



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview of the board of the
Spokane Art Center, 1965 November 18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Members of the Board of the Spokane Art Center on November 18, 1965. The interview took place in Spokane, WA, and was conducted by Dorothy Bestor for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

TAPE #1, November 18, 1965

Present at the interview are:

Florence Reed (Mrs. Truman Reed, former board member of the Spokane Art Center and until 1960 Director of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society)

Mrs. Henry Irving, former board member of the Spokane Art Center, a former teacher of art, and formerly a student at the Center.

Mrs. Elsa Weaver, former Board member, and also a former student at the Art Center.

Erna Bert Nelson, (Mrs. Eric Bax Van Werald) former student.

Gladys Guilbert (Mrs. David Guilbert), former board member and former student at the Art Center, now a writer of a weekly column of Art News for The Spokane Spokesman-Review.

DOROTHY BESTOR: This tape will be a record of a sort of multiple interview in the home of Mrs. Truman Reed in Spokane, Washington on November 18, 1965. The people to whom I shall be talking are:

1. Mrs. Henry Irving, former board member of the Spokane Art Center and a teacher of art by profession.
2. Mrs. Truman Reed, board member and until 1960, director of the Eastern Washington Historical Museum.
3. Mrs. Elsa Weaver, board member and also a student at the Art Center.
4. Mrs. Erna Bert Nelson, (Mrs Eric Bax Van Werald) student, and now by profession a portrait photographer.

And finally,

5. Mrs. David Guilbert who will join us a little later. She was a board member and she is now and has been for some years an officer in the Spokane YWCA, and the writer of a weekly column of art news in the Spokane Spokesman Review.

But at the moment I'll just say that I'm going to be listening to what Mrs. Henry Irving has to remember about the workings of the Spokane Art Center in which she was very much connected during the years -- what? -- 1939-1942?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I guess that's right -- but I don't remember just when it closed.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I have one brochure that I've seen, it is dated 1942, and it is still appealing for memberships.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: That was probably about it because I know I don't seem to have any recollection of this Jerre somebody who was probably the last director.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Jerre? I don't have a record at all of a Jerre who was a director. Who is he?

FLORENCE REED: Jerre Murry. This came out of Jane Baldwin's notes ---

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

MRS. HENRY IRVING: There is supposed to be a scrapbook that was kept by Jane Baldwin and it should be at the YWCA and I tried to check on that this morning.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I would certainly like to see that. Now --

(There's a slight interruption here for a couple of minutes while we get ourselves rearranged but shortly we will

continue our discussion of the origins and the life history of the Spokane Art Center between 1938 and 1942.)

MRS. HENRY IRVING: There had been an Art Association in town which didn't seem to accomplish very much, but the active people in that organization came right over into this Art Center and worked.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And Harold Whitehouse was president of that Spokane Art Association for many years, and then Fabian Smith, and when this came they came right in and worked -- were on the board.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I'm glad to know that. I wondered whether there had been an antecedent to you.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: This Art Association had monthly meetings, it was more like a club, and there were a few artists trying to promote art in Spokane who would always be on the exhibition committee and very active, but their interests were very different from the majority of the members, they were more socially inclined. They thought it was a good thing to have, and we used to get exhibits from the same sources that they get them from now - from the American Federation of Arts and, oh, we had a very nice stained glass exhibit here which - but I didn't think they were appreciated, these exhibits we brought, they were a little ahead of the time in Spokane ...

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: ... a lot of the nice exhibits.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You speak of being ahead of the times in Spokane. Could you fill me in a little bit about what the general political and cultural complexion of Spokane was in the 1930s, when this was getting started?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, I think music was in a little bit better position than art, and while we had art in the public schools and it was well - taught - and that has been improving all the time through the years too but music was our strongest point, I would say, and then the little theatre and then art, in about that relationship. I don't know whether you would agree with that. But it was a struggle. And for A.A.U.W. at one time I made a survey of the arts in Spokane and -- did you say that's at the Museum?

FLORENCE REED: That's on file.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I'd like very much to see that. What is the date of the survey?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: That must have been -- that was before -- oh, it must have been when you first came, wasn't it?

FLORENCE REED: Yes. I would think that probably they made that during the 1930s, Ruth.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, that would be marvelous to see.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And I know I worked very hard on it, and here again I don't have my copy. When I moved and I had to discard things, I didn't save my copy. And I'm so glad that that's in the library at the Museum.

FLORENCE REED: That goes way back to the old Historical Museum.

DOROTHY BESTOR: If you had saved your copy and if you didn't want it, it could have gone straight to the files of the Archives in Detroit.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And there was a Mrs. Wegner who did it for music, and she was one of the best workers on my committee, and I don't remember who did it for the little theatre, but I think that will give you quite a little idea of the history.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. In general do you remember your conclusions of that as being -- what?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, you know, I just - I worked so hard on it, and it's so many years ago, I had hoped at the time that this survey, in fact, the directions from the headquarters of the A.A.U.W. expressed the thought that it would be of value in the community. And I had hoped that it would, but I don't think anything was ever done, -- it came out more as a history, and it's sunk in the files somewhere, as those things so often are.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Alas, yes! Well, there was something I was going to ask in connection with that. Oh! This survey was definitely pre-WPA Art Project?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. Yes, it was. And it would give the background of the community, I would think, from

way back, you see.

FLORENCE REED: I'm sure it would. You made one point to me just now, and I think it's important -- that there were no classes for students in Spokane in art.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: No. Oh, no. There was -- Dorcas Leslie who had private lessons for children and she did a very good job, she was - now let's see, she was just ahead of this project, I think. and that - we were very pleased with - and she's related to Mrs. Fisher and Edith Smith - Dorcas Leslie was.

FLORENCE REED: Well, I think that was one of the things that brought the enthusiasm of Jane Baldwin and you and Elsa Weaver and Gladys Guilbert into the hard work that you did.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And we thought that this creation of the exhibits plus the school - I think that whoever, at the very beginning of this, planned it, did a very good job, because we were asked to get a location downtown that would be easily accessible to all the people in the city. And we did that. And I think that that was very important.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It must have been. And you kept the same location? North 106 Monroe Street all through?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes, in the block where the Post Office is.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, that's marvelous. In Seattle they had to keep changing around, changing their site, and that was one of the things that worked against them.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I think this was -- and then the young people did a very good job in organizing the school - they had not been out of school very long and their ideas were very good for the furniture and the physical aspects.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Do you remember which young people they were?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Carl Morris was the head at that time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: He was head at that time?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: When it started as the WPA project did Bruce Inverarity of Seattle make contacts with you people, or did you -- how did the contact get established between this group that had already been here as the Art Association and the design for the Spokane Art Center?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I can't -- I think Bruce Inverarity came over here and I don't know who he saw -- he would probably have contacted the then president of the Spokane Art Association.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

FLORENCE REED: That would have been Mr. Whitehouse probably.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Fabian Smith was after Mr. Whitehouse.

FLORENCE REED: And he too, worked very hard to get it.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And I remember some of the opening meetings, and they organized a speaker's bureau, and that was organized pretty well. I think that was locally done though, after he had gone back. But they stressed the fact that money was available if we raised a certain amount.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And the money came in very well, after the first \$1,000 came in, the impetus of that, and these speakers going out to all these clubs. The clubs enjoy having a speaker, and it was just what we wanted, and we had a speakers' bureau, and if anyone wanted a speaker they could call in and we went around to all the PTA's and money came in from clubs, a lot of clubs as well as individuals.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good. And I read in one of the brochures that some of it came in from the donations of school children, too.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Then you didn't have to meet with any opposition at the first in raising the money?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: No, I don't think, no, I think the idea - that was in the early days of the government matching money, I think.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And that had quite an appeal.

FLORENCE REED: As I recall, the Spokane quota at first was for \$3,000.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, we went way over it because --

FLORENCE REED: You had a lot to do --

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, I don't know just how much it was, but I know we went way over, we went over the quota.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, good! I saw in one printed article about it that Spokane had to raise \$3,000 and when it did the government would provide \$12,000, it was that ratio at first, at least, and I don't know whether when Spokane went over the quota if the government matched with still more or whether the \$12,000 was the fixed amount.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: But setting this up was expensive.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it must have been.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And we got that set up and then we didn't need so much the next year, but we didn't get as much either.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And each year it got a little less, you know, and there are always some people to criticize everything, you know, after it gets going whether it deserves it or not and --

DOROTHY BESTOR: I remember reading an allusion, in one of the publicity releases, to a telephone campaign against the Art Center, and I don't know whether that had any connection with another instance that I was reading about in the correspondence in the U. of Washington library yesterday, but Mr. Inverarity over in Seattle and Kenneth Downer over here were trying to quell a scandal of alleged communist activities and it really all boiled down to one janitor who had a son who was in a workers' organization. Was this campaign against the Center very long drawn-out or very damaging?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I think it did hurt the Art Center, but -- well, it probably hurt us financially, and Gladys Guilbert, I think was at the head of the Center at the time that came up.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mrs. Reed, would you remind us about the time, since my watch has suddenly completely given up?

FLORENCE REED: It's eleven o'clock.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine. I just don't want to keep Mrs. Irving too long, because I know you have a lot of commitments. But it's terribly interesting to hear about this firsthand. So do go on with whatever you remember that you think is important, and I'll go on with more questions whenever you stop for a breath. I might ask one thing now though. There was this minor opposition on political grounds, I take it, when there was the communist scare. Was there opposition among the business men or others on practical grounds? Did they say "Why are we keeping artists at work in such a crucial time?"

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I think there always is that feeling, but money is, of course, hard to get and there are always some people that will criticize the way it's spent.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And I think Spokane is a city which is particularly careful in the way it spends money. If you notice in our -- so many things we've been trying to get, improvements, civic center improvements for years and it gets voted down. We tried to get money for an airport and it got voted down.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But you now have this glamorous new airport?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: We have it now but they got it by selling bonds and so it was not voted by the people.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I didn't know that.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I saw it in September when I was passing thru here and it's lovely.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And we should have had it before, but it's that same thing, that so many people have earned their money hard, the hard way, and they don't want any luxuries floating around.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, of course, that feeling was especially prevalent during the depression, I'm sure.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Is Spokane predominantly a farming community, or is there manufacturing and business to a large extent too? I'm ashamed to say that I am fairly ignorant about Spokane.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, it is the center, it's the commercial center of a large area in Northeastern Oregon, Northern Idaho, Western Montana and Eastern Washington - the geographical location of the mountains and everything tend to make Spokane the center, just as Seattle is the center on the Coast.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. So I hadn't realized this until now - Spokane probably feels it has closer ties with these places in Idaho and in Oregon than with Seattle?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And I think probably there were students - there are always students coming in from these outlying areas, you know, not only in Washington.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, to get back to the Art Center proper, you were on the board, and what else was your connection? Did you teach classes there?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: No, no, I didn't teach any classes. I took some.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, did you? Which ones?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I took some painting under Fitzgerald and under Kenneth Downer, and it's such a strange thing that I can't remember who - I think Vanessa Helder was teaching this lithography course which I took.

FLORENCE REED: Lithography.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And that was the extent -- oh, I think I took one class with Vanessa Helder in watercolor.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And you felt that the classes were really done in a professional way and contributed quite a good deal?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I think there were. There's -- the instructors got around to give individual attention in the same way that they used to many years ago, and I think they were very capable, and the fact that they were practicing artists is always helpful.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I notice the monthly brochures of the Center, those that I've seen, make a good deal of the fact that the staff are all practicing artists, and that they were paid for not only for a certain number of hours of instruction but for two or three days a week in which they just produced themselves.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I shouldn't say "just produced themselves"; I should say, "time in which they did produce themselves." James Fitzgerald, when I talked with him in Seattle recently, was very pleased with the fact that he had been able to arrange his schedule so that they could have just about half a week off every week to get on with what they were doing. You had studied art before you took classes at the Center?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Where had you studied?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: At the Chicago Art Institute.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And I had been a teacher of art.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And yet even so, you felt that you got a good deal out of these classes?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: One gets very rusty, and busy with other affairs and unless there's something to get you regularly at it, you're apt to do other things. Even now I find that trouble.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. How about the other people in your classes with you? Had they had anything like as much training or experience as you, or were they people who were coming in contact with lessons in art for the first time?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: They were a mixed group, there were those people who had had no previous instruction and I think a number who'd had art in a college like Washington State University or the University of Washington, and then there were those who had had no previous instruction, I would think. One of them - Opal Fleckenstein - I don't think from the work that she did, I don't think that she had had previous instruction, and she's now teaching at Eastern Washington.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Of course, she's gone on and got more since.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Opal Fleckenstein?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And another - Maxine Altman - she painted next to me at one time, and I would say that she had not had - she may have had a little, but I would say she had not had painting instruction. And she took ceramics down there, and she was a great worker, and anything she did she would do very well. She was chairman of the Art Committee at the YW, soon after the Art Center closed. And they had hoped to continue the classes over there, and they did, for a time, but things changed in the community, and Washington State University came in with an art center and filled the need there.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I see. Incidentally, how far away is Washington State from here?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: 80 miles.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, as near as that?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But at the time that this WPA Art Center was here in Spokane, there wasn't much of an art department at Pullman, or there wasn't an art center there, or what?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Oh yes, they had a pretty good art department, they had, I think, about three instructors in those days, and now they have a number - oh, many more - I don't know how many they do have now, it's increased. And there was no art department at Whitworth -- well, Ruth Large taught part-time there and I taught part-time there the year before my husband retired and now they have a couple of men teaching in the art department.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was there much cooperation, as far as you knew, between the college at Pullman and the Art Center here in personnel or in sending exhibits back and forth?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, after it started there was a nice relationship but I don't think they helped any in the organization.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I see. Well, it seems marvelous that the Spokane Art Center could have so many classes and such good ones. Many people feel that that was the biggest lack of the Seattle project. There they just had the studios with artists at work and didn't hold classes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, I would think it would be very different in Seattle because of the other means to study art.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And here you see it was a fertile field. There wasn't art instruction in the city except in the public schools. I think Gonzaga University didn't have any classes. And Holy Names may have had some but -- they're now Fort Wright College -- and it's possible that the Art Center had some effect on these colleges right around here, you know.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I would think it might have.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: It sort of filled the need, they may have been more conscious and then that elusive something which -- the growth in population and the increased interest all over the country in art, that may have, you see, helped these to grow. But I think the Art Center had its effect.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good. Even though it was -- the Art Center itself wound up in 1942?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I think that those three years - you couldn't have art classes and exhibits in a convenient location downtown for three years without it's having some effect on the community.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: The greatest criticism we used to have of our Spokane Art Association exhibit was that we held them at the public museum, and that is hard to get to.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I see. Where is that? I don't know --

MRS. HENRY IRVING: You'll probably -- you'll go down --

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'll see it.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. And, you see, with this location right downtown, all the buses came right there.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! Very good. I read somewhere that the staff of the Art Center were so devoted to the project that they voted to work a month or six weeks one summer without pay, when the funds had been held up and there was an order that they had to close, but they kept it open anyway?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. They worked many, many hours, they certainly didn't punch any time clock when they were organizing and starting and beginning that Art Center. They worked many hours early and late.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good! Mrs. Reed had very kindly compiled a list of the various artist instructors. Maybe you could tell me anything that you remember about any of those as far as they had a significant effect or made a special contribution to the Art Center. (showing her a list)

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, I suppose I'm more familiar with those who began it, and I thought that of those who began it - - Carl Morris and Kenneth Downer and Hilda Deutsch were - - they were good artists. And some of these names are not in the same class. This Ruth Egri - I couldn't remember her at first, but I am beginning to remember her a little now. I think she was not here too long. Some of these are in a different class. John Davis was a young fellow, and he was probably a little less stable, he was just going through a, I think, divorce with his young wife or something, and he was not here too long.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Hasn't he since become head of the art department at the University of Idaho?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I don't know, he may have. John Davis. There was a Mr. Pritchard there for many years as head of that department. And whether this would be the same one - - see, this John Davis, I met his father once and I remember what a fine-looking man his father was and I thought probably he was really of student age himself. And he could have gone on, I have never known what became of him, he could have gone on. And James Fitzgerald, Vanessa Heler, and Nikoloff, Carl Morris, Joseph Solomon, those were all artists of calibre. And some of these others like Earl Carpenter, he was a local man, and I think he probably learned a lot from these young people and -- oh, Guy Anderson, I should have included with that group.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh yes! I want to know anything you remember about him. I haven't been able to pin him down for an interview yet. He's in and out of Seattle at odd times.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. Well, he was a good artist. I didn't have any classes with him but I remember talking with him about painting and --

DOROTHY BESTOR: There seems to have been quite a number of shifts in personnel for a center that was only in existence three years. Do you have any clues as to why so much changing around?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Well, I think some of these people were sent out from the headquarters back in the East, and possibly we had enough staff at the time they were sent out. I think this Joseph Solomon and Ruth Egri came out and there really wasn't the need for them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I've heard that the Morrises -- or rather Carl Morris and his wife - she then was Hilda Deutsch - were sent out from New York.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Yes. They and Kenneth Downer came about the same time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

MRS. HENRY IRVING: And Carl Morris probably got here first. I can't be sure of this but they - those three were in on the organization and building of the equipment, and Carl Morris worked night and day on it, he was very enthusiastic and he worked very, very hard.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Hmm. Good. Several questions have come up in my mind in the last few minutes. You spoke of ceramics. I take it then that the concept of art held by the board and by the Art Center was a rather inclusive one, you had ceramics, and you had - didn't you have photography?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: We didn't have a kiln for ceramics, did we? I think if they did some ceramics it must have been fired somewhere else maybe at the Washington Brick & Mine, or some place like that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! Well, how inclusive was the Center's program? What else did they have besides painting and some -- ?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: They had painting and sculpture and lithography. And these different instructors taught painting in different mediums.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Mr. Fitzgerald taught egg tempera painting and the others taught oil and watercolor and gouache.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was there anything done with photography, except for the exhibits of photographs that were occasionally sent out from Washington?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: No, I think not. Not to my knowledge. I think they didn't teach sculpture after Hilda Deutsch left. It seems to me, if my memory serves me correctly, that they left and then Mr. Fitzgerald came in to take over the directorship.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's what I gather - yes. They were transferred over to Seattle and, according to one set of records it looks as if Hilda Deutsch herself was only there for a month in Spokane. That can hardly be right.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: Oh, no. she was there much longer than that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I thought so. Perhaps she was reclassified then because at one point they have her classified as a certain kind of instructor -- in February 1940 she was assigned to the project, and then in March 1940 she was transferred over to the Seattle project, but - - ?

