the way, who treated everything very badly by leaving the house he had given him, on account of me because his girlfriend had caught -- it's too involved a story, in any case.

George -- apparently somebody, one of George's admirers -- he was the head of the syndicate, diamond syndicate, a very important man and really marvelous, and one of my greatest friends. And his friendship with me was really valuable in my life. But -- George -- somebody had given Epstein the order to make a bust of George. And when I came I said, "Where is the bust?" So he had the butler go under the piano and get the bust out. But when I saw the bust I knew why. He had made George into a very disagreeable Egyptian. George looked like, [inaudible] in his younger days, and when he'd grown older, of course, he still looked like an older [inaudible]. But he looked like that. And he had made George into a very bad type of man. And I was -- my breath was taken away. And George said, "Now you know why I don't want it." I said, "Yes," and it was put away again. So, when I came to Epstein I was very embarrassed. What should I say?

MR. MCNAUGHT: Yeah.

MS. MODEL: So I said to him I hadn't seen it yet. I couldn't tell him that I thought it was a terrible bust. But the funny part was that George had some qualities which were sometimes very disagreeable, and Epstein just got them enlarged --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Found them.

MS. MODEL: He got them enlarged, without -- I mean he didn't do it purposely. George was very haughty, very proud, very conceited, and -- but he was a powerful person. But you know every powerful person has qualities. And I knew them, but I didn't want to know them. And here it was blatantly screaming into my face. And

George, being very bright, knew.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Saw them himself, yes.

MS. MODEL: So that was the story of George's bust and Epstein.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: One day my husband called me up -- it was in the 30's, of course, and no certain reason -- and he said, "I have somebody here from America [Jean Paul Getty] who wants me to get something for him, which I will not get him." I said, "What is it?" He said, "He wants in, the oil" -- it was something with Deterding, Lord, Sir, something Deterding [Sir Henri Deterding], who was the head of the Dutch petroleum and oil thing [Royal Dutch Petroleum Company]. And my husband said immediately, "He will not get it, but let him come." He's a very funny man.

So, what could I do? I had to meet him. We met for lunch. And there was a beautiful girl there with another friend, who was not beautiful, and she was introduced as "my fiancé." That was to be his fifth wife, Peggy Lynch [Louise Lynch]. She was just gorgeous. And for the first time in my life I saw emerald buttons. You know, real emerald buttons. But she didn't want to travel alone with him, so she had that Irish girlfriend with her. She was a society girl, Peggy Lynch. In any case, we had a very nice lunch, and she said that she was in Paris now, and she saw so many things; it was pleasant.

And then she -- Getty said, "I have to buy a Rembrandt here."

MR. MCNAUGHT: Now where were you, in London or Paris?

MS. MODEL: No, that was in Amsterdam.

MR. MCNAUGHT: In Amsterdam?

MS. MODEL: Yes, he has to buy a Rembrandt there.

MR. MCNAUGHT: I can't believe that you were there.

MS. MODEL: With the Mensing -- with the Muller auctions [Frederik Muller & Co]. I know that. We knew them all. We knew, at least, each other socially. And we knew there was a big auction. And she said, "I won't go there." I said, "Why not?" She said, "Because I'm a singer and I do not want to sit in these tacky auction rooms." So he said, "Will you go with me?" What could I do? I said yes.

This was very interesting afterwards. Before -- but before, he came to my house for dinner a few times. And he never even brought a flower. In Holland, this is *unheard* of when you come to dinner. You know, the flowers are --

MR. MCNAUGHT: You always bring flowers.

MS. MODEL: -- on all corner, on every corner, even if you don't go to a big shop. No. He never, never did a thing. He was a few times at my house. So he came, and I never can forget this first evening. He went up to my studio with me. He was very -- [inaudible] is very beautiful. And then downstairs he sat for three hours, talking nothing but about Milo, Milo, the sculptor Milo. And I didn't even know who he was, the sculptor Milo. He must have meant -- until today I don't know -- he must have meant the man who made the *Venus de Milo*. I cannot tell you. It was -- my husband said that he didn't know what to do. He was sitting and talking about art and sculpture and Italy.

MR. MCNAUGHT: How obscure.

MS. MODEL: And I later saw the bust which his father had made of him, in marble in Italy, as a 15 year old boy. I saw it in the house when I was there, but this comes later --

In any case, I didn't think how I could survive this evening. So then the next day, I went with him to the auction. And of course I knew Mr. [Antonius] Mensing the owner, the people who owned this. And he came over to me, and he looked at me. And Getty -- I said, "This is Mr. Getty, who wants to buy." "Yes, we know," he said, "He wants the Rembrandt." Now, he took me aside then, in a moment when it was possible while he was wandering around, and said, "Look, what he wants he doesn't get. He wants to have the burgemeester Six [*Portrait of Jan Six, 1654*]" -- you know, that most famous portrait of Rembrandt's friend the burgemeester, the Mayor of Amsterdam [Jan Six I]. It's one of the most beautiful paintings. And of course the family Six wouldn't dream about selling this. But they sold a few other things from their collection, which he then got too, I think. And he thought he would get the --

MR. MCNAUGHT: He thought he could get it?

