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Oral history interview with Joan Ankrum,
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Transcript

Interview

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH JOAN ANKRUM
AT HER HOME IN SOUTH PASADENA, CALIFORNIA
NOVEMBER 5, 1997
INTERVIEWER: PAUL J. KARLSTROM**

JA: JOAN ANKRUM
PK: PAUL KARLSTROM

PK: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, a first interview with Joan Ankrum, the former art dealer and actress-and perhaps a number of other things. We'll find out through the interview. This is the first session in a projected probably three sessions. The interview is being conducted by Paul Karlstrom at Ms. Ankrum's home on Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena and the date is November 5, 1997. What am I leaving out? I guess nothing. Oh, and I should mention that this interview is being supported, underwritten, by our mutual friend-your admirer-Beth Broderick of, I believe it's called Regardless Films or Productions; that's her company. So this is nice. It's the entertainment industry actually, then, supporting an historical endeavor. What we want to do, Joan, is, as we were discussing earlier is to, in the time available to us, some four hours perhaps, really meet you. Be introduced to you in a more complete way than I think most people have been, and this is our opportunity-it's my opportunity. One of the things that you have mentioned-and I think we may as well just get it out there on the table, so to speak, right in the beginning-you've mentioned, I've certainly sensed, and this has been reinforced by Beth Broderick's interest in seeing this interview being done, that you've run into a number of women-presumably younger women-who somehow see you as, well, maybe as a role model. But there's something about your life that they admire, that attracts them, that perhaps they find inspiring. Anyway, before we go back to the beginning, why don't you make some-if you want-some comments on that. You've said that this has been your experience. Women come to you, when they meet you, and say, "Gee, you're something special." Why is that?

JA: Well, I don't know. I've always had a nice relationship with women-strangers or close friends. I've always had a very warm, natural, affectionate attitude toward women, but it became much more pronounced when I changed my whole life from a career in the theatre to a career in the art world, although my professional career really began in the theatre when I was quite young. It began when I was seventeen, and at that time, of course, I became involved emotionally with my teacher-director at the Pasadena Playhouse, and it influenced me to a great degree.

PK: Who was that? Who was your ____?

JA: That was Morris Ankrum. And so I had a life with him, but a life which actually led to a rebellion because of the domination and the completely possessive attitude. So I had to break away from that after several years of marriage-many years of marriage. I had to break away from that in order to pursue a stronger and more real relationship with an actor, who became so involved in my interests and pursuit in the art world, which was initiated by my sponsorship of Morris Broderick. So I had to take many risks in my life. My life has been a kind of a series of risks.

PK: Well, do you think then, if you were to interpret this interest on the part of other women in your story, would you credit it to your independence-achieving a kind of independence-professionally and then in your personal life?

JA: Yes.

PK: Do you think that's it?

JA: Yes, I would. I think many women have had disappointments in their marriages, and many women that I've talked to, there was always something else they wanted to do but circumstances. . . . And also the desire for marriage and children became paramount, in spite of the fact that they have these submerged other creative urges-to write or sing or act or whatever. And so when they would hear of my story, they were immediately. . . . They just identified [with-Ed.] me in a very strong way, and some of them would say. . . . In my descriptions of my experiences with my artists, I would describe the influence I had, and they said, "Oh, that sounds like my psychiatrist," or "That sounds like my mother," or "That sounds like my father." And the stories that I told of

trying to break away from a possessive husband or mate or a possessive family and, in telling that, it seemed to reassure them that all was not lost in their life, that they could have another experience outside of the traditionally acceptable ones. And even my grand-daughter. . . . No, even my daughter-in-law says to this day that I taught her about risk. So I was kind of pleased that somebody. . . .

PK: So you have children, obviously.

JA: Yes, I had two children. I adopted both my boys. And I had very tragic loss of my younger son, who was killed in a surfing accident. And I had a struggle to get my boys.

PK: How do you mean?

JA: Because my husband-my first husband-didn't want them, because he didn't want it evident that he wasn't able to produce these children.

PK: He was, what, infertile, I guess, is the term?

JA: Yeah, he was infertile. And so he rebelled or he fought against this obvious proof that they weren't biologically his. So I had a hard time. And so I had. . . .

PK: Of course, it could have been viewed as readily as "your," quotes, "lack." You know, that you were indeed infertile

JA: Sure.

PK: . . . unless you went around telling people. So I don't know why it would need to be that kind of a threat, is what I'm. . . .

JA: Well, no. It was well-known. Because he made it very well known, because. . . . It's a very bizarre story. He would approach other friends of mine, some very well-known friends, and say, "Look, I think you ought to get together with Joan and you produce . . . you know, get her pregnant." And even my own mother-in-law advised it. She advised me to go out and find somebody to get pregnant because

PK: So like a family friend?