MRS. HENRY IRVING: No.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No - - there must be something wrong there.

MRS. HENRY IRVING: There's something wrong there.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. well, thank you very much. Now there are questions I haven't asked you - -

MRS. HENRY IRVING: I have a feeling that Miss Deutsch and Carl Morris left about the same time because they were getting interested in each other and they were married somewhere else.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

(Doorbell rang. Mrs. Elsa Weaver has arrived)

MRS. HENRY IRVING: This is Elsa Weaver. Do you think you have finished with me?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it's been wonderful to talk to you ...

FLORENCE REED: Mrs. Bestor, this is Elsa Weaver.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'm so glad to meet you.

ELSA WEAVER: And I'm so glad she invited me.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Wonderful. I know you have to go in a minute, Mrs. Irving, so tell me if there is anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important about the Center - -

FLORENCE REED: Ruth (Mrs. Irving) has been going it alone and I know that you could have filled in many little spots.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, you can do anything I can do.

[INTERRUPTION]

DOROTHY BESTOR: Now you don't at all have to be careful about what you say because anything you don't want to have left said can be erased, or we can cut it out of the manuscript when you see the copy, so - -

ELSA WEAVER: I'll try not to bang too hard.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Bang all you want. Now you were saying that you did have considerable contact with the Art Center because you opened your house to the artists. Do you want to tell me some more about that? Which artists? And when did they come over, and what did you do?

ELSA WEAVER: Well, those that I knew, of course, were beginners, those who came from New York, Hilda Deutsch, Morris - let's see, was it - -?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Carl Morris?

ELSA WEAVER: Carl Morris, yes. And a man by the name of Solomon - I don't know the rest of it - - and Vanessa Helder was in that group somehow, and the Downers, they dominated.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Excuse me, who were the Downer group?

ELSA WEAVER: Well, Downer and Morris and Hilda Deutsch were the sort of energetic, aggressive leaders among the artists who came from New York, and I was interested in them, enormously interested in them personally, so I would have them out to the house for a Christmas party and all kinds of things while they were here because they were strangers, and I was entertained at their home. Then, of course, they carried in their wake a group of avant garde people, the kind of youngsters in the town that were just dying to have someone spearhead some such thing as an art movement. And I was more or less in sympathy until politics entered into it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's one thing I'd like very much to hear about, how politics entered in or whether to what extent it entered in?

ELSA WEAVER: Well, of course, this is off the record, in a sense.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Because I was so intimate and worked with them and was on the original board and helped to raise money for it, I was naturally a key figure in the beginning.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Also the fact that I was a Republican made one of the bankers in town when I went there to ask - to tell him about what money we had raised so much from the government and we were to match it, he said, "You should be a Democrat!" Well, I shrugged that off, and then there was one banker to whom I explained that the wealth of the country was, after all, in its trained people, and that these were people who really could not remain active in their particular skill without help, that their training was in danger of being lost to the country, he said, "Let them wash dishes."

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did he really?

ELSA WEAVER: That's the kind of thing I was fighting in Spokane -- indifference. Well, as a result of my strong partisanship, my strong feeling of the value of what they were doing and why they should be encouraged, I had them at the house often and learned to know them very well personally. Of course, James Fitzgerald and his wife, Margaret, came into that group slightly later.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I'd love to hear what they were like then. I've just met them over in Seattle recently, when I interviewed them.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, they were darlings, I saw a great deal of them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good.

ELSA WEAVER: And I worked with them, I mean by that I took some of their work, and I took some with Hilda

Deutsch, and I was in Downer's class. I just played along with it, I wasn't serious. But I learned to know the teaching staff quite intimately. As a result of that, they turned to me when they had their political -- what shall I call it -- ? -- ambitions. They wanted awfully much my endorsement about things they were going to write into Washington.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

ELSA WEAVER: And I said, "No".

DOROTHY BESTOR: What kind of things?

ELSA WEAVER: I cannot be specific. The general tenor of it was a type of Socialism that I am theoretically interested in, but not actively concerned about as yet for America.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. If it's not too much to ask, could you say whether these views about this type of Socialism bore upon the arts and the artists, or whether they had to do with society generally?

ELSA WEAVER: That's a fine line.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: They were involved as artists who did not like the contemporary picture. They wished a change. So in that sense it was political.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: And in that I totally, totally ignored their petition and presently said right out, "This is something I can't endorse, I refuse to put my signature to it," when I read the letters they were sending to Washington.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was this connected with the sort of general hullabaloo that I gather there was later on in the history of the Art Center, charges of communist activity?

ELSA WEAVER: Slightly. It was leading toward that. And, as I say, I was a key figure and I was definitely intending to make my position clear from the start. I was all for the arts, I was all for giving them all the opportunity possible, but not from a political angle.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, again that's a fine line too, isn't it? Because, after all, the WPA art program, though it was bipartisan was worked out as the brainchild of a Democratic administration. And I'm quite sure it was quite hard often, in practice, to see where the lines could and should be drawn.

ELSA WEAVER: Theoretically. You remember we studied all these movements in A.A.U.W. study sections. I did talks on the new Technocracy during the depression all that kind of thing was being done.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: But that didn't mean we were out promoting it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Right.

ELSA WEAVER: We were trying to understand it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Right.

FLORENCE REED: Erna Bert Nelson has arrived. (Mrs. Eric van Werald)

[There is some discussion of the Spokane scene in re the arts, before the tape recorder is turned on]

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, didn't Cowles give that -- wasn't that -- ?

ELSA WEAVER: I don't know how much Cowles gave, I've forgotten.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I thought he gave that building for three floors, wasn't it? I don't know --

ELSA WEAVER: I was on the board, good heavens!

ERNA BERT NELSON: Somebody paid --

ELSA WEAVER: -- from the very start I was on that board of directors and, believe me, I do not remember --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Of course, you don't, because you haven't thought about it. Well, there's one statement that I read that Spokane had to raise \$3,000 and if and when it did, the government would provide \$12,000. Now perhaps \$3,000 was what you wrote down as the amount that you could raise and then you went over it, then you exceeded your quota.

ELSA WEAVER: That could have been. I do remember that after the war when I learned to know some of the local artists like Nan Wiley and certain others I began to wonder what happened to them during the war.

DOROTHY BESTOR: What did?

ERNA BERT NELSON: They weren't there in the Art Center, were they?

ELSA WEAVER: Not at all, they had nothing to do with it. They just kept on teaching. Soberly.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Where were they teaching? In the schools?

ELSA WEAVER: At Cheney in W.S.C.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Were they already teaching before the Art Center was founded?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Nan was already a teacher - Amanda, yes. Well, how -- when did you -- I mean all this board and stuff went on before they even opened the Art Center?

ELSA WEAVER: That's right.

ERNA BERT NELSON: And somebody had to plan that all ahead?

ELSA WEAVER: That's right.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Because I never heard of the Art Center until it was a going thing and then somebody said, "Well, why don't you join it?" And so I did. I became terribly involved, you know, it was our life for three years, I'm sure.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes. Well, all people we knew -- Mr. and Mrs. Kizer were enormously interested.

ERNA BERT NELSON: And Ben is still a very good friend of Carl and Hilda - Ben Kizer. And he's a very intelligent man. Have you met him?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I have not.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Have you heard of him?

DOROTHY BESTOR: I've heard of him.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Mmmmm. Because I don't - Caroline - she'd be the one - -

SB She's over in Seattle.

ERNA BERT NELSON: She was only a little kid but she sure was messed up with it. She wasn't much of an artist but she knew those people. That was what happened that people like Elsa Weaver and Mable Kizer and all, they just, you know, were very kind to these people.

ELSA WEAVER: Hal Whitehouse, although a conservative, gave the movement strong support.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who?

ELSA WEAVER: Hal Whitehouse worked hard on it, too.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes, I bet he did.

ELSA WEAVER: And Smith -- what was his name --? Oh, Edith Smith's husband -- ? He died. Fabian Smith was terrific. Also Aubrey Lee White --

ERNA BERT NELSON: A.L. White? Was he ... ?

ELSA WEAVER: Yes! They were all on the board.

ERNA BERT NELSON: See, I never even knew there was a board. About as near the board as I got was Charlotte

Upton being the publicity manager, and she was kind of the connecting link between the board and the teachers and the artists.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was she the one who wrote the articles, the publicity about it?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Mmhm. She did that. That was her job. In fact, that's where she got into that kind of work where she got to be the society editor of the Spokesman Review.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

ERNA BERT NELSON: Is she not here any more?

SB She's in California at the moment.

ELSA WEAVER: Is she at the moment? Well, she's been back and forth.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! And she's on her way to Italy from California. I heard that this morning at the travel agency.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes, I think that's right, because she's always - -

ELSA WEAVER: She's working at the travel agency here, you know.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Just warmed up to get to Italy.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh good for her. I didn't know that - -

ERNA BERT NELSON: That is so interesting that you all worked so hard, and that's why you were so good to them and Hilda (Deutsch) - I often remember that Hilda couldn't stand her sponsors, you know -- that isn't you personally, because I think she like you - -

ELSA WEAVER: No. We got along great.

ERNA BERT NELSON: - - because I think she liked you, she liked you very much, but by and large, she wouldn't even mention their names, but that was her favorite gripe, and that I always thought made that's one reason -- there was no sympathy with Hilda for her sponsors, for the people on the board.

ELSA WEAVER: Actually there was no need for them to have much to do with us --

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's right.

ELSA WEAVER: - - except for persons like me who having an art interest, went down to the Center all the time.

ERNA BERT NELSON: You were both, you were both a student and a sponsor, you see.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes. I did both. So I knew what was going on. The same at the Y. I've been on their art board, helped bring it over there, after we closed the one place we just channelled the art movement into the other.

ERNA BERT NELSON: That was a wonderful thing that you did, because that kept it going and you see that's what I always tell people that one of the good things about the WPA was that it got a lot of people interested in art --

ELSA WEAVER: Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: -- and a lot of them continued when you put it over to the Y and then it went to the WSC Art Center, so we've always -- but if we hadn't had the WPA I suppose that those things would have been slower building up.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, that's very important. Now fill me in -- since I'm from the other part of the state and so ignorant, what is the WSC Art Center?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, WSU it is now.

ELSA WEAVER: Extension from Pullman.

ERNA BERT NELSON: They took it over. In fact, we even had college professors come up from Pullman to teach in this Y class that was the -- when the WPA folded everybody that had gone there just felt sick and then the board did just move it right across the alley into the Y building, and we stayed there a couple of years.

ELSA WEAVER: Gladys Guilbert was the one who arranged for us to use that place under the porch to store all our props.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Then, the next year, war coming on and we saw these kids coming back from the hospitals in England doing fancywork on pillows -- Ughhh! We said we should have an art department --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Fancywork on pillows?!

ELSA WEAVER: And they appointed me to be the Red Cross Arts and Skills Chairman. As a result of Spokanes WPA preparation, we had trained talent to draw on for the Red Cross Studio at Fort Wright.

ERNA BERT NELSON: How did you ever get those college people like Wessels and all those to come up? Wessels taught down there, you know, in that awful Y.

ELSA WEAVER: I just asked them to come, and they did, even George Laisner.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, did they come -- where did you get the money? Did the WSU pay for it?

ELSA WEAVER: No, the Y paid it. There was a small tuition to attend classes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: The Y paid that money! Well, that was a wonderful thing and I always say that that was what the WPA did more than the actual people that came in. They didn't fit in here. Elsa is right, they didn't fit in.

ELSA WEAVER: I enjoyed the bohemian atmosphere artists provide.

ERNA BERT NELSON: You did - -

ELSA WEAVER: Art has been my hobby, I like creative people. I backed the artists unconditionally except when I was asked to sign certain things, then I proved - I had to - that I was not with them.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. Well, sure, there still would have to be certain businesses - -

ELSA WEAVER: I could not unequivocally endorse some of their political points of view. I thought they were wrong and I told them so.

ERNA BERT NELSON: It wasn't only them but the letters - -

ELSA WEAVER: That's what I was saying, you see, would I sign this letter? Would I write this letter? Would I do so and so, send them to Washington? I said, "I don't approve of it."

DOROTHY BESTOR: To whom were the letters to go in Washington?

ELSA WEAVER: I can't tell you any more. I've forgotten. That's between us. This is not public information. In the end it may have been perfectly harmless, but I felt caution was indicated.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Very well..

ELSA WEAVER: I'm just giving you the atmosphere.

SB Yes. Quite.

ERNA BERT NELSON: But I don't think it was Hilda - Hilda wasn't as active a communist as those other - -

ELSA WEAVER: Also, it wasn't so bad to be a communist in those days, you must remember.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, it wasn't. You're quite right.

ERNA BERT NELSON: We had a store down on First Avenue where we bought all sorts of things to help the Russians, you know. It was something entirely different.

ELSA WEAVER: Mabel Kizer endorsed it. We sent "packages of food" to Russia.

ERNA BERT NELSON: But it didn't take long when we got into the war.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, of course.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, even then during the war it wasn't - - I don't remember when it was that all of a sudden you just - - -

ELSA WEAVER: We were with Russia during the war, you know.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. But when Mrs. Meyers, you know, -- is she still alive? --

ELSA WEAVER: I don't know.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Her daughter is.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: She's sort of drooping.

ELSA WEAVER: Everybody's dying. I'm in my 82nd year honestly --

ERNA BERT NELSON: You aren't!

EB You couldn't be.

ERNA BERT NELSON: She just sits there and lies, I don't think she has her birth certificate.

ELSA WEAVER: Look here, I'll show you. I've written my epitaph, it goes like this, "Born 1884, died 1964." I thought I was going to --

DOROTHY BESTOR: 1964.

ELSA WEAVER: Four score. What a life! I made it! Here it is '65 and I'm still alive!!! I have enjoyed watching these things, you see, and often participated. I don't get involved when it's a matter of principle; then I stand on my two flat feet. When it comes to understand romance, and I saw plenty of it, and the glamour and the artists point of view, I can understand it, you see.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Quite.

ELSA WEAVER: But I had to be, as a matron, representative of a certain dignity.

ERNA BERT NELSON: You're quite right. It was a terrible shock to have these grubby people come in here and live in the grubby way they did.

ELSA WEAVER: Grubbiness didn't bother me, it never does, that isn't it. But when I see lay people working in government things I am very careful not to seem to agree with them if I don't.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Quite.