MS. MODEL: Ah, but he was so disappointed. But of course, there was no -- nothing to talk about.

MR. MCNAUGHT: No possibility.

MS. MODEL: I mean they wouldn't dream about it. So, I was sitting with that man, and sitting with that man, and he finally got a Rembrandt [*Portrait of Marten Looten*, 1632, purchased 1938]. And of course, as Mensing said later, much too cheap. He paid \$150,000 for a beautiful Rembrandt -- at guilders -- which was nothing for him. But he got it, you know.

MR. MCNAUGHT: And this was in the 30s?

MS. MODEL: This was in the 30s. And then --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Had he been -- do you know had he been collecting a lot --

MS. MODEL: Yes, he had --

MR. MCNAUGHT: -- again, or was this his first Rembrandt or do you know --

MS. MODEL: No, no, no, no, no. No, I think it was his first Rembrandt. But he had bought a lot of, you know, when you -- on the museum, you know that he bought quite a lot of not good things. I mean his taste was -- ah, I don't even want to talk about it. But he loved art. That truly is true.

So I was sitting and sitting there, and it was really terrible. I never can forget the sitting. And then I saw him a few times. And he always talked about art with me, but he did not get what he came for. I told you my husband refused. He said, "I cannot sell this to America. It's impossible." There was -- it had something to do with Tidewater Oil. I forget. I never knew anything about business.

But the interesting thing was when -- then he said, "Adieu." He said he's going to Berlin. And my husband said, "What are you doing in Berlin?" "Selling oil." My husband said, "There are *Nazis* out there. You cannot do that. You cannot press the hand of these people who killed so many" -- not talking about Jews, but we knew what they did through the world. He said, "Oh, when they buy -- if they buy my oil, it doesn't matter." And he really and honestly went to Berlin and was invited -- [Hermann] Göring -- and sold oil. That's what he did. And what is -- he was oil businessman, on the other side.

But it continues in a way, the story, with -- as he's such a famous and big personality, I think I should get in that when we went to -- was it when we went to America? In any case, on the boat -- no, we went from America to Europe -- there he was. I was sick the whole time; I had a very bad fever. And so I said to my husband, "Why don't you sit with your friend Getty?" [Laughs] And so, the whole trip, he was every night with Getty and Sir Charles Mendl. And he told a very nice story about Mendl when he came home -- when he came into the cabin one evening. He said, "Sir Charles is such a charmer. I said to him" -- he was in his near 90's or something -- "I said, 'It's wonderful Sir Charles that you still like to be with the girls.' He said, 'Oh, my eyes are still good, Mr. Model.'" [Laughs] I thought that was a lovely remark, and Getty was sitting there silently listening to all the women who were around him. That was it.

But then he said, "When you come to California, why don't you come and see us?" I said, "Maybe one day." So we went in 1950; I know it because -- '49 [Ms. Model corrects herself] -- because in 1950 my husband died. We were in California, and he had given me the number, and I called. And there was Mrs. Getty. That was that girl, Peggy Lynch, who had married him, right.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Oh, yeah.

MS. MODEL: And she immediately came with her car. And I still see her coming, and she was really beautiful, tall woman, flying hair in the car. She embraced and kissed us, and said, "You must come for lunch now." So, we came to lunch to their house in Malibu Beach, which was built like a little castle, a French castle. And she said her next door neighbor was the house of Marion Davies; it was sold later to be a club. And these were the only two houses on the beach, directly on the beach. We went out from the house, and there was the beach.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Wow.

MS. MODEL: You can imagine how marvelous that was. This was the strangest thing. There suddenly comes in a little replica of Getty, a tiny little boy. I think he was about nine years old, with an English nurse. I never saw anything -- you got a shock. It was Getty en miniature. It was frightening; it was really frightening. And he looked at us, and my husband, who loved children, immediately talked to him. And he took to my husband, all children did. And then I hear the nurse say to him, "Timothy, isn't that marvelous? Mr. Model saw your daddy

four -- Mr. and Mrs. Model -- saw your daddy four months ago." So I said to Peggy, I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "He doesn't come. He doesn't come. He just stays away." That was the beginning when he didn't come. And then she took us to the house where there was -- the big house -- where there were the lions, you know; he had a little zoo for his son. And that was also the first time I saw a door electronically opening. When we approached with her car, the doors flew open.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MS. MODEL: Oh, it was quite a sensation. And then we went to the big house, where the first thing you saw when you entered was the bust of Mr. Getty, in marble, when he was 15 years old. And you saw the collection. It was -- partly, it was very good. It was the beginning of that museum collection, of course. And then, into an enormous room where there was a theater. And I said, "What's that?" She said, "You know I'm a singer?" -- Oh, I forgot to tell you that she was in Italy; afterwards I will tell you that. She had -- he built her this stage, that she could have her little operas. But it was, so to say, the honeymoon, you know. And she said *Sunset Boulevard* [1950], the film of *Sunset Boulevard*, was filmed in that house. And the stage you see was the stage there. So that was a fabulous thing.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Really --