JA: . . . she didn't want her son to be unhappy. So she said, "Oh, he doesn't need to know anything about it. Just go out and find somebody and. . . .

PK: Interesting family.

JA: That's a very involved story.

PK: Well, it sounds actually very interesting, and I think we will revisit this story. But even at this early stage I can't help but asking why, on the one hand, he resisted the adoption, but on the other hand, encouraged-apparently-a different way for you to produce, quotes, "naturally" children. In either case, it was going to no doubt be evident that he was not the father. So to me this is rather puzzling. You said that he resisted the adoption of your boys.

JA: So I just went ahead anyway and, through family connections and family doctors from my family, I was able to adopt the first child that I adopted. And it infuriated and enraged him so much that he threatened to leave me.

PK: Well, I'm still wanting to try to figure out why that was the case that he would be so angry if you chose that way to bring children into the family, and not the other way that he seemed to think was okay-which was that you "get together," as they said, with ____.

JA: Well, it was all right as long as he chose the person. See, he

PK: Ah-h-h, control.

JA: . . . always wanted complete control. And it was the same way in the theatre. As soon as I ventured out in the theatre to do an important role in a major play, he would try to keep me from it because he wasn't directing it. He could only praise and admire me if I was under his direction. And when somebody else directed me, then he had all kinds of criticisms. But I don't know how I was. . . . I was pretty strong. I'm pretty strong, so I was able to get through all those years, and then finally escape. And one of the reasons-one of the deus ex machina of my escape-was Morris Broderson].

PK: Oh, I see. Yeah, Morris, as everybody, if they don't know now, will discover as we talk further, is a wonderfully gifted artist whom you in effect adopted as well. Is that right?

JA: No, he was conceived illegitimately. He was born. . . .

PK: But didn't. . . . Well. . . .

JA: He wasn't adopted. No.

PK: Morris wasn't?

JA: No. Morris Broderson was not adopted, no.

PK: Okay, I thought that there was some legal connection . . .

JA: No.

PK: . . . between you and Morris. I mean, there was. . . .

JA: Oh, well, Morris's mother was my husband's sister. So Morris [Broderson] was actually my nephew.

PK: Oh.

JA: Not a blood nephew. He was just my nephew through. . . .

PK: So he was Ankrum's. . . .

JA: Nephew.

PK: I see.

JA: Yes, he was his. . . .

PK: Well, how interesting. So then Morris. . . .

JA: That's a whole other story, too

PK: Yeah, well, we'll get to that as well. [chuckling] Morris Ankrum's family then, in effect, through Morris Broderson, provided the agent of you finding a way to separate yourself from. . . .

JA: Well, actually, it was when I was first, when I was married, and I was leaving the theatre, more or less, when I married. He insisted that I be. . . . Although I made several surveys [perhaps means forays?-Ed.] back to Broadway and into film-but so, when I came back to settle down to marriage and life with my husband, that's when I met his nephew who was then fourteen years old. And that's when I discovered his talent. Nobody else was paying any attention to this boy who was born deaf, born with embryonic nerves in his ears. And when he came to visit he sat down and did a little drawing of me sitting at the piano, playing it.

PK: Just on his own? He just sat down?

JA: Yeah. And I saw it and I was absolutely stunned, because it was so expressive and it was so good I couldn't believe it. Here was this boy who was couldn't even speak, because he was born deaf, and I was just so impressed with his talent that I immediately started to help him. And I looked-well, that's a long story-but I looked for a teacher. I even called the famous school that Spencer Tracy established for his son, the School of the Deaf, to find out if there was somebody there who could help me with his teaching. After all, I was not a teacher trained to help the deaf. And they were very indignant, said, "Oh, we don't do that. We don't do that. We don't have anything to do with adolescents." He was only fourteen. So I proceeded to do it myself. And I would sit down and talk to him and show him, give him books on art and drawing, and I would draw with him. And that was the beginning of my real involvement with art.

PK: You say you taught him. Did you teach any, quotes, "speech therapy"? Or not? I mean. . . .

JA: Actually, I spent a lot of time talking to him and writing things out for him, and taking him places. I even took him to movies, and I'd write-in the dark-I would write down what they were saying, part of the time. No, I really didn't teach him, except that he was very observant and watched my lips very carefully. But I really had. . . . I found that my relationship to him was more helpful through art, through our discussion of paintings and anything to do with art. That was our great source of communication. And. . . . Well, how old is [Darvin, Darvon]? At one time, he said, later, [in life, Mommy, love he], he said, to find out. . . . He had to leave me for a while and find out. He said,, "Am I Morris? Or am I Joan?"