ELSA WEAVER: I won't play along with it, you see. I'll study socialism, I'll study communism. I was going up from Vienne to Berlin a few years ago through Soviet territory. In my compartment were 3 communists, we discussed Thorstein Veblers from four o'clock in the afternoon till ten P.M. and Das Kapital - I had read them all, and I speak a couple of languages all right, I had a glorious time, also I had known Louis Fisher, so I quoted Louis Fisher and at that they got a bit edgy. "But look, as Louis Fisher said, if to the brotherhood of man, you would have added the fatherhood of God, you would have been invincible!" And do you know those men were perfectly marvelous to me, when we got to Berlin there was nothing they wouldn't do. There was no gebacktrager, so they helped me, opened the windows, the Russian told the other man to carry this and that. "Now follow me," he took me all the way through that elaborate station, a madhouse, to the shuttle train to the West, put my luggage around me on a bench, shook hands and said, "It's a pleasure to know you." Now that's Americanism that holds it's own, because I fought for what I believed in. And I did the same thing in all of these contacts that I had now and again with people that have a different point of view. You perhaps would call it compromise, I don't, I say it's the right to differ politely. You know what I mean?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: And that's the way I felt about our WPA project. Sure, I was on the board, but I wasn't a classic instance of pulling your skirts and saying "I don't like the grubbiness, or I don't approve of the romance."

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh no. That's why Hilda liked you because I mean you were a little more tolerant, but some of them did pull their skirts and disapprove, and I don't know if that's why she doesn't want to talk about it, but there were a lot of things that went on.

ELSA WEAVER: And the Fitzgeralds used to come out to the house and talk, and I had some figures I'd done, I had my birdbath, and Fitzgerald said to me "I'd rather have that original piece that you've done than the copies of the classical Italian marbles Mr. Blakely bought in Rome." He said, "I'd rather have that thing that you did which is original." I had my little maid sit on a table while I drew her from four sides, and then I modeled it and I did it. Well, that's the kind Fitzgerald was, and his wife and I were good friends.

[Pleasant rattling of china]

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mrs. Reed, are you trying to tell us something?

FLORENCE REED: Luncheon is ready, I'm waiting for Gladys. She will come in a few minutes, I'm sure.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, my dear, do we have to eat! I'm getting ready to give a dinner for eight and I just --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it looks heavenly.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I'm hungry.

ELSA WEAVER: I'm stuffing eight, you know, rock hens, game, you know --

[END OF SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

DOROTHY BESTOR: This is the second side of a tape of interviews with members of the board of the Spokane Art Center gathered at the home of Mrs. Truman Reed. The first voice you hear will be that of Mrs. Elsa Weaver who has been telling about some of her experiences in trying to raise funds for the Spokane Art Center at its inception in 1938.

ELSA WEAVER: I went to a banker, and he said to me when I was talking about how the wealth of this country lay in the skills of the artists and so forth and how some of them would be starving unless we gave them employment, I really had a fine little story, and he said, "Let them wash dishes!" And that's the way a lot of people felt. We really ran into that all the time.

GLADYS GUILBERT Of course the principal thing was the fact that it was the WPA and of course, let's face it, this was a Republican stronghold.

ELSA WEAVER: Sure. You know what Mr. Brown said to me when I went to him -at the new Farmers Bank - he said, "You ought to be a Democrat."

GLADYS GUILBERT Fortunately, we had some strong people who could see the possibilities of this project who stood by it and were willing to support it with their names.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it's really amazing, considering that this was such a Republican stronghold.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, that's what I would like to understand, I would like to understand Spokane in relation to that movement and know who the people were that had vision enough, I mean the business men, to think it had value in the first place.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Who were they? Does anyone know?

ELSA WEAVER: I would like to know.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, there was a marvelous - if you were going to get 16 - was it \$16,000 worth of federal money for \$3,000 of ours, was that --?

ELSA WEAVER: \$12,000 I thought.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Twelve -- Perhaps it's the bargain that they like. They probably didn't give a care about what culturally --

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, I'm not sure, I think that men like the Kizers.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT - - and Hal Whitehouse --

ELSA WEAVER: Yes. Hal Whitehouse. And the Kizers.

GLADYS GUILBERT - - and then yourself, Elsa, as well as the rest of us.

ELSA WEAVER: A. L. White and Fabian Smith.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Those are the people, but where are the rest of them? We got support, now where did we get it? I've forgotten.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Would it be in the minutes of the Board's meetings?

ELSA WEAVER: I don't remember. I just went up and down the street, I went from door to door.

GLADYS GUILBERT I think it would show who the Board members were and the officers were.

ELSA WEAVER: I remember Mr. Paine's remark at the Crescent, I said, "After all, man does not live by bread alone." and he came through.

FLORENCE REED: He always has supported things, hasn't he?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh! Paine, oh, that long ago?

FLORENCE REED: Yes. He was very generous.

ELSA WEAVER: I can remember little instances, they're coming back.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good.

GLADYS GUILBERT But it was a marvelous thing for our town because it was, as I say, a pioneering effort in bringing this very avant-garde New York talent out here to this little sort of insular town, you know, that didn't have opportunity to see outside exhibits to any great extent, and it just opened up a whole new avenue of thought.

ELSA WEAVER: Tell me, Gladys, where did the Cowles stand?

GLADYS GUILBERT In those early days I know they helped support it financially, by providing the building to house the center.

ELSA WEAVER: They were not antagonistic?

GLADYS GUILBERT No. Oh no. And our publicity was marvelous -- in the newspapers --

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's one thing I especially wanted to know about.

GLADYS GUILBERT We did have the backing of the Cowles publications.

ELSA WEAVER: That's what I was trying to find out. I had not heard of much criticism.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good. I have looked but so far in vain through the pages of the Spokesman Review over in the University of Washington library, the copies we have are not indexed and so far in my looking through for what seemed to be key dates in the years 1938 to '42 I haven't been able to find much mention of the Art Center. One person connected with it, I think it was Fitzgerald, said his impression was that the papers were pretty heavily Republican and just gave a bare notice that such and such an event would be held --

ERNA BERT NELSON: In Spokane he felt that?

DOROTHY BESTOR: In Spokane, yes. But, however, I found in the files of correspondence which are kept over in the library, both some of the Spokane correspondence and some of the Seattle correspondence, a good many letters to Cowles, and to both the Spokesman Review and the Chronicle staff thanking them for their unusually generous allotment of space to activities of the Art Center. So I was going to see -- one of my missions over here is to see whether you really do have somewhere this scrapbook that it's reputed you have with clippings in, because I can have those photocopied, and otherwise I could spend the rest of my life going through the pages of the Spokesman Review in Seattle and not find what I'm looking for.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. You could find it here in our own local newspaper office if you look for just those particular years --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who has it? Did someone keep a scrapbook on the board? The secretary I suppose --

GLADYS GUILBERT We had a scrapbook on the whole activities of the Art Center and it must be either at the museum or the library.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Have you located it?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, Mrs. Reed, I think, has a clue about it.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, that will show you the dates.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I haven't as yet been to either the museum or the library.

ELSA WEAVER: WSC asked me for information and some of it is what I gave to Florence Reed (Mrs. Truman Reed) and it was rather - I think it was Jane Baldwin's account of the origins of what we did. And WC used it in their continuity program when they moved their extension up here. So that is about all the --

GLADYS GUILBERT We had a good many of those early records, of course, we didn't have any place to store them, so that when we moved the material from the Center, when the YW was willing to take on the program, then Jane Baldwin and I moved things over to the YW, so we inherited a lot of their equipment and carried on there, of course, and also we inherited their records. But through the years they got dustier and dustier down there in that basement where our Art Program was located at that time.

ELSA WEAVER: Weren't you president of the Y at that time? Wasn't that how we got that hole under the porch to store the props?

GLADYS GUILBERT I guess maybe that was right.

ELSA WEAVER: I think that was it. I think it was through you.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, Jane and I worked together, she was very active at that time and was one of the responsible people in that closing term when things were happening. But I was just going to say, to me it was one of the best things that ever happened to Spokane in the way of preparing us for an appreciation - - we've always been very strong musically, we've had musicals since way back, you know, with a very wonderful auditorium built very far back in our history that gave marvelous musical things. So we were very strong in music but very, very conventional and limited in art.

ERNA BERT NELSON: We didn't have any shows. Our museum wouldn't hold any exhibits, so this was really the first Spokane exhibit, and it was interesting that after they had those exhibits there, then the stores and the Crescent occasionally brought in something, you know.

GLADYS GUILBERT And I think that started through this business of asking them if they'd put up a few pictures, a little of our student art or, you know, feature, for instance we brought a marvelous Van Gogh show early, terrifically expensive as far as insurance went.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I remember the Old Masters, we had policemen standing around, you know for days and insured for \$100,000 or something. I can remember Downer said he went to get the insurance on that.

ELSA WEAVER: And then we had prints, too, from the Prado. We had certain things that came through, I remember, in the days of Jane Brown. That's an awful long time ago.

GLADYS GUILBERT But they turned out to be very well received, and we had wonderful receptions and they were very fancy affairs, everybody dressed and the gallery was quite nice.

ELSA WEAVER: Vachel Lindsay did something for us right in there too.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who did?

ELSA WEAVER: Vachel Lindsay.

DOROTHY BESTOR: What did he do?

ELSA WEAVER: Well, you see he illustrated his own things, and in our Art Association we bought one of his wall hangings - (what was her name -- ? -- Mrs Madeline Langworthy and I were the committee that chose it) and we bought that as a piece of art to put in the Museum. What has become of it?

ERNA BERT NELSON: But he never helped with the SPA -- he wasn't even here during the WPA days.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, no, no. But I mean talking about - she was talking about the very beginnings and how there had been nothing in Spokane, and how it had been a gradual development.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, Vachel Lindsay stirred things up a bit and then there was that little gallery downtown before you had the Grace Campbell Memorial. It was an upstairs room where there was a showing of Vachel Lindsay's things, do you remember?

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't seem to recall that.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, you're too young, for heaven's sakes!

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, you lived next door to him for years.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Didn't they live there when you lived there?

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: What years were those, about?

GLADYS GUILBERT Well now those when we were -- oh, heavens! Erna --

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's when you were first married.

GLADYS GUILBERT 1928. '30.

ERNA BERT NELSON: But he was gone before the WPA came, because he only stayed --

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, I know that but I'm talking about our beginnings ...

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

ELSA WEAVER: ... that had anything at any time ---

GLADYS GUILBERT But we did have the old course.

ERNA BERT NELSON: You can't have WPA people without having something of it. This was a little more.

ELSA WEAVER: And back in - let me see - '23, I joined the Spokane Art Association and had also become involved with the Historical Society, I mean the two of them, you paid the membership for both together, do you remember that? When Mrs. Connolly and --

GLADYS GUILBERT Let me help you, Flore. (with hostess duties)

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, there's a whole group of older people in my day.

ERNA BERT NELSON: The old Art Association, maybe there's where the beginning ...

ELSA WEAVER: I used to give lectures on prints.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, did the S.A.C. people, as the sponsors of WPA did they belong to your group?

ELSA WEAVER: It was before WPA.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, I thought maybe the same people might have gone over.

ELSA WEAVER: The Kizers belonged to it, I think.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Sure. Well, but you asked a little while ago who started it.

ELSA WEAVER: And Mrs. Connolly and -- who were the people that were interested in art in those days -- ? -- that old lady that used to buy awful prints, and she didn't like my talk on prints? She had an old automobile that was an antique --

GLADYS GUILBERT McDonald.

ERNA BERT NELSON: McDonald.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, Mrs. McDonald. I can still see her sitting in front of me when I gave that lecture. And then I gave another lecture over at Moore's house up there across from the hospital, do you remember those Moores that lived in that house?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes, I do, yes.

ELSA WEAVER: And I can remember I talked on the difference between art and photography.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, probably the minutes will bring us up to date on just who the nucleus of these people were.

ELSA WEAVER: But I've always wondered whether the old Washington Art Association with which I was originally affiliated didn't have people in it who presently backed what we did next?

DOROTHY BESTOR: That is what I heard just this morning -- oh, I know her name perfectly well - the person I was talking to -

ERNA BERT NELSON: Jane?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No.

FLORENCE REED: Mrs. Irving.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who did you say it was?

FLORENCE REED: Mrs. Irving.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mrs. Irving. Her impression was that the Washington Art Association merged into this after Mr. Inverarity, or the key people, including you in the Washington Art Association, merged into this after Mr. Inverarity came over from Seattle to see what group or what people would be interested in helping start an Art Center here.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, Mrs. Moore was Mrs. Hamblen's mother - Dr. Hamblen's wife - and some of those people were the sweet old biddies that I knew when I came to Spokane in 1923. Of course, you kids are just young.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, I hope to tell you --

GLADYS GUILBERT We don't feel that way any more.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes, we do. I just feel old beside you Elsa.

(SOME PLEASANT CHIT CHAT WHILE LUNCH IS BEING SERVED)

FLORENCE REED: Some milk or some tea?

ELSA WEAVER: No, darling, this is it.

FLORENCE REED: No milk?

ELSA WEAVER: No, thank you. I'm a dieter. I'm sorry that I carry it on to my parties but I do --

FLORENCE REED: I want to thank you, Gladys, for coming in.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Very good of you.

ELSA WEAVER: I was out at the Garden Club last night and I drank nothing but Postum or whatever they had - there's another, there's an equivalent for Postum nowadays called --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Sanka?

ELSA WEAVER: -- Sanka. And I didn't eat any of those delectable cookies. I've got the best no-power, but believe me today I'm just going -- no, I've got to stay up and be good all the rest of the afternoon and I might just as well have a little fun.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Do you ever hear from those Solomons, and was it Ruth Egri and Solomon -- ?

DOROTHY BESTOR: I haven't heard anything from or about her, or them until this morning. Not the least thing.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I don't suppose they've done anything and gone on. I've never heard of them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: They may have done something in another part of the country.

ELSA WEAVER: They belonged to the Hilda Deutsch group in the beginning.

GLADYS GUILBERT And Jane Baldwin, I think, knows about them, if you haven't had time to check -- I don't remember very much the people who were there unless I had classes from them or worked with them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, with whom did you have classes, by the way, Mrs. Guilbert?

GLADYS GUILBERT Ken Downer. I started out with Ken Downer. Didn't you all?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Mmhmmm.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You all studied with Kenneth Downer?

ALL IN UNISON: Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: And Carl Morris didn't teach much. He was the head. But Hilda taught sculpture in the basement and then -- I never had any work with Joe Solomon but ---

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, Ken was the head first, he was the director --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes, that first weak year.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, tell me a little bit about Kenneth Downer. We were talking a bit about him before I had this thing on. But from the correspondence in the files I get two rather conflicting pictures, on the one hand here is this man who had this astonishingly broad and varied background having studied in Europe in several places --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Under Andrew L'Hote.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- and having shown widely --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

EB -- and having traveled from Greece to Russia and worked on road gangs and all sorts of countries, studied languages and psychiatry and anthropology and a wide variety of things. So here was this dynamic man with broad interests; then here are all these letters flowing back and forth between him and the Seattle office, people scolding him for not sending the correspondence in triplicate and he being abject and apologetic and saying, "This won't happen again, I'll always send it in triplicate." And then someone else scolding him because an article comes out here, not written by him, but an article about the Spokane Art Center but it doesn't happen to mention the WPA and he gets blamed for that and he says, "Dear, dear, this is too bad." And then --

GLADYS GUILBERT He was just a delightful person but he was a very gentle, not-completely-organized - wouldn't you say - and he didn't run that Art Center with a tight, strong hand.

ERNA BERT NELSON: And he never had to do that before. But I can understand his being apologetic about making a mistake because he would like to do it right ...

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: ... as best he could, but I don't think he'd ever done anything like that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It seems sort of tragic that he was pinned down by so much red tape and so many requirements.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh well, he didn't stay too pinned.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good.

ELSA WEAVER: He was conciliatory and he got along with people, he was pleasant.

GLADYS GUILBERT Very much so.

ELSA WEAVER: Who was that other fellow -- was his name Anderson - Guy or something?

ALL IN UNISON: Guy Anderson!

ERNA BERT NELSON: Guy Anderson. He's one of our names now.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

FLORENCE REED: Yes, he's doing very well.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Is he a recluse? Does he live off by himself?