MS. MODEL: And the swimming pool was her swimming pool. She gave that to the film-makers. Isn't that wild? And she said, "Why didn't you call me before? I had a big party for them." But of course I didn't know that, and I wasn't there.

But to come back to her, she was a really *wonderful* person. She -- when the war had started -- no, we came when the war started. There was a notice in the paper that "Mrs. Paul Getty just arrived from prison in Italy. And she's very tired; she goes back to -- immediately to California." That was 1942, I think it was, or '41. She had had so many people to escape with her money, with his money. She studied voice in Italy -- she wanted to be a singer; I don't think she was a great singer, but she loved it -- and there Mussolini put her in prison for three weeks. And of course, Getty and money and politics and ambassadors --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Got her out.

MS. MODEL: She was released. But she was -- she said she became -- she told me she became a Christian Scientist in prison.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Hmm.

MS. MODEL: Yeah, so she became a Christian Scientist.

Now, that has in a way a little ending, because when she finally got her divorce from Getty [1958] -- which I didn't even know about -- I called, when I was in California again. And there was her mother on the telephone. And she said, "You know that she got a divorce?" I said, "No." She said, "She got it, but imagine, the little boy died. That little boy died."

MR. MCNAUGHT: That little Timothy.

MS. MODEL: Timothy died, and he [Jean Paul Getty] didn't come for the funeral. And she said, "I never, never will shake hands with a man like that again." And she said, "If only my daughter wouldn't be such a Scientist she would have handled it differently."

So then in 1950, my husband died -- a year afterwards -- and Getty heard about it. And I must say, he wrote me the most beautiful letter. Because my husband impressed him terribly much, as a man --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Your husband was in the oil business, or --

MS. MODEL: No, my husband was in banking, the banking business --

MR. MCNAUGHT: He was in banking?

MS. MODEL: -- but my husband -- he was -- he could help him, he thought, in Holland. He really, apparently, was so impressed by my husband who said no to him, because nobody ever said no to Mr. Getty. But he said no to him. And he wrote me a beautiful letter; how much he appreciated him; how wonderful he thought he was. I mean I can't say the words, but it was a -- and she wrote me a lovely letter. And she wrote in the sense of Christian Science, of course.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Hmm.

MS. MODEL: Then -- but of course he lived -- the boy was alive at that time. She wrote that you have to think this, and that. So that was the last of the Gettys for me, but it was quite some big and --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Fascinating story.

MS. MODEL: -- fascinating story for them.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: One of our great friends in Holland -- as a matter of fact, was the best friend -- was Jacques Goudstikker, who was the biggest dealer in old art, and recognized by everybody because he had a nose for the real thing. He discovered a Seghers [ph.] and so on, and my favorite, [Maurits] Escher, and so on.

In any case, he took us to Rotterdam when there was the big a-do about a newly discovered Vermeer ["Masterpieces from Four Centuries" exhibition, 1938].

MR. MCNAUGHT: Now when was this?

MS. MODEL: It was -- ah, it was of course, before the war because -- I know it was a few years before the war. And there we were standing, and I still see us in that big museum in Rotterdam [Museum Boijmans van Beuningen]. And then they take the things away, I mean the curtains, and there was a very big Vermeer. We were stunned. We didn't expect a big Vermeer, you know; Vermeer never worked that way. The biggest thing we knew was *View of Delft* [1659-1660], which was like this. And --

MR. MCNAUGHT: How big was this?

MS. MODEL: Oh, like this, from the floor. And it was the Maria, and the Jesus, and the bread, and everything [*The Supper at Emmaus*, 1936]. And my husband looked at it, and he said to me, "That's not a Vermeer." And I thought Jacques Goudstikker kills him; he was standing next to us. He said, "Keep quiet, keep quiet." And we did. He didn't say anything. So as soon as the speeches and everything was gone, the marvelous Vermeer there, Jacques Goudstikker said, "How do you say that, a thing like that?" And all the connoisseurs are from all over the world, the director from the museum, and *he* was a connoisseur. My husband said, "I'm sorry, Jacques" -- I never can forget his word -- "a Vermeer would never have given these sensuous eyelets to a Maria." I never can forget my husband's reason. And then, of course, Jacques Goudstikker was furious.