PK: Really?

JA: Yeah.

PK: When was that? When he was still a boy?

JA: No, by that time he was seventeen.

PK: Well, so after about three years of you being in his life.

JA: Yes. We were very. . . . There was. . . .

PK: Where did he live? Obviously, we are going to have a chance to talk a lot about Morris, but just to sort of sketch this in, what year was it when you met him? He was fourteen years old. Do you remember the year?

JA: Yes. He lived with his grandmother, and his mother, also, part of the time. But at that time, see, he had just finished his training in the Berkeley School for the Deaf. His mother couldn't handle. . . . She just couldn't handle his discipline, as an obstreperous young boy, and she didn't really realize his talent. She had sent him to this School for the deaf. So I met him when he came back from the School for the Deaf, where he had had excellent training in speech and. . . .

PK: So he could speak then?

JA: Well, he. . . .

PK: Sort of.

JA: Well, I could understand him. I understood him and his family understood him, but it was very halting, unrecognizable to most people who were not used to it.

PK: So he's much better now.

JA: Oh, yes. Thousands of. . . .

PK: Thousands. [chuckles]

JA: Thousands of times better.

PK: But he could express himself? He did know language?

JA: Well, his speech was almost like translation of a foreign language. People would say to me-when I would introduce him to people-"Oh, what country's he from?" And I'd say, "Well, he was born in Los Angeles. He's American." "Oh yes, but what is his cultural heritage?" I said, "Well, it's American. His grandparents. . . . His [great, great-great] grandmother was a Quaker from back East, Pennsylvania." But, anyway. . . .

PK: So he. . . . When was this, though? You still haven't told me what year it was that you had met him.

JA: Well, what happened. . . .

PK: He drew your picture at the piano.

JA: Well, that year was. . . . Let's see, I'd been married then about six years. Let's see, I was married in 1935. '36, '37, '38, '39.

PK: So it was about '41?

JA: Yeah. Yes. Yes, it was about '41. And, actually, I went to see him at his family's house in Highland Park.

PK: He lived in Highland Park.

JA: Highland Park.

PK: So that's where you played the piano and he drew you?

JA: No, no. I played the piano at my house in Altadena.

PK: Okay. So you visited him in Highland Park.

JA: But I first met him in Highland Park at his grandmother's house, who was my mother-in-law. And she was a

very interesting woman. And that house in Highland Park was a house that she built herself when she came out from the East. As a widow, she built this house and she would rent out rooms to artists. So one of the artists that she rented to was the first artist whose work I bought, which was in about 1940. Something like that. 1940. His name was Arthur Durston.

PK: Yes, yes.

JA: And that whole story is a very interesting story.

PK: But he was a lodger?

JA: Yeah, he was just a lodger.

PK: This being your mother-in-law's place?

JA: Yes. Her name was Ankrum, Carolyn Ankrum. Carolyn . . . her maiden name was Gregory.

PK: Well, this is going to be interesting, because I can see there are going to be many threads that we need to pick up as we go along.

JA: Yeah, it goes through, goes into the whole. . . . The first interview that I gave the Archives was in the early years of the gallery [[Ankrum Gallery, Joan Ankrum Gallery]-Ed.], and through that interview these other things came up like the names of Helen Lundeberg.

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: They came to the gallery because they were investigating WPA artists, and Helen and [Lorser] [Feitelson-Ed.], who were both artists with me, now, in the gallery. . . . And this is the sixties, early sixties. So when they came to interview me, that's when this story came out about Broderson. And when Helen heard the story, she said, "Well, I'm the one that took the model to that house." In Highland Park.

PK: Didn't the model. . . . Yeah.

JA: She was the one that took the model there, where they discovered that Arthur Durstan was dead. He had died.

PK: Now, wait a minute. What's. . . . Tell this story!

JA: This is all a very vital part of my book, of course, too.

PK: Yeah, yeah, that's okay.

JA: What happened was that. . . . When this interviewer-I can't remember her name, but I know it's there someplace in the. . . .

PK: Yeah, [Betty-Ed.] Hoag.

JA: Hoag. That's right.

PK: She did a whole series of these interviews-shorter interviews-for the Archives. Some were longer.

JA: Well, this was early. This was 1962 or '3 when she came to the gallery and I was telling her this story, and then she told Helen, and Helen said, "Well, I'm the one that drove the model there," to my mother-in-law's house.

PK: Helen Lundeberg was?