DOROTHY BESTOR: He lives at La Conner, or he has chosen to go up there and work. But this is a sort of, may be an off the record observation of my own and maybe it doesn't hold much water but I think it's interesting that on the one hand he has chosen to go miles away from everyone to work and he doesn't want to be interviewed and he doesn't appear much in Seattle; but on the other hand when you're in the opera house and you see a long, a very long horizontal abstract impressionist mural there as you're standing toward the lower left you see the signature "Guy Anderson" you think -- well, yes, this is Guy Anderson's mural, very interesting. Then you wander over you get to the lower right hand corner, there again it's signed "Guy Anderson." Now has anyone ever seen a mural signed in two places by the artist? My husband and I hadn't, we noticed it the other night and we were so amused. Shy violat indeed!

ERNA BERT NELSON: He is a shy man.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: He wasn't here the whole term.

FLORENCE REED: Perhaps he hadn't realized he had signed it --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Maybe. Maybe.

FLORENCE REED: You know, it was an afterthought -- well, I'd better sign this and he did.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It might be.

GLADYS GUILBERT If it's very long --

DOROTHY BESTOR: It's quite long.

GLADYS GUILBERT -- he might have done it in two pieces or something of that kind, you know.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Possibly so. Maybe that --

GLADYS GUILBERT If he were filling in area he might have done it sort of like a - not a triptych - but, you know, a diptych.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, since then I've looked at every very long mural I happen to see anywhere and I haven't seen any others signed twice. It's just a straw in the wind, it doesn't prove anything.

FLORENCE REED: He probably would be very embarrassed if it were called to his attention.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I think not. Maybe he'd say, "That's the way I always do it."

FLORENCE REED: I don't know him, you see.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I don't either.

GLADYS GUILBERT One of the most exciting things I thought about that early Art Center, too, was the theory behind the whole project that everyone should know a little bit about art, so there was this ruling that all the carpenters - the man who did the cleaning - everything, everybody took an art course. And our tools so many of them we made too, of course --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I still have a palette knife that one of the men made.

GLADYS GUILBERT So many of them are hand-made and they're beautifully made.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I have heard you did a wonderful job of making tools at your center.

GLADYS GUILBERT There was that spirit.

DOROTHY BESTOR: They made a lot of tools at the Spokane center for the sculpture classes - no, not for classes - but for the sculptors to use in Seattle, and Mr. Inverarity wrote over to Kenneth Downer saying how delighted they were with these exceptionally firm tools.

FLORENCE REED: Well, that was wonderful to do that.

GLADYS GUILBERT There was a sense of craftsmanship which to me was very unusual - the fact that they insisted that everybody who was connected in a large or small way with the Art Center know a little bit about art.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That I hadn't realized before - that they were that explicit about it --

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't know whether that was general policy or not, but --

FLORENCE REED: Well, I noticed the great list of names who were not artist instructors doing things - carpentry, all the things one needs in a gallery, and this is interesting to know, that they were not just there on a works project.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, they were probably on the government payroll.

FLORENCE REED: Yes, they were on the payroll and it was good, it gave a lot of people employment when it was needed.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, we certainly did.

FLORENCE REED: That was a serious depression we were in.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it certainly was.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, to me the whole project was marvelously thought out in the first place and I'm sure there were places where it didn't go as they had hoped it would, but at least I thought the fundamental thinking was unusual and creative for those times, and certainly we benefited from it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did you have a sense of being closely connected through the Art Center with Seattle or with Washington, D.C., or --?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Certainly not with Washington. No, I think we -- well, you see Bruce Inverarity came over every so often and there was another one of those directors that came - Danysh was his name.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Joe Danysh.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Joe Danysh. And they came, and there were always parties among the faculty or whatever you call it, for us. So I think we heard a lot about what went on in Seattle, but Washington, D.C. we didn't -- we as students certainly didn't -- I mean did the board have anything to do with that?

GLADYS GUILBERT No. Except circulating shows ...

DOROTHY BESTOR: There were exhibits sent out ---

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes. Yes, those ---

DOROTHY BESTOR: And some of the paintings from people over here, perhaps just from the teaching staff, were chosen from time to time to be sent to Washington, D.C. I believe.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, I would have thought some of the things that Hilda did, and some of the things Carl Morris did would have been very much --

DOROTHY BESTOR: I think they were. And some of the things that Vanessa Helder did, too.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh yes, of course, Vanessa became an institution. She was a legend presently.

GLADYS GUILBERT She was one of those people that really worked at publicizing herself. The others were a little less, you know, of the pushy type.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, Vanessa was already selling, you see, and depending on this for selling, and the rest of them were more or less --

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, they were truly artists.

ERNA BERT NELSON: She was the only one, she was the only one that had any traditional in her, the rest of them were all what you said a moment ago - avant garde.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, I mean she wasn't typical - that word 'traditional' wasn't very well chosen.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I see.

GLADYS GUILBERT -- I mean she was the practicing artist from it, so that is why she had to publicize herself.

FLORENCE REED: By the way, in the file there are some interesting autobiographies that the artists contributed, and one is Vanessa's about her scholarships and where she had studied, and I was quite interested to read it. I've forgotten the others. I read that one, and I had Carl Morris's in there.

GLADYS GUILBERT And, of course, she worked awfully hard. She was constantly out painting our wheat fields, you know.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, that was the reason she became almost indigenous because she did the country around here.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Everybody's office, they're hung in every doctor's office --there are still quite a few of them. Of course they are very realistic, that's what they are.

FLORENCE REED: She married an architect and they went to California later and she said "In California if you want to sell, you paint California, just as in Spokane I painted the area around Spokane - the Palouse." I guess that's very true. People want to buy their own familiar landscape. And of course at that time landscape was more or less in the fore.

ELSA WEAVER: Do you remember that picture of Margaret Tompkins Fitzgerald that I had that I gave to the Y to sell? I always wondered if it made any money.

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't remember anything about that.

ELSA WEAVER: Marian Shoup bought it. I thought you told me about it, that you and Marian went down there and - "My word!" you said "There's a picture by Margaret Tompkins." I turned it in because I didn't like the frame. John Davis made it for me, charged me five dollars and I had it in my guest room and I loved the picture, didn't like the frame and I was too economical to have it reframed, thought it over and I thought, "Well, although I'm interested in this," (it was in California), "and I really would like to have had it," now I sometimes regret that I let it go. But I thought it would make money for the Y.

GLADYS GUILBERT It probably did. I'm sure that Marian Shoup would be very careful about seeing that the money got in the right place, but I just don't recall anything about it.

FLORENCE REED: I've been wondering, did you ask the ladies if they knew this Jerre Murray who was here?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't. That's a good point. He is supposedly the last of the series of directors. You did know him, did you, Mrs. Guilbert?

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. Didn't you Erna?

ERNA BERT NELSON: I didn't know him very well.

GLADYS GUILBERT He was a Californian --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Can you tell me a little bit about him?

GLADYS GUILBERT He's a Californian. Did he go --? Do you know anything about -- ? I don't know --

DOROTHY BESTOR: I hadn't heard his name until this morning when Mrs. Reed showed me her list. She had found from the brochures that --

ERNA BERT NELSON: He must have come in right after Carl left then.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Our records over in Seattle seem to have stopped after Carl Morris left so I didn't -- oh no, after Fitzgerald left.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. Jim.

DOROTHY BESTOR: So I didn't know who had taken over. And Mr. Fitzgerald was a little vague as to who had, whether perhaps he was the last one or whether someone else --

ELSA WEAVER: Well, I had a feeling he was. The last effective one.

GLADYS GUILBERT I thought he was the last one. He wasn't?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I don't -- Jerre Murray I think is

FLORENCE REED: Jerre Murry was actually the last one.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, how long was he here? I don't remember him really. I think the directors were --

FLORENCE REED: I don't know, She just had read this little history Jane Baldwin wrote of the Center, you remember you gave it to me - Jane's little history that she wrote of the art project, and she listed the ones we've spoken about and at the end she had Jerre Murry (spelled J-e-r-r-e) Jerre Murry.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I don't remember him or her.

GLADYS GUILBERT It was a man, I had a painting class from him. Oh, he was very much fun, and had us painting in very lively California colors, you know so I enjoyed it, but as I remember it, I don't think he was here a full year - if a year. So that -- none of the rest of you happened to be taking at that time?

ERNA BERT NELSON: No, I don't remember him.

ELSA WEAVER: That happened about '30.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, you asked who some of the other teachers were.

ERNA BERT NELSON: At the same time as Murry, I mean after Norris and Fitzgerald left, there wasn't much left. You see the Solomons had gone and Ruth Egri or whatever her name was, they left early.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: It must have been a rather weak group. I don't remember too much about it.

GLADYS GUILBERT. Well, I think time was running out on the whole thing, Erna Bert and the support was running out --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, with World War II it had been -- thing accelerated and --

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

(Here the ladies are looking at newspaper clippings and a list of names)

GLADYS GUILBERT John Davis, I don't remember him.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I do, the blonde that was so crazy about that nurse...

ELSA WEAVER: He was the one -- that nurse.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. Well, with the nurse and also Meyers - little Jan Meyers was --

ELSA WEAVER: Jan was adorable.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. I remember John Davis well.

ELSA WEAVER: I have a newspaper that I gave to Florence the other day, and there was a picture of Jan Meyers in it.

FLORENCE REED: Also one of Charlotte Upton, she looks so young and charming.

ERNA BERT NELSON: They weren't together at all.

GLADYS GUILBERT They weren't?

ERNA BERT NELSON: No. I mean Ruth Egri and the Solomons went around always together.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh! Now is he -- well, maybe I --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who?

GLADYS GUILBERT Did you say you could erase?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh yes, yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT Is he the one --? We had one silver shirt in the crowd.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Who? Which crowd?

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, now I'm now sure, that's the reason I don't want it on the record --

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, it won't be.

GLADYS GUILBERT We had problems with that at the time.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes, in certain parts --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was that a janitor whose son was supposedly in a subversive organization?

GLADYS GUILBERT No, I think this is one of the artists, and Jane would know that, too, I'm sure.

FLORENCE REED: You know I thought somehow ... (looking through clippings)

ERNA BERT NELSON: Which one do you say it might be?

ELSA WEAVER: Well, we were always protective of those who worked on that and we knew they wanted very much to keep them from doing anything that would get them into trouble.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, I'm not sure whether or not this has any connection with what happened back in New York recently. Have you read about it?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't but --

GLADYS GUILBERT As I say, I don't want to even suggest

ELSA WEAVER: Let's don't drag up the other.

GLADYS GUILBERT No, no.

FLORENCE REED: (In the background) Do you recall Charlotte Upton?

ELSA WEAVER: We're oldies.

GLADYS GUILBERT And it's always hard to tell people's intentions.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I see.

ELSA WEAVER: What's the date on that Florence?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Is there more on the other side?

ELSA WEAVER: I think I'm on that, too. I think I'm right up there in the forefront.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Here we are.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Very nice.

ERNA BERT NELSON: What was this all about?

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, it's a newspaper I happened to keep.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, my goodness.

ERNA BERT NELSON: My goodness, what's the date on that?

FLORENCE REED: In the museum, I saw one.

ERNA BERT NELSON: 1940.

FLORENCE REED: -- and couldn't recognize her.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'm going to put on my glasses to look at that one.

ELSA WEAVER: ... wonderful girl.

GLADYS GUILBERT Margaret Allen! She's the one I was trying to remember.

ELSA WEAVER: She was still working in '40.

GLADYS GUILBERT She was such a good friend of Opal Fleckenstein.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, Opal used to work down there.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. She, of course was taking lessons all the time, was a very promising painter who's gone on and developed.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Now, who is that?

GLADYS GUILBERT Opal Fleckenstein, she's now on the faculty of Cheney.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, wasn't she a student of Tobey's over in the Seattle Museum Art school?

GLADYS GUILBERT No.

FLORENCE REED: No, that is Kathleen Gemberling.

GLADYS GUILBERT That was Kathleen.

FLORENCE REED: Opal had her start right here.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. Opal had her start here -- was Mark Tobey a WPA artist too?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, he was.

GLADYS GUILBERT My! They certainly did get hold of a lot of them, didn't they? - - I mean a lot of artists worked in it that have amounted to something.

ELSA WEAVER: Heavens! I've seen his things in the Metropolitan. And there was another man, Graves.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh yes.

ALL IN UNISON: Morris Graves!

ELSA WEAVER: Morris Graves, yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT But Mark Tobey, you know won the Biennial, which was, of course, an international honor.

FLORENCE REED: Now Ruth Irving gave me the name of Maxine Altman, who was also a student.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, Maxine, yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

FLORENCE REED: And I couldn't remember her, she may have taught at Holy Names.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, she's terrific.

FLORENCE REED: Maxine Altman.

ERNA BERT NELSON: She's still here, isn't she?

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. She has her own ceramic studio now.

FLORENCE REED: I didn't know that.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Read some more names: Bob Engard.

FLORENCE REED: Bob Engard, he's in commercial lithography now. And Erna Bert Helson. Those are the two -- Opal Fleckenstein I didn't write down.

GLADYS GUILBERT I wonder what happened to Margaret Allen, who was that good friend of Opal's? They were together, and she was a nurse, too. They seemed to be two of our more serious students at that time.

FLORENCE REED: Jane had a very close friend, and they painted a lot together, who moved away, but I can't recall the name.

ELSA WEAVER: Langworthy?

FLORENCE REED: What was the name?

ELSA WEAVER: Mrs. Langworthy.

FLORENCE REED: Langworthy? I -- can't remember ...

ERNA BERT NELSON: I don't remember her there. You mean the doctor's widow?

ELSA WEAVER: Yes. Mmhmm.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I don't remember her --

GLADYS GUILBERT She was there in the very beginning, I don't think --

ERNA BERT NELSON: She didn't become very serious, did she?

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, she moved away.

ELSA WEAVER: Later, she was sculpting.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes, she was first a painter, but I don't think she stayed with the Art Center much. I don't think she liked their approach.

ELSA WEAVER: Not especially.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, who would you say were the artists on who the Art Center may have exerted a formative influence, who have gone on and painted?

FLORENCE REED: Oh, I'd say Opal Fleckenstein.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Opal Fleckenstein, and --

FLORENCE REED: Bob Engard.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- Bob Engard and all the staff probably.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- the ones we've been talking about.

FLORENCE REED: As for the other students, I really don't know what they've done in later years.

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't know that there have been any outstanding --

ELSA WEAVER: I think there have been an awful lot of just, you know, sort of do-it-for-fun people like me.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes, I think so.

ELSA WEAVER: I was never one of the serious ones.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, --

ELSA WEAVER: Now look at Gladys - the field that she's gone into, she writes about it.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. Well, Erna Bert too.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You've gone into photography.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I was born a photographer, so that with me it was just, you know, fun.

ELSA WEAVER: It was an outlet.

ERNA BERT NELSON: The same with me. But it was a nice social outlet for us in those few years in that whole thing.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, it just was a marvelous opportunity to study with people that, you know, were wonderful -
-

ELSA WEAVER: I didn't think of it from that point of view at all. I think the reason I joined the Art Association was that I had just all my life been interested in art.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. Well, that's what all the rest of us -- the reason we got into it was that it filled a very definite need.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. It was the nicest way for adults to dabble a little in it, you know.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: I'd never had a chance to do sculpture. Oh! I was thrilled.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. Their sculpture classes were wonderful. We really had --

ELSA WEAVER: Do you remember George Scott, who went down with the "Arizona" in Pearl Harbor? His picture is on that page. I was in his class, he and a Negro, and we all worked together. That was just great.

ERNA BERT NELSON: That was great.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Who was the Negro, do you remember?

ELSA WEAVER: I can't think of his name, I think his picture is on there, I'm not sure.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh this?

FLORENCE REED: I can't find George.

ELSA WEAVER: They were always together, over there at the table I can see them now.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I can remember the man but I can't remember his name.

FLORENCE REED: There's no Negro.

ELSA WEAVER: He should be down there with George. There's Vanessa.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Let me see Vanessa.

GLADYS GUILBERT It doesn't look too much like her, you know.

ELSA WEAVER: No.

GLADYS GUILBERT This is Vanessa here.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes, it looks just like her when she poses for a portrait by Leonid Fink.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, she's the one that taught --

ERNA BERT NELSON: It's a perfect likeness. I remember her now, yes. She was so -- I can remember her sailing in and she'd say, "Well, after all, there's something to be said for craftsmanship." They looked down on her very much, she wasn't inventive, and she wasn't imaginative, and she just painted -- that's the Spokesman Review building looks like right there and that's what she could do so well, that and the Palorise landscape.