But a funny thing happened. He trusted, in a way, my husband's instinct who had discovered without being a -- only an art lover. He had a painting there one day, a very ugly painting which I didn't want; it was an Il Sodoma. And my husband said, "Gee, that's a fantastically painted painting." He said, "I don't know what it is," my husband said, "but it's good." And so he always trusted that, that he had the instinct only.

Now, you know what happened with [Han] van Meegeren and -- he was the one who painted that picture, that Maria -- and my husband said, of course --

MR. MCNAUGHT: So your husband was right.

MS. MODEL: My husband was right. He had --

MR. MCNAUGHT: What had you thought? What did you think when you saw it?

MS. MODEL: I must say, of course, I was -- I was not impressed; I must say that. I was impressed with the bread, how he painted the bread. It was beautifully painted. You know the --

MR. MCNAUGHT: No, I mean I'm just saying --

MS. MODEL: -- things afterwards were terrible, what he did afterwards -- van Meegeren -- absolutely terrible. I got from Holland, I got a whole set of reproductions of the things which he did in prison [1945], then and afterwards. They are horrible. But this is a beautiful painting.

MR. MCNAUGHT: mm-hmm [affirmative]

MS. MODEL: No doubt.

MR. MCNAUGHT: See that's what -- I know other art historians who said they too were beautiful.

MS. MODEL: It's a *beautiful* painting, but he outdid himself.

And you know it ties in, what I heard afterwards. I mean, I had met van Meegeren -- right, we all met, there

were not so terribly many artists in -- and I met him through that man who painted my portrait, [Jan] Sluijters. And he was a very shy and little man. And then somebody told me that he makes beautiful portraits, and he's very unhappy. He married late in life a very rich Dutch woman, whom wanted him to make the portraits. He was a good portrait man, and he was sick and tired of portraits. And the people, of course who are -- you know how people are with portraits. Artists, I mean, they look down at somebody who only makes portraits. Of course, you can't look down on Despiou. But he was very unhappy. And the reason why he did that [Ms. Model refers to the forgeries], he wanted to prove that he is a great artist. You know, that was his main reason behind that, because money he did not need.

So his biggest success was then that Göring bought all the things afterwards [*Christ and the Adulteress*, 1941, purchased 1943], which every little connoisseur would have known immediately are no Vermeer's. But Göring was no connoisseur, you know. So, he bought these things.

But this [*The Supper at Emmaus*] was in the museum. It was absolutely gorgeous.

[Audio break.]

MS. MODEL: We were -- I mean, that one year of war was of course terrible. My husband -- I knew he would taken into prison, because I had -- in Switzerland they stole my letters, the Nazis, when they found out who I was. And the Nazis then later said to me he was in their books since years, and I knew it. In any case, we were smuggled out of the country. And I wrote 55 pages, only on this year of war, because my husband was a hero, even in the eyes of the Nazis. He -- they said, "Isn't he a stupid hero to stay in prison for other people" -- just to give you an idea, but this is another story.

When we arrived in Lisbon, friends of ours said they tried to get in touch; we had no passage, or something. And so they brought us together with a sort of a council. And then we had to pay a fantastic fortune for being in one cabin together because, they said, we have to pay for the others who can't pay. And we had no money, so they -- my husband had to telegraph to America, and then some friends of ours, and my sister-in-law put the money together that we had to pay, \$6,000 or \$7,000.

MR. MCNAUGHT: \$7,000?

MS. MODEL: Yes, which was of course -- which was for the others. We didn't have the money. My husband had to earn it back later was the only trouble. But to escape from Lisbon where he was still under surveillance of the Nazis -- every morning the Nazis stood there and waited for us. We saw it; we knew it, because he escaped.

MR. MCNAUGHT: mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. MODEL: And he escaped with the most important news of the war in his mind. And that's another interesting story; I don't know whether you are interested enough to know. Because when we arrived in -- the night before we left, he was called in to the Grand Central Station where he had to memorize the undersea-boat station in San Dunn [ph.], because the English always bombed the wrong one. This, of course, is in that -- in the 55 pages. And so the Nazis knew that we were -- but they didn't know that he was escaping. So five days after he had escaped, they came to get him again. And he had flown with us --

MR. MCNAUGHT: And you got --

MS. MODEL: We arrived --

MR. MCNAUGHT: -- to Lisbon?

MS. MODEL: We were -- no, we were smuggled into a transport which had, oh, terrible dangers because the Nazis accompanied the troop. But we didn't leave until the last moment that it would go, with I mean with two bags. And when we arrived then in Spain, somebody waited already for my husband from the embassy. They called up, and called up, and wanted to see my husband because they knew. I mean, they were told. And then -- ah, that's again, such a long story. In any case, when my husband arrived in Madrid, he put us in the Prado, and when he came back he looked ghostly white. He couldn't talk to that ambassador because he told him that he's playing golf with the German ambassador. Imagine, that our countries at war and he plays golf. It was a terrible situation.

In any case, when we arrived in Lisbon, finally he could -- he could talk with the embassy. He was for a whole week there. And when we were on the boat, he heard that the English burned -- bombed again the undersea-boat station. So, he knew it -- the U-boat, you know -- so, he knew it was the right thing. And then also that the Dutch ambassador was replaced by another one, in Madrid, which was my husband's doing, you know. So that was the story by the way.

When we were put on this Monsignor Dutch boat -- Lisbon -- no, what's the -- Portuguese boat --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Portuguese, right.

MS. MODEL: -- which was supposed to have 150 people and had 500. So, you can imagine. We were introduced to the so-called, the *better* people. It was this terrible word. We were introduced; there was the son-in-law of [Arthur] Nikisch the conductor; there was Chagall and his wife; there were Swiss people; there was a rabbi from Luxembourg. They all played in a way a role there. And the captain, of course, who didn't want to talk to anybody but my husband because, apparently, he was warned that this man is to be trusted. You know he traveled as a Dutch courier, my husband, then. After [inaudible]--

MR. MCNAUGHT: He was a --

MS. MODEL: So -- apparently he was the only one who was permitted in the radio station, who could listen to the radio.

In any case, on the first afternoon, a Dutchman comes up to my husband and said, "Mr. Model, there is a terrible situation down there. We have no air, nothing. And we don't get anything." So the first thing my husband did -- he was always there for the underdogs -- he let the boys, my little boys, collect the fruit from our tables and send them downstairs to the bottom of the boat; so they had fresh fruit. The waiters didn't do anything because there was [inaudible] chefs, you know, it was everything there for the first class, so-called first class passengers.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Extraordinary.

MS. MODEL: And then --

MR. MCNAUGHT: You had your children with you?

MS. MODEL: Yes, we wouldn't have left without any -- my husband wouldn't have left.

MR. MCNAUGHT: No.

MS. MODEL: He said to these people who smuggled him in the transport -- this is a long story, which I -- I don't know whether to tell now.

MR. MCNAUGHT: No, I thought maybe they had [inaudible].

MS. MODEL: No, no, no. He said that he wouldn't leave without anybody, course not. He was smuggled in the transport so they had to take us.

So the second day, that same Dutchman who was a diamond clover [ph.], a diamond man who cuts -- not cuts but who -- what do you say, when there's a big diamond and it's too big? They cut into it, and that's a clover. It -- he cloves the diamond, and they are very well paid. I know it out of another reason. So, this man came and said, at night a Dutch -- a Polish violinist -- both very young -- and his wife gave birth to a baby. And she lies amongst all the people, and it's a terrible situation. Could my husband do something about it as he is on friendly terms with the captain? Of course, everybody knew about this. So the captain said, "I can't do anything. I mean, in case you know, we are so -- too many people anyway."

So my husband went. I was sick, so I couldn't do it. He went first to the -- one of, I forgot, one of the people there, and they said no, they wouldn't -- who had rooms, you know. Chagall had a living room; the rabbi had a living room; the Swiss people had a living room; somebody else had a living room. But we were -- only had one cabin. I have a drawing here which I made. We were starboard in front; paid \$7,000 for that. In any case -- we had nothing -- everybody refused him. And first of all, Mrs. Chagall refused. She said she has to see people. So my husband got so mad at her and said, "Mrs. Chagall, whom do you want to see? They are all refugees, but for the Swiss couple, and they surely won't -- they don't need to be received. You see them every day on deck." "No," she said, "I have to receive people that they can see my husband's books," or something. In any case, she walked around with her book. Oh, I was so mad. I could have -- I mean. He was so mad at her, but he told her what he thinks about her attitude. "They are Russian. These were Polish. This is a terrible situation." *Everybody* refused who was concerned --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Hmm.

MS. MODEL: -- and reasons they have to have their living rooms, or their -- the state-rooms, whatever they're called. And finally the purser, who got very fond of my husband said, "Mr. Model, he can -- they can have my room." So the purser gave his room to this couple. I never can forget that trip.

MR. MCNAUGHT: That was --

MS. MODEL: Yes, yes. All she could talk about, Mrs. Chagall, was her daughter who was in Marseilles. Of course, she came out later. She's a very nice girl, by the way; I know her. And she died later, as you know. But he -- she was running around with the book of Chagall's. I still see her there. [Laughs]

MR. MCNAUGHT: Was he on the boat as well?