ELSA WEAVER: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: We've thrown around the term several times "avant garde" saying that the people who came in from New York brought an avant garde spirit in the arts. What kind of painting did they represent at that time? What was avant garde in 1933 in the Northwest? It was a little early for -- no, not '33 - '38 -- it was a little early for abstract-expressionism. What kind of paintings were the Morris and Kenneth Downer doing?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Carl Morris was a little influenced by the Surrealists, you know, a little. In fact, I have one of his canvases - some driftwood looking like bones or something and then this long vacant space with one little figure way off there, a lonely thing. Sometimes I hang it up and people say, "What's that supposed to be?" I say, "Oh, it's just something I dragged out of the attic." But that was - they were a little -- Morris was. Downer I don't know - he was --

FLORENCE REED: Everyone on the staff was doing social painting then, do you recall?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, I remember, yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT But they were beginning to get away from this tight, you know representational type of painting --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT -- into a little more free -- the beginnings of abstract.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well El Greco was an influence on them.

ELSA WEAVER: And the French School was influencing them, there's no question about it.

GLADYS GUILBERT That's right. And I think it probably would be typical of every art movement of that particular period.

ERNA BERT NELSON: A certain amount of distortion and imagination --

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: -- and sombre, dark colors - mud, most of it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But the WPA painting that came from the Art Center wasn't why is sometimes perhaps unfairly called "WPA art", that is social realism, the workers, native industries -- ?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, no. I'm just afraid our artists didn't get too many accepted. I don't -- you know they were always striving but I don't think they got too many --

GLADYS GUILBERT But, as you say, typical WPA art, I don't think they'd fit into that category, do you?

FLORENCE REED: No ...

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, except Laisner, and Laisner wasn't on the staff.

FLORENCE REED: The WPA was during the 30s, and George Laisner, well, it was quite understandable why he would be painting that way.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: But he wasn't even a member of the Art Center.

FLORENCE REED: No, he wasn't connected in any way. I recall his early exhibit at the museum.

ERNA BERT NELSON: But he was a great friend, he came down to the place at Ninth and Walnut all the time.

FLORENCE REED: Some of his pictures were on exhibit there --

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's right.

FLORENCE REED: -- that's where I first made his acquaintance.

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's right. He made those lithographs for the anti-war propaganda --

ELSA WEAVER: Well, don't you feel they were all experimenting at that time? I think they were all influenced by expressionism, impressionism and all the things that were going on. Most of them had early academic training and moved away from it.

GLADYS GUILBERT Mmhmm. But it was that New York background --

ELSA WEAVER: That's right. It was the people from New York that opened, loosened us here

GLADYS GUILBERT And the Chicago Art Institute, of course. Those two things - Carl Morris and his Chicago Art Institute background.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I think they were all feeling around, none of them --

ELSA WEAVER: Do you remember that one of, let me see, it was a Hilda Deutsch lying on a couch partially exposed, do you remember it?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Hilda did it? Or Hilda was the model?

ELSA WEAVER: She was the model. Do you remember it?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Carl did it?

ELSA WEAVER: Um-hum.

FLORENCE REED: Was it a painting or a lithograph?

ELSA WEAVER: A painting.

FLORENCE REED: A painting.

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't remember.

ELSA WEAVER: I'm just trying to feel myself into its classification. I think it was representational, I don't think --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Do you remember how one time Carl painted a beautiful head of Hilda, and he said, "It's the first time I ever tried to paint anything that looked like anything, and it sure looks like Hilda." And it did.

ELSA WEAVER: But, you know, Hilda herself was truly contemporary.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, he was delighted with it, it was nice. I remember Carl made two figures, two people to the waist or a little below, just bared these two struggling people, but they were very realistic, you know, considering what he paints now.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, in his classes we drew what was there, it was literal.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, we were trying to learn to draw.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. But your influence was all the time to be a little loose, a little free, a little more creative, instead of just being limited to what was right in front of you.

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's right. To use a little imagination

FLORENCE REED: I can remember in my own painting career, I was just thrilled if I could make a thing look real. Of course, now I know that was just one of the steps.

GLADYS GUILBERT I saw one of, some of Hilda's work and one of Carl's paintings at the Portland Museum just a week or so ago, and oh! I think he paints in an exciting palette now, I just love his things.

ELSA WEAVER: Oh, marvelous.

GLADYS GUILBERT And Hilda was doing things in a most interesting way, she had them labeled "Cement and

Concrete" but they were the most delicate things. It looked as though she had taken maybe a mesh wire and dribbled, you know, concrete or cement through it and then put her armatures in and then just filled them in with a little free form on her cement and oh! They were just perfectly lovely, I thought.

ELSA WEAVER: Well, she loosened my ideas about sculpture. I had been reading Malvina Hoffman and I thought you had to know all about anatomy, and I thought you had to know all these things that were basic. Well! - Hilda changed my approach.

GLADYS GUILBERT Mhmm. Well, I think that was their influence in the painting area, too. Don't you Erna Bert?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's very important. They were almost unique in WPA.

GLADYS GUILBERT I don't know whether that was typical. Did all the teaching staff come out of New York and Chicago for all the Art Centers all over the country?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, it didn't. Mainly it came out of the region of where the centers or classes were, but there was, as Louis Bunce was explaining to me the other day, there was, in addition to this a program of traveling artists or artists on loan, in which artists would be sent out from New York for, say six months, as the Morrises were, but then sometimes they elected to stay where they were sent, out in the West, and so they stayed there and kept on teaching or kept on the WPA project there.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, Hilda was from New York, but Carl was definitely from Chicago --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, they didn't know each other until they came here.

GLADYS GUILBERT He came directly from Chicago, but he was born and reared in California.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I shouldn't have said "The Morrises were sent." Hilda Deutsch was sent and Carl Morris was sent, separately.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

ELSA WEAVER: Apropos of Spokane, though, there we had Bertha Ballou who came here early and I remember I took lessons from her for a while, drawing exactly what I felt and thought. Well, as soon as I came down to this other place, there was just what you said - a loosening, freedom. Of course, I'd known El Greco, I'd known more about the history of art than painting, but you had the feeling that you could just throw, just slap the paint on if you wanted to, you know.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, I think the artistic faculty group had more than just an influence through their own efforts on our town. That is, I remember Hilda's coming in and meeting a little group that I had at my house once, and she wore a very ornamental ring on her front finger and I remember all the ladies -- that wasn't being done in Spokane, you know, particularly -- showing how conventional we were, because afterwards they said, "Oh, did you know she had a great big ring on her front finger?"

ERNA BERT NELSON: She wore her hair, was it in two braids or one? -- always in a braid, you know, never done up.

ELSA WEAVER: She had an alien look.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes, a very arty-type, Bohemian quality, you know.

ELSA WEAVER: The days before the Beatles. Say, do you mind if I run?

We understand.

ELSA WEAVER: I have eight for dinner tonight and I've got eight little rock hens lying there ready to be stuffed.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It's been awfully good to meet you.

ELSA WEAVER: It's been a pleasure to meet you.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Thank you so much, Mrs. Weaver, for what you've remembered.

ELSA WEAVER: I wish you all the luck in the world, I think you've got a terrific job.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it's interesting. I'm learning a lot.

GLADYS GUILBERT I'm just sorry I wasn't here when you were all reminiscing earlier. I'm sure it would have brought a lot to mind.

ELSA WEAVER: We were sorry. We wanted you, too.

ELSA WEAVER: Goodbye.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Goodbye and thank you. Oh, Mrs. Weaver, may I borrow that newspaper clipping and have it photographed?

ELSA WEAVER: I'm giving all of this to you.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, you're giving it to us? Thank you so much.

ELSA WEAVER: I'm down in my basement and throwing away old letters.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, wonderful! The Archives will treasure it.

ELSA WEAVER: Got to make it easier for my - for the rest of the kids that come after me, poor dears. I'm sorry that they have to go through my junk.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Goodbye.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, does this begin to fill in some of the gaps?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it does, it certainly does. It makes the bare correspondence that I've read take on much more meaning.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, well. Good.

ERNA BERT NELSON: We had three floors in that building.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did you?

ERNA BERT NELSON: The top -- well, I believe it was the basement and the main floor and the second floor, and up above was the office and the painting rooms and the main floor that you came into was practically devoted to the galleries, and then the basement was sculpture and other drawing classes.

GLADYS GUILBERT This is where the Cowles made their contribution in giving us the use of the building as their contribution.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's what I want to ask - how you got the building? Whose building it was? And what happened to it afterwards?

ERNA BERT NELSON: It stood vacant before, and afterwards it stood vacant a long time and then they put a vacuum cleaner company and a --

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. It was just a typical business building but really, as you say, Erna Bert, I think the gallery was one of the most attractive we've ever had in Spokane.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, it was nice and large.

GLADYS GUILBERT It was much bigger than our present museum as far as that's concerned..

DOROTHY BESTOR: Really?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. Yes, it was.

GLADYS GUILBERT They opened it all up and painted it - that's one nice thing we had plenty of paint and carpenters and workmen so those things could always get done and be maintained.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good.

GLADYS GUILBERT There wasn't that struggle.

ERNA BERT NELSON: It was roomy and it was clean and it was always heated, it certainly was a beautiful place

to work in, but I think that all of those teachers worked at home, they didn't work there very much.

GLADYS GUILBERT There really wasn't a good place for them to have a personal studio where you could have all your own paints and equipment around.

ERNA BERT NELSON: No. That's right. They all had their studios at home.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I understand they worked at home for two or three days every week and then were at the Center for two or three days every week.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes, they were always worried, Downer and Morris were always saying, "well, we can't do this, we've got to turn in something now, we're pushed, we've got to submit something, after all."

FLORENCE REED: That would be an obligation not always easy to fulfill.

ERNA BERT NELSON: That's right.

FLORENCE REED: You've got to keep turning things out, producing.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Especially when everybody wanted them for this party and that party and do this, and let's go out to the lake today. We took them to the Coulee Dam country and the lakes and everything.

GLADYS GUILBERT You were wonderful to them, Erna Bert, you and Eric.

ERNA BERT NELSON: No, no --- well, they were our life there for several years, they were practically the only people we knew.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You must have been sorry to see it close?

ERNA BERT NELSON: We were so involved with the war, you know...

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

ERNA BERT NELSON: ... that by that time it -- I don't remember a great sorrow. I mean it kind of -- Morris left and, you know Caroline Kizer came out and Downer and then they kind of left, I mean to me personally it went right over into the Y, it wasn't as good maybe, but I don't remember any great sorrow --

GLADYS GUILBERT The Y.W. didn't have the financial backing that the Center had as far as being able to hire faculty.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh no, and they had no exhibition place to amount to anything.

GLADYS GUILBERT No.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh no, it was a loss when it left.

GLADYS GUILBERT You should see our new art department.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I'd like to. I must get over there and see the new Y.

GLADYS GUILBERT I'd like you to.

ERNA BERT NELSON: It sure was an exciting, fun time.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh yes, it was. You did more things socially with them, of course, we didn't do that so much.

ERNA BERT NELSON: No.

GLADYS GUILBERT I just knew them in an operating, business like student kind of relationship.

ERNA BERT NELSON: We used to -- Eric -- after class we'd go down to the beer parlors, you know, - we were kind of poor - and order a pitcher of beer and sit around and make it last as long as we could and then afterwards I can remember Hilda and Carl and Downer and all the rest of us, and there would be little Hilda, Eric always teased her because she was so tiny - built very small.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I didn't know that.

ERNA BERT NELSON: -- and with those long braids, and he'd say "You look about nineteen and you act about

fourteen," and we'd go down the street singing these songs, you know, "Old Man Moses," and one thing and another. It was a lot of fun. They were nice people to know.

GLADYS GUILBERT They were exciting people.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT -- interesting too.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Were there any other parts of the WPA Art Project, that is the music project, or the Federal Theatre Project, or the Federal Writers Project - were any of those going on in Spokane at the same time?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Didn't we have some writers working? But we didn't have any theatre particularly, did we?

DOROTHY BESTOR: You probably had writers visiting you, to do the Washington State Guidebooks?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes, I heard about that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That was very successful. But you didn't have any theatre?

ERNA BERT NELSON: I don't remember.

GLADYS GUILBERT No, and I don't think we really had a writing project as you think of the art project.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh no, it was not to educate -- see, this was the thing that the whole public centered into the way it was set up here, we had these classes and we had this gallery and the lectures --

FLORENCE REED: And films.

ERNA BERT NELSON: -- and, oh, all sorts of things, which when the writers came through all we did was just tell them about places around here.

FLORENCE REED: They interviewed for historical purposes, you see. Interviewed old timers, --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. But no courses in writing or anything like that.

FLORENCE REED: No.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh looking over the publicity bulletins of the project I was struck by the number of lectures on art history and the scholarliness of them, according to the titles and some of the summaries. I think it was quite unusual to have the WPA Art Project go in so seriously for the history of art. Who was responsible for that? I think it's very good but it didn't happen in lots of other places where they had art projects. Was it Carl Morris, or ...?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Well, a lot of our own faculty wrote those, of course, --

GLADYS GUILBERT Aren't they signed? Don't they have signatures on them?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, sometimes it's just an announcement of a lecture or a lecture series that will be held and it sounds like a very serious, academic course and I --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Do you remember those?

GLADYS GUILBERT No, I don't.

DOROTHY BESTOR: The art faculty?

FLORENCE REED: I was rather a newcomer to Spokane then. I don't recall them at all.

GLADYS GUILBERT Well, I remember who gave some of them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Who gave some of them?

GLADYS GUILBERT Well I think Morris, Downer, -- well, I thought Jim gave some - Fitzgerald --

DOROTHY BESTOR: I think he gave some, and I think Guy Anderson gave some.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But I wondered who set up the curriculum, who thought the community was ready for such lectures on such scholarly level.

GLADYS GUILBERT I think they did.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I think it came out of the people that were working there, probably.

GLADYS GUILBERT And Charlotte Upton helped quite a little at that point, she was editing, you know, you have our folders?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT They're quite nicely done, don't you think they are?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, they are.

FLORENCE REED: Charlotte was very much --

ERNA BERT NELSON: -- heart and soul in it at that time.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. She didn't do too much in the creative end of it, but --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh no.

GLADYS GUILBERT She helped on the board and did a lot of this writing that went into - she was the editor, I think, we called her, of the brochures.

FLORENCE REED: You know, I couldn't find a date on any of those brochures. Did you find any dates?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Some, but not --

FLORENCE REED: I had to guess them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- not on all of them.

FLORENCE REED: Of course, we don't have the full collection, I don't believe. I wonder if Charlotte still has them. When she returns I want to find out.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'd certainly like to know if she does have any.

GLADYS GUILBERT How many do you have, Florence? You know I haven't had time to get upstairs in my attic.

FLORENCE REED: Well, I have none personally but I found some at the Museum that I have taken over and put in the file.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, did you?

FLORENCE REED: And by the way, the minutes that we have came from Mr. Whitehouse in the box that he sent.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, good.

FLORENCE REED: So we can thank Mr. Whitehouse for so many of these things.

GLADYS GUILBERT Yes. Fine.

FLORENCE REED: But we haven't found a scrapbook yet.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, it isn't at the Museum?

FLORENCE REED: No.

GLADYS GUILBERT And it isn't at the Library?

FLORENCE REED: I've asked our librarian to look in our scrapbooks and see if it came with Mr. Whitehouse's material. And Ruth (Mrs. Irving) is going down to the Y and see if by any chance it might have gotten taken there. But there is a scrapbook - Jane told me about it right away, that she had made, and if we can find that, it will have these newspaper clippings I think.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, that would be very interesting.

FLORENCE REED: And I hope we can. Yes, I realize that the time has gone all too quickly --

ERNA BERT NELSON: Don't let me interrupt.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Awfully nice to meet you Mrs. Nelson. Thank you so much for telling me what you remembered.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I think I learned more from it than I ever knew.

FLORENCE REED: Well, it's been wonderful. I'm so glad you came today. We do appreciate it.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh! I'm so happy, it's my pleasure.

FLORENCE REED: Well, we'll have to reminisce again some time.

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh, yes.

FLORENCE REED: Come back we'll always reminisce.

GLADYS GUILBERT It's been fun to see you, Erna. I'll see you again.

ERNA BERT NELSON: I hope so, Gladys.

GLADYS GUILBERT Fine. Are you busy as a bee these days?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Oh yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT I suppose with Christmas coming on it means it's an awfully busy time. (In the photography field)

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes. And too, high school, you know, we have -- high school starts in August and then in June there are new graduates - oh, it's a wonderful idea - because come February and March I'll be through.

GLADYS GUILBERT Oh, will you? Oh, good, Wonderful.

FLORENCE REED: In February and March you have a little letup, do you?