MS. MODEL: Of course, of course. The committee got him over. So did -- the son-in-law of Nikisch, too, you know. But that was some trip; I'll tell you. [Laughs] Yeah.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: Talking about good, there was also something else which was interesting. When I left with -- as I told you, it was two bags -- I said to myself, I'd rather leave my clothes there, but I had illustrated books for my family, for my children, for my husband, and a few drawings which I never could make again, Kogan, my mother. And I knew they were very good. So this is a little basket, which we had on our boat, and in this I packed -- and I carried it myself. And the children used to call me [inaudible]; it was wherever we came, you know, I said, "Don't touch it." In any case, the Nazi who accompanied us saw me carry that basket. In Paris, he came over; he said, "I want to see what's in that basket." So immediately that German officer, who was a Hauptmann from Hagelstein, came and said, "Leave her alone." So, that went on in Paris, in Brussels, in Paris, and in Madrid. Before we came to the [inaudible] -- no, it was not that -- before we -- when we came to the [inaudible], the German came over to me and said, "Now, Mrs. Model, I protected you the whole trip. I would like to know what's in that bag -- in that basket." And I said, "Very simple, I have the books which I illustrated, and the drawings, and two little tiny little terra cottas." So, he was satisfied. So, the Nazi couldn't do anything anymore.

But then the strangest thing -- and when we were on the boat, we had some friends there whom my husband got passage for, through that embassy there, to go on the boat. And they were older people. And she knew about me, of course, and my background. And she said, "Ah, Lisa let's look at your books." She knew I had illustrated the books. The first thing -- I can show it to you -- I open it -- were poems, which a friend from Paris had sent me about Hitler, and what he did to us, and he hopes the only bombs which fall -- and even drawings, illustrated -- would fall on others and not on me. Imagine that, if that Nazi had opened this --

MR. MCNAUGHT: And found that.

MS. MODEL: -- and found it. I mean we were all sitting there. We were trembling. Unbelievable the chances one takes.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: Now, when we arrived here, of course we arrived in the heat, and the heat of summer, it was just horrible. But we were happy to be here. My little boy -- who was there when they took his father into prison, who had been so hysterical that he came from being the first in school, he became the last -- the first day when we arrived here, he immediately started to tell me which bus I should take. And he didn't speak a word of English. So it was the freedom, the happiness to be here. Because in Paris he got into hysterics when the Nazis came and nearly wanted to take my husband away. It was really terrible. So, here he was -- and he became the best in school, and it was really that.

So in any case, after about two weeks, a friend of ours -- the one who had told him in Lisbon we should be saved -- called me, and said that I should go with her to a meeting of the federation of Jewish charities. I said, "Okay I go there." She had a reason. There was Mrs. Ginsburg, she was the mother of the Viking Press, you know her son is the -- I mean her grandson is Tom Ginsburg. Old Mrs. Ginsburg comes over to me and said she was told that I was an artist, and they need somebody so badly, would I do something for her. I said, well -- she's a teacher in a settlement -- I said, "Look I have never taught to" -- I didn't even know what a settlement was, you know. But she explained it to me, so I said, "Maybe." But next day I got all of her telephone calls, so I really taught for seven years, every Monday, in a settlement.

MR. MCNAUGHT: For Seven years?

MS. MODEL: Yes.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Where was the settlement?

MS. MODEL: Down at 1st Street and 1st Avenue.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Oh.

MS. MODEL: And it was partly very beautiful; I learned a lot. And partly frightening because, for example, there

was a little Italian boy who always said, "Heil, Hitler." You know, I couldn't get it off him. And when I said to that Mrs. something, "Could you tell that little boy, because it hurts me terribly much?" She said, "We never interfere with them." So that was that. They didn't tell the people. And after seven years, I really said -- I taught to a young man who was there, all the little tricks that they could make, ashtrays and so on. I mean it was nice. So that was my introduction to that, and I learned as I told you quite a lot.

And so then one day I said, "I must make money," and I had the funniest experience. I had -- I always wear turbans, since my early youth, because my hot hair was flying and I didn't like it. In any case, I had brought nearly nothing with me; so I made myself two pins. And I bought the pins at the five and ten, and put something nice on them. And whoever saw this, they said, "Oh, where did you buy that?" And one day somebody said, "Even Hattie Carnegie would like that." So I walk around, and one day I see a shop: Hattie Carnegie. And I said, "Okay." I took all my courage together, go in. And I was very well-dressed, so somebody said, "What can I do for you?" I said, "I want to sell something." "What?" And I put my hand on my turban. So, she sends me up to the hat department. And when I come, there was frightened women running to and from; so I went down again with the elevator. And there that girl comes out for lunch. She said, "You couldn't have talked." I said, "No." So she goes up with me, opens the door, and says, "Here you are." And there I was, standing opposite a young -- a youngish, very nice woman who was working on a hat. And she said, "Sit down." I was trembling. "What can I do for you?" And I showed only my finger on those things. She said, "That's lovely. Why are you so nervous? Let me -- give me 12 -- make me 12 for a try out." And so it began, the real story, with making jewelry. And I was quite successful, but of course it took all my time. But it -- I made lovely things, because I made these things that women liked; I liked myself. And I was stopped in the street, "Where did you buy this?"

MR. MCNAUGHT: Did you say -- so you sold them to Hattie Carnegie?

MS. MODEL: Hattie Carnegie and Lilly Dache -- she was the reason that, however, I stopped -- and Hariala Ponze [ph.], who doesn't exist. It's very she--she shops, you know.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MODEL: And the one where the Duchess of Windsor bought; I forgot the name. Only she-she. It was all handmade, you know.

But one day the Dutch approached me, and said would I make daisies for Juliana [Princess of the Netherlands] because the little girl was called Margriet; she got in Canada [daughter born in exile]. So, I made hundreds and hundreds of daisies for the Netherlands organization, and the best one I sent to Queen -- Princess Juliana, at that time -- which was quite nice.

MR. MCNAUGHT: How marvelous.

MS. MODEL: I just remembered that, huh?

MR. MCNAUGHT: Yeah.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: -- not so much anymore. I was -- I became one of the first members of -- when [inaudible] was founded because I was cheated by a gallery of half of my earnings, so to say, and so I joined them.

Of course, Louise Nevelson was there. We were great -- very good friends and there is a story there, which I think nobody would believe of the Louise Nevelson now. But it's the honest truth. One day, Louise called me up and said she wants to meet me for a drink. And I come there and -- at one of the hotels opposite the -- I'm not a member anymore anywhere. I don't know where -- they sold the house. And there she was and she said, "I want to know how you met your husband." And I was so flabbergasted. I said, "Louise, why do you want to know that?" "I want to know it. Ever since I know you, you are such a lady," she said, half in joke, "I want to know it." I said, "It's a very romantic story, and I don't think you would be interested." "I want to know it." So I made it very short. I told her that really very romantic story that my husband had seen a photograph and he chased after the photograph, in any case. And I look up, and there was Louise in tears running down her face. I said, "Louise, my God, you don't have to cry. I mean me, I lost him." She said, "I don't cry for you. I cry for myself." I said, "What for?" She said, "I knew it would be like that. You see, I never had anything like that and I never will have anything like that." Now, if you would tell that to anybody now, they would say it's crazy. But it was the truth, the honest truth that she longed for something romantic in her life.

MR. MCNAUGHT: How fascinating.

MS. MODEL: And yeah, that's really true.

[Audio Break]

MS. MODEL: I want to talk about something, how I was on CBS. I had -- before we went the last time to Europe in '49, I had been terribly ill, but I had started something. And when I was a little better, my son took me and got me to my studio. And there was something started and I said, "Oh, here's my Eurydice." He said, "Why Eurydice?" And he told me that -- but in my fantasies I always talked about Orpheus and Eurydice. I had read before I fell ill that *Hercules, My Shipmate* [1945] by [Robert] Graves, and this went over into my fantasies. And, apparently, I battled through the Orpheus and Eurydice. [Laughs] And there it was. So this I got a gold medal for when it was exhibited. And I know my husband was very happy, and he -- after his death a friend of mine told me she called him up, and she said, "Aren't you proud of your wife?" He said, "I always was proud of her. I didn't need a gold medal," which was very lovely to hear.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Very lovely, indeed.

MS. MODEL: In any case, this lady -- that one day I get -- it was reproduced in *Think* magazine. That's that -- that's the one I have in my studio. And one day I get a telephone call from CBS that Mr. Dwight Cooke [newscaster] had seen that figure, that head, and he would like to talk to me. And they made a date and it was a very marvelous interview. But I had said, "Never ask me about my private life. I hate that, when the women always tell about how many children, and so on -- and I don't want to." But he asked one question, and that was permissible. He said, "Of course, then, you made this in remembrance of what happened to you." I said, "Yes, I always felt that the woman left alone was a terrible, tragic thing. And she was left. I mean, Orpheus went on into the world, and she was left in the underworld." So, this was the story of my Eurydice and Dwight Cooke.

MR. MCNAUGHT: Marvelous.

MS. MODEL: Yeah, he made a record by the way; I have it. I have a record of that talk. It was very nice.