ERNA BERT NELSON: Yes.

FLORENCE REED: And then you're beginning again for commencement?

ERNA BERT NELSON: No, then weddings begin.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Oh, dear. Just time to go to weddings ... well, I still have a cup of coffee I'm working on.

[END OF TAPE]

[TAPE 2]

At the home of Mrs. Truman Reed, E. 528 High Drive, Spokane, Washington, November 18, 1965.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy Bestor

And beginning on page 67, an interview with Mrs. Jane Baldwin (Mrs. Warren Baldwin) Board member of Spokane Art Center

Interview takes place at the Eastern Washington Historical Society Museum, November 18, 1965

(Continued from Tape 1)

DOROTHY BESTOR: This is the first side of the second tape of an interview at the home of Mrs. Truman Reed. In a minute we will resume a conversation with four former members of the Board of the Spokane Art Center. Right now they are looking at lists of Art Center Staff, and talking about various instructors who were on the staff of the Art Center. At the moment they are remembering a Miss Egri who was an instructor.

FLORENCE REED: There are the names that I remember: Ruth Egri -

GLADYS GUILBERT: No, I don't remember her.

FLORENCE REED: I remember she was dark-haired, tall --

GLADYS GUILBERT: What did she teach, Florence?

FLORENCE REED: Well, she's just down as artist instructor and I can just faintly see her, she was from Brooklyn.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Was she a painter, do you remember?

FLORENCE REED: Yes. And had had her art work at the Art Students League and had grown up and had gone to high school in Brooklyn. I do recall that she was very unhappy out here. That made her feel lonely, she didn't care for our Palouse country at all, it was just a lonely, barren place to her, and that's understandable, having come from Brooklyn and New York where everything is crowded. And then this Joseph Solomon, do you recall him?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Just very vaguely. But I think maybe, as I recall, there -- whether it was Joseph Solomon or someone else -- that I remember Jane saying, "Well, did you notice in one of the - oh, this was years ago - but in one of the national magazines -one of these men had been written up as having a recent show in New York and I can't remember whether it was Mr. Solomon. I kind of have a feeling it was, but there again --

FLORENCE REED: Then there's an Ann Micheloo.

DOROTHY BESTOR: She did one of the lithographs that Mrs. Irving lent us to photograph.

FLORENCE REED: She was an artist - do you recall her at all?

GLADYS GUILBERT: I can't remember her.

FLORENCE REED: Isn't it interesting? Well, those are -- you might want to look at this.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Guy Anderson and Earl Carpenter, I remember he was one of the -- well, he did a lot of things, he did a lot of the building painting and maintenance, too, as well as --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did he do anything else but this maintenance work?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Well, it says, "ex designer."

FLORENCE REED: Exhibition designer.

GLADYS GUILBERT: That's right. So I think he was kind of a handyman and I think maybe he helped in the putting together of this very fine collection of handmade tools that the sculpture division used. And John B. Davis is another name I don't recall at all. I remember Lou Erickson. And Tom LaFollette, a project technician on films. I don't remember him at all, so I doubt -- I mean I don't think he was on the teaching faculty or anything --

FLORENCE REED: I noticed he went to board meetings when I was reading the minutes, he would be there and he would make announcements at the board meeting about films to be shown.

GLADYS GUILBERT: But Jerre Murry was there - it seemed to me that he was -- no, we were all painting in sort of a -- well, we used the same -- of course, it was inexpensive that we used tempera, egg tempera medium, you know, and so he was the one that really loosened us up quite a little bit as far as his California approach was concerned.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I think egg tempera makes for a certain tightness, but so many Seattle painters are utterly devoted to it.

GLADYS GUILBERT: It was very, as I say, I think it was because it was an inexpensive medium; at that time that was quite an item, you know.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT: But in contrast to oil paint, or an oil glaze, I remember it was economical. Then when Jim Fitzgerald came along, of course, his main forte was a glaze type painting which was terribly hard, for me anyway, to control.

FLORENCE REED: Does he still paint using a lot of glazing?

DOROTHY BESTOR: He doesn't - he hardly paints any more, he's all sculpture.

FLORENCE REED: Usually carving or sculpture.

GLADYS GUILBERT: That's interesting, isn't it?

DOROTHY BESTOR: You've seen the wonderfully exciting screens he has in the Seattle Public Library?

FLORENCE REED: I have. And also, I think he has a large mural down in Olympia in the library there.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. And then, of course, the fountain in the courtyard of the Seattle Center.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Yes.

FLORENCE REED: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It's interesting, when one reads his vita and sees that he started out as a watercolorist, to see what different media he's gone through.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, you were saying before I turned the second tape on, you were sort of pulling together something we were talking about the strong points of this project, the reason for its success; and what were you deciding they were?

FLORENCE REED: Well, I would say first, we felt that it was an active interest on the part of the volunteer workers; and second, and probably most important, the staff itself who brought something with them when they came to give the classes; and the people here in Spokane.

GLADYS GUILBERT: I would agree with that. I think the faculty was probably the principal reason for its success, and you say that they changed quite frequently - well, every new one brought something different and new life -

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT: -- and vigor. I don't think except in the end, at the end when our faculty was gradually dwindling where we were running out of money, that it didn't hold up pretty well all the way through with very different types, you know, Jim Fitzgerald with his methodical type, you know, planning and all, from Ken Downer was very -- quite a contrast.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it would be. You say the money was running out at the end. Was this because the local sponsors weren't as enthusiastic?

GLADYS GUILBERT: No. This was the federal - the gradual tapering off of the Federal Arts project.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well then, would you say that there were any particularly weak points that the project as it was worked out here, any main criticisms or self-criticisms that you felt at the time?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Well, to me I wasn't aware of them, it seemed to me that the faculty with the different kinds of people that came to us, as I say, they all had something that was in their favor - not the same talents in administration or in their own creative effort -- I know there were some local criticisms at first because it was a WPA project, and secondly, because of the natural feeling of a conservative community toward this rather free and uninhibited type of art person. But I think as far as I remember, on the board there was never any particular criticism of the faculty.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine. And you think that the project did have a carryover in Spokane?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Very much so. Don't you, Florence, feel that -- ?

FLORENCE REED: Oh, it must have had an impact. You see, I know so little about it because I had just come to Spokane and wasn't closely associated with it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But you were on the board, though?

FLORENCE REED: Yes, I was on the board toward the end.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, toward the end.

FLORENCE REED: You see, in '42 the project was beginning to wonder from where its funds would come, and if we could carry on without federal help. Then later, as Mrs. Guilbert can tell you, this idea came of taking the equipment, easels and benches, that type of thing and the library books over to the YWCA and carrying on there. There was some attempt made to have volunteer instructors and go on alone at the Center in the center building, but that didn't work out, did it?

GLADYS GUILBERT: No. You know, it would be impossible to run it as a volunteer project entirely ...

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Get volunteers to work that consistently --

FLORENCE REED: And we didn't have volunteers for teachers either that would inspire students. So everyone was very happy when it was moved to the YW, so that something could continue.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And the Y art program continues to this day?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Yes. U-huh. It's one of the strong points and that's interesting, too, in that the Spokane YWCA pioneered in this arts and crafts field, which has gone on now all over the country in YWCA's as an adult education interest. But the Spokane YWCA, because of this feeling that they didn't want the thing to stop, they felt such a good beginning had begun, that it was sad to have all the interest and enthusiasm disappear, so it was carried on in that spirit.

FLORENCE REED: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: One other thing, what do you, either or both of you, think about the problem, or the question that's raised so often now about what form government interest in, or stimulation of the arts should take? Do you think there's a need for, not a WPA program, of course, but for federal encouragement of the arts, and do you think the recent talk about it may or ought to bear fruit - either in encouraging by subsidy individual artists, or encouraging creative centers for the teaching of art to children, or some other form?

FLORENCE REED: It's a little hard for me to comment on that because my whole viewpoint is so local. I know that we have excellent opportunities here for young people in the arts. However, all young people may not be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But you think here in Spokane now it's not really needed - government sponsorship?

FLORENCE REED: Our public school system has a very strong art department.

GLADYS GUILBERT: The only thing, Florence, that I think is sad about the public school system's art is that it doesn't start until the sixth grade.

FLORENCE REED: Yes. That is with special teachers. The primary teachers teach it, but I know our art supervisor works very closely with her primary teachers because they've had no art training, and they do some marvelous things in the second and third grades.

GLADYS GUILBERT: That's right, but it so depends on special quality in that first grade teacher and, let's face it, they're hired as general teachers --

FLORENCE REED: That is true.

GLADYS GUILBERT: -- and if they have an art quality it is marvelous but --

FLORENCE REED: If they didn't why -

GLADYS GUILBERT: -- so many of them --

FLORENCE REED: That may probably be very true. And until our system does have art teachers throughout, beginning in the kindergarten, it will keep those younger children from being as expressive as they might be.

GLADYS GUILBERT: That's right. I think there's really a great need for a strong -- and we don't have it in Spokane - a strong museum art program.

FLORENCE REED: Yes. You mean instruction?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Instruction for junior artists, and for children, and as it is we don't have anything right at the moment ...

FLORENCE REED: No, we haven't in the younger age group.

GLADYS GUILBERT: ... except that we have a few classes at the YWCA in this field.

FLORENCE REED: For the young children.

GLADYS GUILBERT: And now our Fort Wright College is beginning to come along with some additional instruction for promising high school seniors.

FLORENCE REED: Mmhmm. Well, we have a good department in the high schools in art and we have our new Community College, which is doing very well and, of course, our WSU art center, which -- I do not think takes high school students.

GLADYS GUILBERT: They took a few of the very promising high school people in some of the special master classes in the summer, that they felt could handle it, but that was the only one, with just a few children.

FLORENCE REED: But I think in our junior high groups and in our senior high schools we have excellent art instruction, where many different media are explored. Some very fine creative things are made.

GLADYS GUILBERT: It seems to me there's still an opportunity for the especially gifted and especially - interested student in a more intensive program, though, than you can get in a class of 30 or 35.

FLORENCE REED: That is true. They try to keep classes small, but they do run as high as 30. I think of Sacafarven Junior High and the people that they have reached, with only three special art teachers.

GLADYS GUILBERT: It's marvelous. Mmhmm.

FLORENCE REED: Our high schools have two or three art teachers, they do a much more creative type of thing and use many different materials.

GLADYS GUILBERT: As for the federal project, I have mixed emotions about this. I know that it's been difficult for artists to support themselves, and it's true right now even though the times are more liberal, I think, and all the art that's being used in architecture and sculpture is connection with architecture is marvelous, it still leaves a pretty skimpy kind of income for anybody who wants to support themselves entirely through the arts. You're almost forced to be a teacher and carry on your own creative effort on the outside.

FLORENCE REED: That is what has happened.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Yes. You teach. But on the other hand you would have to put so many safeguards in a program sponsored by the federal government so it wouldn't be -- well, like this current thing - some of the problems involved in this new Poverty program would be the same - to be sure that it was kept in the hands of the art people, that it didn't become a political situation, and that it would be done with understanding.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Do you think that the WPA art program had some or any of these safeguards built in it?

GLADYS GUILBERT: Because it was an emergency situation it had less than I think would be true if we did it as a regular year by year kind of thing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT: But I realize there's a great need for some kind of subsidy, as there has been through the ages, the kings supported art, the royalty, the Church in other generations -- but the only bright spot in the picture is that business foundations are coming in now with strong support for art with the development of collections.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

GLADYS GUILBERT: So whether that would answer the problem or whether that would ever adequately answer I wouldn't be sure. But I think there's a need but just how it should be met I --

FLORENCE REED: Well, by way of illustration we have - and I think of only one - truly creative artist who worked independently and who doesn't teach for a living in our city. There may be more --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Who is that?"

FLORENCE REED: Harold Balazs.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

FLORENCE REED: And he has gone it alone all these years, he gets very discouraged but he has contributed a great deal.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Does Kathleen Gemberling teach, then?

FLORENCE REED: Yes, Kathleen Gemberling teaches, she also is not dependent on her painting.

GLADYS GUILBERT: That's right.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I was looking over some of my notes on the correspondence, and I just came across two lists that I thought I might show you to see if any of those names call forth anything else. Those are people presumably on the Board that Kenneth Downer was sending copies of this to, and those were people on the staff, the column in green on the page.

GLADYS GUILBERT: I don't recognize -- are these Spokane people?

DOROTHY BESTOR: I gather they were, because they were people to whom he was sending copies of a letter about -- copies of a progress report, I think. (looking at lists) Those were all on the staff.

FLORENCE REED: Mary Morgan was a teacher.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Miriam? Is it Miriam Morgan.

FLORENCE REED: Yes, she was a teacher.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Yes, that's right.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, if you think of any other points that are important, or even not very important but concrete and interesting, why of course you can add them when we send back the manuscript with the tape. So think you both loads for all your time and contributions. And if you find any other records -- I know Mrs. Reed is going to show me some, but anything that could be photographed or microfilmed -- send it in to the Archives, they'd appreciate it very much indeed.

GLADYS GUILBERT: Fine. I will - I'll go home right now and go up in my attic, it's one of those things that I've been pushing ahead and here the time has come and I haven't done it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, thank you again.

END OF THIS INTERVIEW WITH MESDAMES REED AND GUILBERT.

This tape continues with an interview with Mrs. Jane Baldwin (Mrs. Reed also being present)

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH Mrs. Jane Baldwin (Mrs. Warren Baldwin)

Former member of the Spokane Art Center Board

November 19, 1965

(Mrs. Truman Reed is also present)

JANE BALDWIN: Jane Baldwin

DOROTHY BESTOR: It is now the next day, November 19, 1965. Mrs. Truman Reed and I are in the Eastern Washington Museum at Spokane, of which Mrs. Reed was formerly the director (until her retirement in 1962) We are interviewing Mrs. Jane Baldwin, Spokane painter and teacher of art, a board member of the Art Center who was much involved with fund raising and public relations as well as with the classes and the exhibits throughout the life of the Center. You had a connection throughout the entire -- ?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. On the first drive for the Art Center, Bruce Inverarity contacted myself and Mrs. Ben Kizer, and we were co-chairmen for the drive to raise the first money to match the federal funds --

DOROTHY BESTOR: There's a slight interruption here while we are rearranging things and in a minute you will have a chance to continue.

(INTERRUPTION)

So now we're really on. And why don't you start and tell me about the original contact that Bruce Inverarity made with you and how you started getting matching funds, and then we can go on from there.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, we just had a straight drive throughout the city, through the schools, and we raised a large committee to do this, and we were very pleased because the Art Center started with contributions from school children - their pennies up to quite large sums.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: We formed the board, which you have a list of, and big committees for cultural research and for social and all types of activities. This was outside the classes that were formed.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well now, about this collecting funds, did you meet with much opposition as you started? Did people know what the Art Center would be like and think it was a good thing, or did you have to educate them?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, we had to educate them somewhat. They were all for it in a way because there was not Art Center or gallery here, but the average person I think at that time, when they were not exposed to TV and that type of thing so much, didn't feel that an Art Center was too important to the city of Spokane.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. And then I believe you were saying, before we turned the tape on, that there was some opposition to the WPA as such.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. Not to the Art Center but just the idea of the government coming in and raising money and, of course, I think, too, that there was so much comment on WPA, of course we know that it did a great deal of good but there were also things that could be approached by the public that they disliked.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, and there were a lot of cartoons and a lot of aspects that could be exaggerated and ridiculed.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, and they were to some extent. But after the Art Center was formed, I think they forgot about that aspect of it more, than they did at first.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You think that by the time the Art Center was to wind up its affairs after about three and a half years that the public was convinced that at least in this case WPA was a good thing perhaps?

JANE BALDWIN: I wouldn't say that entirely.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

JANE BALDWIN: I think during the height they felt, "Well now, this is wonderful for our children and for the adults and the exhibits," - we had some very fine exhibits, the WPA exhibits on the whole - they sent one through I think it was a once a month and they were extremely good --

DOROTHY BESTOR: These were the ones sent from Washington, D.C.?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. And then they had our opening exhibit we had a Van Gogh show, original Van Goghs.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. That came here before it came to Seattle, Mr. Fitzgerald was saying.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. But after Mr. Fitzgerald left, and our manager too, then WPA took it over and we were under -- do you remember what that was -- ? you wouldn't - I'm sorry -- it was under different control - we were under the General WPA office here, and not on our own.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, as I reconstruct things from the records, though, of course you can correct me -- first you were the Spokane Art Center but you formed that for the purpose of getting under the WPA?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, that's right.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And then in the state of Washington elsewhere the WPA Art Project presently became the "Washington State-wide Art Project" so-called, but it was still supported partially by WPA funds.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, that's right.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You think this also came under the "Washington State-wide?" I don't find that in the records but it must have been, it was in Washington --

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- and then there's a change that mystifies me, and that I was asking Mrs. Reed about last night. In November, 1941, you suddenly became the Inland Empire Art Association but you were still being supported somewhat by WPA funds. Do you remember about that or why they changed that?