Now there are a few things left. For example, one day the bell rings at 8:00 in the morning, and there stands a very good-looking, tall, young man. And he waved and he said, "I have to talk to you." I had even my *nightgown* on and I opened the door a little bit. I said, "Wait a moment." I let him in, and at that time you let people into your house. I took a robe and I said, "What do you want?" He said, "I heard you have small sculptures." I said, "Yes, of course, a lot of them. Why don't you go in my studio while I dress?" -- you know. So this tall young man whose name was Sam Miller came into my studio, and I dressed and I came in. And he said, "I don't want one of your sculptures -- small sculptures, because -- I like them, but I saw a drawing, and I want to have that." And this was a drawing which I had made after I had heard Edith Sitwell [British poet]. Only in -- I mean, you can imagine that in the Kaufman Auditorium, how far away I was, but we all knew her face. I said, "No, that's not for sale. I had called it *The Poet*. It was exhibited but it's -- I don't want to sell it." He said, "I won't leave your house before I don't get that drawing."

MR. MCNAUGHT: [Laughs]

MS. MODEL: I said, "You can wait for a long time." He said, "You would be very proud one day to be in my collection. I started to collect. I'm still a student at" -- I don't know where, New York University or something. But he was not so young. He was about 28 I would say. And it ended, of course, that he took the drawing. And I had made a modest price, and he said, "By the way, I can't pay you now." That was the funnier thing. I said, "What do you mean?" [Laughs]

MR. MCNAUGHT: Extraordinary.

MS. MODEL: He said, "I have an allowance from my grandfather to study, and I used it up, so I will" -- that was in the winter -- "I could probably pay you in March." I was so amused at that whole thing I said, "Okay you can have it." I didn't know the man from Adam, only that he was a student, that his name was Sam Miller. And he said, "Oh, I will -- I will reframe that whole thing, also."

So he left, and after a few months he called me up -- no, the next day I said to myself, "Am I mad? I have even no idea who the boy is." So -- I forgot, some gallery had sent him to me. I forgot the name now. So, I called the gallery. "Oh," they said, "he's absolutely reliable. He's a very nice young man and he will go places; He's ambitious. Don't worry. His name is Sam Miller and he lives," there and there. But before I could do something about it, he had written me and said that he got this drawing from me, and he was very happy to have it, and he will pay me one day. Then I got a telephone call, or letter, that he has exhibited it in a students' exhibition [inaudible]. And then to my surprise, after two or three months, I got the check. And he said he got a Christmas allowance from his grandfather [laughs], and he's paying me, and he's very happy to have it.

Now, this was Sam Miller. And then one day he came and said he got the position as a curator at the Albright Museum [Albright-Knox Art Gallery] -- as an assistant curator. So, he really made it true. And he wrote to me from there once; he's very happy there. But I thought that was the end of it.

And then I'm one day in the Guggenheim Museum and there was somebody, curator of Albright Museum. I said, "Oh, I knew somebody who probably worked with you." "Who?" I said, "I believe he worked with you --

[END MD 1 TR 1]

MR. MCNAUGHT: Side-Two of an interview William McNaught is doing with Elisabeth Model, May 19, 1977. You were talking about meeting Sam Miller in the Guggenheim Museum --

MS. MODEL: No--

MR. MCNAUGHT: Oh, a friend of his.

MS. MODEL: [inaudible] I didn't meet Sam Miller--

MR. MCNAUGHT: Yes.

MS. MODEL: -- I met the curator of the Albright Museum. And of course I immediately hooked in, and said "Is-- what about Sam Miller?" He said "Yes, he just married the richest woman in" -- of wherever --

MR. MCNAUGHT: Buffalo?

MS. MODEL: "Buffalo." It was very interesting. And I said, "Oh yes, fine, that's wonderful."

So one day, in *The Times*, there was a picture of a fantastic oil, beautiful oil painting-- says "collection, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Miller." So, I knew that must have been going on.

Then, I heard that he was director of The New Jersey Museum [Newark Museum]. And I get an invitation to an opening, which I couldn't follow I'm sorry to say. But I talked to him on the telephone, and then I met him with a very good looking, older, but lovely woman in a gallery. And he introduced me to her and I said, "Do you know-- do you still have that drawing?" She said, "Oh, he's so happy with it." I said -- I told her quickly the story--

MR. MCNAUGHT: The story.

MS. MODEL: And he said, "Why don't you come to" -- no she was not -- yeah, she was with him in New Jersey. In any case, I got another invitation, and I couldn't go. So we -- we were always in touch with giving me a rain check. And then one day I'm in a gallery and there was Sam Miller looking very thin, with another lady, and I -- we saw each other. And I said, "Where is your wife?" He said, "She died." So he was very unhappy about it -- she had died suddenly -- because she was really beautiful woman. And he's now rich, the museum's director, I suppose, he got the money. But he's an awfully nice guy. And he's still managing The New Jersey Museum. And once I wanted to go, and I went on the wrong day, things like that; so I gave it up. You know. [Laughs]

MR. MCNAUGHT: Yeah.

MS. MODEL: [Laughs]

[Audio Break]

MR. MCNAUGHT: End of Interview. Thank you Mrs. Model.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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