JANE BALDWIN: The "Inland Empire Art Association" was to include other people to support it because of all the small towns around here -- this was a side organization that had function outside the center to which we could

charge admission, to raise money. All functions at the center had to be free.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: That was before this complete breakdown came at the last.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I see.

JANE BALDWIN: Where we were under the direction, not of an art director, but we went, I forget - not too many months - but quite a few months under the WPA man who hired everybody, he knew nothing about art, he knew nothing about the Center, he confiscated all our materials --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good heavens!

JANE BALDWIN: -- and we had to get that back.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I should say so. Now this would have been toward the end of 1941 and '42?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. It would be '42, it was right at the end.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I wonder what kind of WPA person that would have been. Would that have been the supervisor for the state of Washington?

JANE BALDWIN: I believe in this, or for this section.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh. I know that the supervisor for the state of Washington for a good deal of the time was Don Abel, who is now down at Olympia. Did the Spokane person have to resign when he came -- ?

JANE BALDWIN: No, this was Mr. Lancaster.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, Lancaster.

JANE BALDWIN: So I think he was here in Spokane.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Then it was a local thing?

JANE BALDWIN: A local thing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- because Don Able was succeeded by --

JANE BALDWIN: He might be a very fine fellow in many ways but even like our life classes where we had dressed models - we never had nude models at the Center, still he objected to a girl standing on a platform with artists drawing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good heavens!

JANE BALDWIN: It was just unfortunate.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Very unfortunate.

JANE BALDWIN: And then the state at that time said that they would continue the Art Center but they wanted to appoint all the directors and art people. Well, of course, that was their privilege, but we in Spokane felt that we did not want that to happen. We would prefer to give it up during the war because, of course, at that time it was impossible to raise funds.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: But we could have gone on with the state help under state association, but if they wanted to appoint all personnel, we would have no discretion in this.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I wonder why it was that Mr. Inverarity over in Seattle wasn't the person -- ?

JANE BALDWIN: He would have had no say about whom the state hired.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, but during so much of the time he was corresponding with the director over here.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, Bruce told me that and he tried to keep the center going - he was leaving WPA at this time - the whole thing was falling apart, the Government was withdrawing all WPA funds.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I see. Well now, in a way we're getting ahead of the game --

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, we are.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- because I mentioned Fitzgerald's name, and that brought us to the end.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: So why don't we go back and fill in some of the details of the general growth and development of the Center before we get it wound up and abolished?

JANE BALDWIN: One more thing --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, surely.

JANE BALDWIN: Before we say it was abolished, I can't - I don't think anything like that ever is, because I think it inspired Spokane to go on and to open up Art Centers after the war, on their own.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, that's very good to hear.

JANE BALDWIN: And I kept a nucleus of working women and we conducted a class in my home just to keep them busy and working in art, women that had gone out and worked very, very hard on the drives and committees that were artists, and then when Mr. Glen Jones of WSU came up to me and wanted to start an extension in Spokane, we had a nucleus of women to go out and round up students and start again.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine. When did they start the extension, and how much of a thing was it?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, we started with one class at the YW, and Mrs. Guilbert was art chairman at the Y the first year and then I took it over the second year as chairman, and developed it into quite a full art schedule, we were busy every day. But the extension then had two classes, I taught the beginning drawing and painting as a paid WSU instructor. But let's go back again, but I wanted to get recorded that I don't think that anything is ever lost entirely.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I'm glad to get that on the record. Yes. Well, fine. I knew that part of it had been in some sense taken over by the YWCA.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And that some of the equipment --

JANE BALDWIN: All the equipment went over there.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- but I hadn't realized the full import of this other development.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, it's really amazing, because now in Spokane we have so many places to exhibit and, of course, a long time ago, 50, 60 years ago, they did have a very active Art Association with a drawing group.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: But we'd lost all that, we had had absolutely nothing of that. But now today we have so many fine places to show and classes, accredited classes and also, let's say, busy-work classes that interest the housewife. But I feel that the Art Center was the renewal of art activity and interest in Spokane. I can't say the beginning, because sometime back when we had the opera house here, sixty years ago, they did have active exhibits in the Art Association.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see. Incidentally, just in passing, what happened to the opera house?

JANE BALDWIN: It burned down or they took it down, I think they took it down.

FLORENCE REED: They took it down. Lack of interest in the 30s, it was an excellent business location, stock companies were on the wane, movies were taking over, and it was demolished and we now have there a Pay Less Drug Store on that side --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh dear!

FLORENCE REED: -- and a parking lot and a Woolworth's store. Profitable to the landowners, but the opera house was an institution at one time and a very fine --

JANE BALDWIN: I believe they called it the Auditorium at that time --

FLORENCE REED: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: -- and the whole top floor was taken over by the Art League.

FLORENCE REED: It was very beautiful --

JANE BALDWIN: The Art Association before the Art Center was a very fine social club - they studied, but it was not a working association, there was no drawing or painting.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. There's a big difference.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I'm glad to get the before and after ...

JANE BALDWIN: Now let's go back again.

DOROTHY BESTOR: ... now let's get down the middle. You helped raise the funds, and helped educate the community as to what might be done with the funds, and this was at the beginning, after Mr. Inverarity had made contact with Spokane and asked if it wanted an Art Center.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And then - I don't believe I gave you a chance to get down on this tape the fact that there was -- well, the implications of the fund-raising you had to guarantee a certain amount here --

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, we had to guarantee all expenses except wages. We had a group of speakers, Mrs. Reed did that too, we went out before schools and oh, granges and clubs, we were just on call any time to give an art talk, and we did not go out just to plug the Art Center but to give them an educational talk on art plus what the Art Center could give them. And we went to Coeur d'alene and all the granges around, I think what interested me most were the people who could not travel and had been more or less in Spokane, people with less funds seemed more sympathetic to art. The people, who had traveled and everything were sympathetic and wanted the center for Spokane, but to these other people it was the inner need of man and that was very gratifying.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see. Well now, that's interesting. When the Art Center became a reality did this same less-privileged group support it and come to it and take the classes?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, as much as they could.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good.

JANE BALDWIN: But, of course, they couldn't support it to the extent that it needed support.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I don't mean financially, necessarily, so much, but did they take advantage of the exhibits and classes as much as they had hoped to?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, yes, they did definitely take advantage of that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, the fund raising, of course, was a continuing process.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, it was always our headache from year to year, to get a chairman, and people to go out and work on a drive of that sort.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You would have to get, have a campaign once a year, to get funds for the next year?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And to get the government money?

JANE BALDWIN: And then during Mr. Fitzgerald's time we tried not to have a privileged class in the drive, but it finally came to that point where we were using every means to raise money, and that's how people paying so much would get certain privileges, which some of us did not approve of, but we felt that the Art Center was more important than our own personal likes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, what kind of privileges did they have?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, they got tickets to a series of lectures free, they also got a set of prints - that's what those prints were for.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I see.

JANE BALDWIN: And we only did that one year. I don't approve of that type of thing at all, but I think where there is something like that it should be open to everybody, and everybody treated alike. But we felt that it was much better for us to raise the money. The classes were going well. When the war came Tom LaFollette - I worked very closely with him - was our business manager --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, he was the business manager when Mr. Fitzgerald was director.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: The rest of the time you didn't have a separate business manager did you?

JANE BALDWIN: No. But we felt with Tom LaFollette and the way things were going, if the war hadn't broken, that we could have built up and really had our own building at that time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! Wouldn't that have been wonderful?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. But, of course, during the war, with WPA withdrawn, and the people had much more serious things to think about.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, it must have been fairly expensive to have a business manager and pay him. Were you criticized for spending money on a business manager when you needed to raise money?

JANE BALDWIN: No. Because there you see all the salaries were paid by WPA. We only raised money for heat, light and rent. The students brought their own supplies but they were never charged a fee, and we could not charge any type of entrance fee to anything at the center, for entertainment or anything, that is, we could not rent out the rooms for other purposes or anything like that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! I notice in this set of posters that are in the notebook that we have in mentions the fact that, I believe, 37 organizations held club meetings in the rooms within a certain time.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, yes, we asked them, but we could not charge them rent.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It was a goodwill gesture, but you couldn't earn money that way?

JANE BALDWIN: No, we couldn't earn money that way.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, that's too bad.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, that was a stipulation of the government, but we thought that anybody coming in to the Center was fine, except one of the directors let in a drill team (and we thought that was going a little bit too far) to practice.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, heavens! Well, I should think so. Well, perhaps we have sufficiently explored the difficulties of raising funds, but you certainly were successful in getting them raised for the Center.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, to a certain extent. I think it was one of those things where you never feel you're successful, because every year you need more, and you have to work harder, and the people that work, the old guard that always work, they get very tired of it, I don't think it's a satisfactory way of doing things.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Can you think of any way it could have been improved upon, that is, the financing?

JANE BALDWIN: No. I think that's a necessary evil that way, and of course, one thing that thrilled us -- it actually did thrill us at the time -- and I still feel that way about it, that everybody gave, the children even giving their nickels and dimes, and it was their Center and that is the thing that we wanted - the main thing that we tried to impress on the public - it was their Center, it did not belong to a specialized group, which so often happens in most places that are considered public, but still within the group there are very specialized groups which the public feel that they do not belong to.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Very true.

JANE BALDWIN: Then during Mr. Fitzgerald's time they organized a student body, into groups.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! What kind of groups?

JANE BALDWIN: A regular group, president - etc to give suggestions to the board - I was not in the organized.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Now --

JANE BALDWIN: Can you stop?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I can stop it, sure.

(interruption)

JANE BALDWIN: Let's talk about our WPA help for a bit.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, by all means.

JANE BALDWIN: We appreciated them very much because they did the janitor work - I'm speaking of the WPA help besides the instructors.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: -- but of people that were our regular - oh, one was an ex-prizefighter, he couldn't do anything else but serve as our janitor, and the man that did the office work was a good office man, but toward the last of this we found that those people actually could have gotten other jobs but would not work.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, really!

JANE BALDWIN: Because it was easier to take the WPA money. Also I started getting anonymous letters from people about communist infiltration --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

JANE BALDWIN: -- and I'm quite sure that this wasn't just a minor thing, I knew it was going on, that groups from the Center, mainly from this WPA group. It might have been one of our instructors started the more or less subversive groups meeting. I knew these were meeting, but I felt that they weren't strong enough to do any particular harm.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, was this definitely an Art Center thing, or a movement in Spokane?

JANE BALDWIN: I suppose it was both. But I actually think that that was one reason why the classes were organized into groups.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh?

JANE BALDWIN: It only takes one or two people to start these things that are radical, and I realize that, and I think that you have to balance it off, and not feel that the whole thing is that way.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: But I am sure I'm not just making this up because, oh, a long time after the Center was closed, I imagine it was about ten years ago, and FBI man called me and wanted to know the names of these different people and where they were.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! Now when you say these different people, you mean the staff members or the students?

JANE BALDWIN: Some of the students and some of the staff members; and he asked if I knew about this and if they were active. But I think that that wasn't the Art Center at all, I think it was more or less kind of a breakdown of the WPA organization at that time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: -- toward the end.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

JANE BALDWIN: And I think that in any music or art group, because artists and musicians do work hard, they play hard, the public feels that they might be subversive, which I don't think that there is a larger percent of subversive people than there is in any other group. But that was one unpleasant thing that we did have to face, there in the last part.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, that's unfortunate if it lost the support of the community for the movement.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, I had several teachers tell me that too. Maybe people were more aware of it than I thought. One has to be reasonable about those things.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, definitely. Well then, someone was suggesting yesterday that there had been some "Silver Shirt" episode.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, well, that was way at the first. A couple of the people from New York, and I'm not sure, and I wouldn't want to quote names on that, because I haven't proof of that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Were these some staff members or some students?

JANE BALDWIN: It was staff members, coming from New York, the first staff members; and one of them stayed on quite a while. I think that maybe with WPA teachers coming out, from New York, they did not understand the West, and I think maybe that was a fallacy in sending them out to a place that they didn't understand, a big change of environment. We had to get used to them actually, and they had to get used to us as a community.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Must have been quite a cultural shock.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, it was because of this community, I think, people who had worked in larger towns, they understand different types of people, and it didn't bother them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, aside from these more or less political upset now and then, can you look back and tell what the general feeling and morale of the staff was?

JANE BALDWIN: Fairly good. I can't say it was wonderful, I really can't.

DOROTHY BESTOR: How about the morale of the clientele? They were pretty excited about it during most of the time, weren't they?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. And I think they went along - I mean they were more interested in learning and the exhibits
--

DOROTHY BESTOR: More interested in learning than in the exhibits?

JANE BALDWIN: No, learning art and the exhibits than outside activities. Well, the staffs private lives were private lives, and as long as it didn't reflect on the Art Center or the community --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well now, you had so many different kinds of contact with the Center - you were on the Board all the time, and you sometimes taught classes - what classes did you teach?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I was just fill-in, I wasn't on WPA, I was a volunteer.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But you volunteered in the painting classes?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, painting or drawing, if somebody was ill, I mean it wasn't a regular thing, but I did have close contact with all the instructors, and I felt that I knew them very well personally, maybe up to Mr. Fitzgerald's time. And then when we got a business manager and James Fitzgerald wanted to run it more from his viewpoint than the Board's viewpoint.

DOROTHY BESTOR: On what kind of things did their viewpoint diverge from that of the Board, would you say? On policy or personnel or -- ?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, Mr. Fitzgerald wanted to use more the students' ideas. That was kind of odd, because he wanted to go ahead and organize them, which was fine. But I remember one time one very radical person whom he had quite a bit of interest in came before the board, and she planned an exhibit for a certain month. Well the board already had an exhibit committee and had planned the exhibits for the whole year! I think that Mr. Fitzgerald was an individualist and he preferred to work more on his own than with direction from the Board. But Tom LaFollette was his balance. So it worked very well.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well now, about the classes. Do you think that most of the students were really fairly serious and did pretty good work, or was quite a lot of it busy-work?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh no. I think that the instructors had them working extremely hard, and to their utmost ability. There was no busy-work, as we call it, in the Center. There might have been some towards the last when we tried to run it with just a director and volunteer teachers, and then we didn't have quite as professional people.

But they actually gave everything they possibly could to that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Were the lectures in art history well-attended? I notice quite a few of them were scheduled, according to the publicity brochure.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, we had very good attendance to all those, but those were usually not so much the students, as the people who were backing the Art Center.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I see.

JANE BALDWIN: People just interested in art that would go to a lecture, but not the students. The students - that was one thing and maybe it would have worked out differently - the students seemed to be an entirely different group than the people on the board or the committees or the people who were backing them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's interesting. What group would you say the students were, or what groups?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, of course on the whole they were a younger group, they were not, shall we say, as well-known in Spokane, although we got a great variety in our students.

DOROTHY BESTOR: They weren't, then, the clubwoman type?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, we had some of those, but it was more the younger people that wanted to work hard, but I think that was one of the things that was nice about the classes because we had doctors and dentists, professional people, we had all types of people and that's what we liked about it, that's what we wanted.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: We didn't want it for a special clientele.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I wish they could have had something like this in Seattle. The Art Center - well not Art Center but the Art Project, was very different there.

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, really?

DOROTHY BESTOR: As you probably know, there were no classes; there was a large communal studio which moved every year or so from place to place, and many of the painters worked in that, others worked at home and brought in pictures from time to time, but there were none of the educational and public relations functions.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I think, to me, an exhibit alone is nothing. You have to have your creative arts, your students along with it. And Inverarity agreed with me on that, and that's what we looked for. And then maybe it takes an interested person to build up all these committees and to get them all working. It took a tremendous amount of time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it would have.

JANE BALDWIN: And then getting each committee working and going, and getting as many groups interested, and we found these committees, too, we thought, well now this group would not be so interested in drawing or painting or art, they lent support but they would be interested in the social end of it, or the costume end of it, and we picked our committees very, very carefully, contacted them, and got them all working. And it was a tremendous job, and we had a lot of people working, and we hoped that they would bring other people in.

DOROTHY BESTOR: And did they?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, they did, but still again it was rather two separate things. The student body and this other group working, supporting.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You mentioned Mr. Inverarity several times. How closely did you work with him? Did he get over here quite often?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, he got over here quite often, and I usually saw him and talked to him. I hope - I must remind you though that all the time we had a good art director, we had a good president --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: So I mean my part was kind of welding things together and doing the committee work, and seeing that the tea was gotten on hand and so forth, because after all the head people were the president and the director of the Museum, and not myself.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I think you all made quite important contributions, from what I've heard.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did you feel that during the first part of it that this Center was directed by Seattle a good deal? Or did you feel that you could decide things pretty much yourself?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, no. I feel that Bruce Inverarity was very, very fair.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, good!

JANE BALDWIN: Of course, he was State WPA Art Project Director.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: -- and I knew I didn't even tell him about this communist bit until sometime afterwards, and he said, "Well, Jane, you should have written me about it." But it never entered my mind, it seemed a local thing. But I think there was some opposition between our director and Bruce Inverarity -- when Carl Morris left and Kenneth Downer became director. I don't remember what it was about, maybe I didn't even know what it was -- but I felt then there was a feeling that he was directing them too much. But he might have had a reason for it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well now, who was the "he" in this case who was directing too much -- Mr. Inverarity?

JANE BALDWIN: Mr. Inverarity directing Mr. Morris too much. But I know Bruce quite well and I feel I would take his judgement because he was seeing it from an all-over pattern and not just from a Spokane pattern. And he always seemed extremely fair to me. But now, I was not working with him as the director would be working.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. There would be a difference.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did you feel that he was actively an artist himself, or that he was mainly an administrator?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, he's done beautiful things. I don't know if he was working at that time or not --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I think he has though he has been criticized by some people as not being a practicing artist, really, at least at that period.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I don't know what he was doing at that period, but he must have -- oh, he's illustrated beautiful books.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I know he has.

JANE BALDWIN: And I don't see -- maybe all of us get periods when we aren't working as hard at one time as another, and maybe that would happen then, but he couldn't do the things he's done since if he'd given it up completely.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good. Well now, who do you think were among the most outstanding artist instructors on the staff that you remember?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I can only say that personally.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: I felt that James Fitzgerald was very outstanding. Carl Morris, our first director, did not teach classes, but was very good at meeting the public.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Was this the result of his choice, or because he was so busy, not having a business manager to help him?

JANE BALDWIN: It was his choice, because he had a lot of contacts to make with the public, and he really didn't have too much time to teach class. He gave a great many talks to organizations and then he did have a lot of paperwork to do, it was his own choice, but looking back I think that James Fitzgerald really the most outstanding - I think he, from the way he presented his work, he had had more training in teaching art.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, he had had some training in the teaching of art at the University of Washington, where he got his degree in architecture.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. Then there was Guy Anderson, who was --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh yes, I wanted to ask you about him, because I haven't met him yet at all.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, he wasn't with us for more than a year, I believe, but as I remember him he was a very nice person, he was very good in starting students in beginning painting, and that's about all I remember about him. Oh and some liked our last directory - Jerre - I forget his last name --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Jerre Murry, wasn't it?

FLORENCE REED: Jerre Murry.

JANE BALDWIN: Jerre Murry. He came from California. He had some interesting ideas in teaching painting, but he was a very shy person and really quite a bit of an introvert and this type of job where you're pushing something before the public was difficult with his personality. He was a nice person - his wife was charming - I don't think it was the right place for him to be.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh. I see.

JANE BALDWIN: And I think, though, his idea coming up here was that he would just stay a very short time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh. Well, I read his letter of resignation to the Association and it suggests some of what you said.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, I think that he didn't really plan to stay up here, and he didn't seem to be too happy here -- it just takes a different type of person to meet the public than Jerre was.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, this is running out, let's turn it over and go on, if you have a few more minutes.

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, yes.

[END OF SIDE 1]

[SIDE 2]

DOROTHY BESTOR: This is the second side of the tape of an interview with Mrs. Jane Baldwin, who has been telling us about the Spokane Art Center. This is on November 19, 1965, and we're having the interview in the Eastern Washington Historical Society Museum. The other voice that you will hear coming in occasionally with questions or additional information is that of Mrs. Truman Reed. We were going to say when we turned over the tape that there was quite a range of classes at the Center. Maybe you would remind me what --

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. We had quite a few painting classes. They worked mostly in oil, and there was a lithograph class, a watercolor class, a metalwork class, - now these did not all run maybe at the same time, but during this year different directors, or usually the director's wife - if they had a wife - would teach, too, at the Center.

DOROTHY BESTOR: As a volunteer?

JANE BALDWIN: No, they were paid by the WPA, and like Jim Fitzgerald's wife was good at ceramics, then we had a ceramics class at that time. But it would depend more or less on the demand from the public, but mainly what the instructors could do.

FLORENCE REED: We had sculpture.

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, yes, sculpture class the first year; and life drawing class.

FLORENCE REED: Lithography.

JANE BALDWIN: And lithography.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Any etching?

JANE BALDWIN: No. No etching.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Printmaking?

JANE BALDWIN: I think I taught - I can't remember whether it was there or at the Y, but I did teach a class in printmaking and wood block and linoleum. But that was volunteer.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That certainly is quite a wide range.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, they did have a wide range.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Which ones were the most popular, do you remember? Which kind of classes?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I think the straight painting seemed to be most popular but, it kind of fluctuates in anything like that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

FLORENCE REED: You might speak about the egg tempera classes.

JANE BALDWIN: Oh yes. Each instructor that came contributed quite a bit to the classes, because each had their own special field. And as in the instance of James Fitzgerald, he was very interested in egg tempera, which is an extremely old medium, and for which most people don't even know how to mix the egg and color nowadays.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No.

JANE BALDWIN: And he had us all learn that. Another time - I can't remember, I think it was for Jim, we all did a great big cement sgraffito --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh!

JANE BALDWIN: -- and so they were having us work in different median. Jerre Murry did a type of watercolor or painting with outlines, similar to what Cezanne had done. But I think James Fitzgerald was the most thorough, he even had us make a study for one painting of a clay model similar to what Cezanne had done, and work our painting from our clay model. Kenneth Downer was more or less straight painting, as I remember, and Vanessa Helder is quite well-known for her watercolors --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: -- she does a special type of watercolors, and lithographs. Those are the two things that she taught.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I saw incidentally, her Grand Coulee series here in the Museum this morning.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. She does that type of thing.

FLORENCE REED: Were her things contemporary for the 1930s, or were they a little ahead of the 1930s?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, it's interesting -- we look at Vanessa's work now and it seems almost quaint to us in a way.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It seems tight.

JANE BALDWIN: Very tight, and quaint.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Very, very tight.

JANE BALDWIN: But she did a certain type of built-up watercolor and not the free flow which is so important now.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. She certainly did not do the wet watercolor of the California School in the least.

JANE BALDWIN: I wouldn't say that they were advanced or behind as far as art goes, to the public who had not painted, why I think they thought we were painting "way out," just as with any artist that is working today. The average layman doesn't understand what he's doing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: I don't think as far as that it was any different than it is today. But as for the people who came from New York out to Spokane, I'm sure they had a more contemporary approach to things than we had in Spokane.

DOROTHY BESTOR: So you feel that in some measure at least, the instructors who came in were a sort of liberating influence.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, they were stimulating to us because we had not had anything like that in Spokane, we hadn't had a teacher -- well, as long as I can remember in Spokane. I have always been interested in art, and when I got out of college and came here we had a group that drew from a model, but we did not have an instructor, and you have to have an instructor.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: So I think that they all were very inspiring even those who weren't so good had something to contribute to it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

JANE BALDWIN: And of course when the first group came in from New York we were all very excited, and I think they were excited, too, because I'm sure they expected to see Indians on the street --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh yes, you were talking about that.

JANE BALDWIN: They were all from New York -- well, not all, Morris was from Chicago, and Vanessa Helder was from California, but the rest were from New York City and had actually never been out of New York City.

DOROTHY BESTOR: What do you think they expected when they came out here?

JANE BALDWIN: Heavens knows! Except that they all brought long woolen underwear and high boots and they were going to spend the weekend in Alaska! So I think that they should have been orientated a great deal more, just the same as the Peace Corps. Of course we're not quite that far off as going to a foreign country, but it was a foreign country to them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it was.

JANE BALDWIN: Three of them were people who had not been outside of New York, they were city people, big-city people, and they were very unhappy here actually. Because of the small community they were very homesick, and Solomon and the other -- what's her --?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Miss Egri?

JANE BALDWIN: Miss Egri left very soon afterwards. I don't believe she stayed a whole year, she just couldn't stand it she was so homesick. But I think it was a lack of training before they came out, or maybe if they'd sent us somebody more from the Midwest at first.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Well, in some regions most of the art staff would be from the locality,

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But apparently this was something extra, adding visiting artists ...

JANE BALDWIN: Well, actually we had people in Spokane who wanted to teach in the Center, but they weren't eligible.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh! That's interesting. You mean they couldn't prove they needed the job?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. They couldn't qualify for WPA. I think that it was the Center's advantage to have the glamour of outside instructors, and I do think we needed the outside inspiration that we would get from a larger place.

DOROTHY BESTOR: But then I suppose you also needed the public support of having some local people teach and not be embittered by not being on the staff?

JANE BALDWIN: No, I think that that was replaced by this committee work.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I see.

JANE BALDWIN: By getting them interested. And then we had these exhibits, and we'd have open house and serve coffee and cookies to anybody that wanted to come, they were always made welcome. I think that during the height they really felt it -- everybody felt, "This is my Center."

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, good. About the exhibits - you've spoken about the traveling exhibits from Washington, D.C. but you did have, didn't you, quite a few local exhibits at the Art Center of Art Center work and of staff work, student's work?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, yes, we had staff work and student work and then WPA traveling exhibits, and then we would bring indifferent things -- we had an exhibit committee that handled all that and set up the things. And, of course, like any exhibit, some people liked them and others didn't.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Did you get good reviews in the local press?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, we had very good publicity. Mr. LaFollette when he was on the staff handled all that. Before that we had a publicity committee and we always had a great deal of publicity on it, we saw that we did have.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine! Do you remember whether there were any WPA murals around here? Or done by the artists on the staff in the post offices?

JANE BALDWIN: No, there was none as far as I know. Virginia Dorsey, who was on the staff here as a volunteer instructor worked on a WPA mural at Mount Hood in the lodge.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

JANE BALDWIN: But that is the closest to Spokane.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It's surprising you didn't have any in post offices or public buildings here or schools, there were so many in the Seattle area.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. No, there wasn't a thing here.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Perhaps it's a question of sponsors' not being able or willing to put up the money for the supplies?

JANE BALDWIN: I can't ever remember of that being approached here, and maybe it's because we were all centered, all our enthusiasm was on the Art Center.

FLORENCE REED: I'm trying to recall if any new public buildings were being erected in those particular years --

JANE BALDWIN: No, there weren't.

FLORENCE REED: -- and that would make a difference.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I was wondering about that, because I think ordinarily they were put up in new buildings, but sometimes weren't they just installed in a building that already existed, as in some of the Seattle schools. There are some in different Seattle high schools that weren't just built in the thirties but they have these murals.

FLORENCE REED: We have none. I think there's one up in the mining area, in the Coeur d'alene region, either in Wallace or Kellogg, I've forgotten which, in a post office, I believe.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Kellogg, Idaho.

FLORENCE REED: But I think none of our people has --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. One of the Seattle people I talked with told me about that.

FLORENCE REED: I think that is probably the only one in our area.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. Now the instructors might have back in New York or some of the other instructors that were on WPA might have done that type of thing but they didn't paint murals here.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well now, what haven't we talked about that is interesting and important about the Center?

JANE BALDWIN: Well, I don't know how important it is, but it's all extremely interesting.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It's all important, for instance, its after-influence on the lives of any of the people connected with it?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh yes, you wanted to know, too, about when we had to close the Art Center, then this other group connected with WPA took over the old Art Center for a while as their offices, and we moved all our equipment over to the Y for storage and then fairly soon after that they opened up an art and craft department using the WPA furniture. It wasn't really the WPA's, because Spokane had paid for it. As I say, WPA only paid salaries, we did all the other maintenance. And, oh, it was about a year I think before the classes were started and then there were classes started in the YW. Well, I think that on the whole - to me it was the beginning of an actual participation of art in Spokane, a renewal because of the people became more acquainted with it and of course, TV now has helped us a lot, I do think at that time it influenced the public quite a bit and I think maybe too WSU felt that they could come up with an extension after that and make a go of it, and since then, the other

colleges have come in with art extensions. There are a great many classes. There are many people painting and drawing today.

DOROTHY BESTOR: There are now, currently, in Spokane?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Is it of a pretty high quality, do you think?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, I think it is very high, I don't think anybody has ever seen it all together, but we have so many classes going through our WSU Extension with their credit classes, and it has to be a certain quality of work or they don't stay in class. Have we covered all of it?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Just about. Just two more questions really, Mrs. Baldwin. As you look back now, if you were planning it over again or raising funds for it over again, or being on the board over again, can you see any way that some of these difficulties could have been avoided?

JANE BALDWIN: I don't know. I don't think you can go back or think back that way at all. You life changes, your city changes, I think we did the best at the time, but I rarely think you can look at things that way at all. Time goes too quickly, life is too --

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, yes. From all I've read about the Center, it was a tremendously successful operation.

JANE BALDWIN: Well, it had its up and downs, with anything like that, you think you have it going very smoothly, and then boom! something happens. And we were always fighting the financial end of it, raising money, although we did feel during that period when we had a business manager that we would be able to get on a very firm basis where we could have our own building, or classes were so full we did really need more space actually.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mmhmm. That was certainly a tribute to your drawing power.

JANE BALDWIN: But it was because of a great many people working on it, and in committees, and working with it and being extremely interested and dedicated. One person, of course, couldn't do it, the director could not do it, it took a great many people to do it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, with all the current interest in what the government might do, or may do, or could do, to encourage the arts, and all the appropriations that may be made, what is your view of the role of the government in the arts as of the 1960s?

JANE BALDWIN: They may be people - communities may need help but, having been a practicing artist and a teacher and working in this type of thing, I do not think the government can come in and push anything like this, or should not push it down our community's throat. I think it's very bad. I feel that the community should want it and not from the idea that, "Oh, goody, we're going to get so much government money to spend here," because it isn't government money, it's their own money they're spending.

DOROTHY BESTOR: That's quite true.

JANE BALDWIN: That the government gives back to us. I think that they should need it, want it very much, and really have to work for it, and not have it handed to them. As a matter of fact, I am very much against that type of thing of it being just handed to them and saying, "Here now, you need an Art Center, you're going to have one."

DOROTHY BESTOR: Of course, this wasn't handed to you in Spokane, you all did work for it?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes, we worked very, very hard for it.

FLORENCE REED: And you had to vote to accept it, as I recall.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

FLORENCE REED: The old Art Association decided to come in and aid this new project and gave up the old Association in order to have it.

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. Well, one point on that; we felt there couldn't be two.

FLORENCE REED: Yes, and --

JANE BALDWIN: And some of the old Art Association did not want to come in, they resented it.

FLORENCE REED: -- they were sad about it, they all hated to leave the place they had worked for.

JANE BALDWIN: But that was a specialized group: this was open to everyone, which I thoroughly believe in, I mean it would have to be, of course, with the government helping. I find that if people have to pay a little bit for something, they appreciate it more than when it's handed to them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, very definitely!

JANE BALDWIN: And then, of course, I did have the experience of the WPA working people, it helped them up to a certain point, then they became lazy.

DOROTHY BESTOR: You think it was demoralizing after a while?

JANE BALDWIN: Oh, definitely! Because I know quite a few of these men who -- well, practically all of them toward the end could have got work, war jobs were starting --

DOROTHY BESTOR: You're speaking now of the janitorial staff?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: -- that group?

JANE BALDWIN: Yes. We had quite a group of those helping us out that were on WPA rolls. There were war jobs starting, they weren't too complicated for them, but it was much easier to accept a check from the government and not have to work so hard.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Too bad.

JANE BALDWIN: And I believe that people really have to want something very badly and have to work for it and give up some part of their lives, which I know all of us did that worked for the Center, something we felt -- and there were a great many people who worked very unselfishly. They weren't doing it for the glory of being on an art committee, they were doing it for the love of their community, and wanting to bring art to the community.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, fine! Thank you very much, Mrs. Baldwin.

JANE BALDWIN: You are welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Last updated... *December 16, 2002*