JA: Helen Lundeberg was the one who drove the model there for Arthur Durstan to paint, and the day. . . . They went to the house. Nobody came to the door. Nobody came to the door. So they had to break the door down. With my mother-in-law, they broke the door down, and there was Arthur, who had died. And when Helen heard the story she said, "Well, yes, because I'm the one that drove the model there." And this only came to light when they came to interview me in search of Helen and Lorser. But from this story then they got very much interested in Morris. Because Morris was the reason that Helen and Lorser at first came to the gallery, because they were pretty impressed with him.

PK: Well, go ahead and tell that story. In a moment we'll. . . . This is useful, because what we're doing is, in a preliminary way, brushing in some of the important parts of the story . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . and we'll certainly revisit them, but why don't you just go ahead and tell this as an example of the people and connections and so forth. Helen and Lorser coming to your gallery the first time. . . .

JA: Well, actually, what happened. . . . The opening of my gallery was a very spectacular success, because it followed on the exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York, in which he made a great impression.

PK: Morris?

JA: Yes. And was chosen out of that whole show to be-was chosen by John Canaday-to be the outstanding artist in the show, and it was written up. Time magazine did an article. The New York Times. . . .

PK: Was this show at the Whitney, did you say?

JA: Yeah, this was [Young America, 1960; Young America 1960].

PK: Oh, yeah. And so you gave Morris a show. . . .

JA: Well, actually, no. My first show that I organized for Morris was way before that, was in Laguna when he was only twenty-eight.

PK: But you didn't have a gallery then?

JA: No, no.

PK: But you organized it for another gallery?

JA: No, just on my own for Morris.

PK: Yeah, but I mean, wasn't that a gallery? It must have been.

JA: Well, actually, yes it was. It was a friend's. . . .

PK: Somebody else's gallery.

JA: It was a friend of mine who saw Morris's work in my house in Altadena, and he was very much impressed and said, "Oh, I have a little gallery in Laguna. I'd like to give him an exhibition." And I said, "Well, I will tell him, but I don't think he would be ready yet. He doesn't have enough paintings." And he said, "Whenever he's ready." So. . . .

PK: That was. . . . I know the name of. . . . I must have it. . . .

JA: Dixi Hall was the name of gallery.

PK: Who ran that? Was the name of the. . . .

JA: His name was Dixi Hall.

PK: I didn't know that gallery. Hmm. Interesting.

JA: Well, he was, in those days, very avant-garde for Laguna. He showed, oh, an abstract architectural. . . . Oh, what's his name?

PK: Not McLaughlin? John McLaughlin?

JA: It was. . . . What was the other one? I guess it was John McLaughlin.

PK: 'Cause he was down in that area back then, I think.

JA: Yeah, I think it was John McLaughlin.

JA: And then he also. . . .

PK: Oh yeah, sure he was. John was down at Dana Point at that time-or in Laguna.

JA: Yeah. And he also showed [Jack-Ed.] Zajac. But Morris had made quite a sensational success in that show, which. . . . PA: What year was that show?

JA: That was in about 1954, something like that.

PK: Fairly early.

JA: Yeah. I'd have to do a little mathematics to figure it out because. . . .

PK: Well, let's get back to sort of finish up this Helen and Lorser story, because you said that the first time they came to your gallery was to see a Morris show. Is that right?

JA: Well, actually, what happened was, before I opened the gallery, I was preparing the building, which was on La Cienega, and so I had been going around looking for places and meeting various people on La Cienega-various galleries that were well-established-and somebody took me and said, "Oh, you must come in and see the Art Association Gallery." And so we went in and I was, of course, full of my success with Morris in New York and also the success in San Francisco. I had organized a show for the de Young Museum! That was before I. . . .

PK: Oh, there was a Morris show at the de Young?

JA: Oh, yeah.

PK: Hmm.

JA: Which I organized with Ninfa Valvo.

PK: Sure, Ninfa. I knew her. Yeah, she was great.

JA: Oh, yeah, she was wonderful. So what happened was, everybody was pretty impressed with the successes that we had in San Francisco, and so somebody took me to meet. . . .

PK: Continuing this first interview with Joan Ankrum, this is Tape 1, Side B. Sorry, Joan. You were cut off. You were saying something to the effect that somebody took you to meet or to see, I guess, to a gallery, right? Is that right.

JA: Yeah, well it was the Art Association Gallery.

PK: Right, right.

JA: He, at that time, had achieved a lot of recognition and attention for his television program.

PK: This is Lorser?

JA: Lorser Feitelson. And I was familiar with that so I was very impressed to meet this artist, whose talks I had heard on television, watched on television. So they introduced me to Lorser, and he was very indignant when they said, "Joan Ankrum is going to start her own gallery [Ankrum Gallery-Ed.], have her own gallery on La Cienega." He said, Well! You have to have more than enthusiasm to have a gallery!" He was really very . . . disinterested to the point of hostile.

PK: Why so?

JA: Well, he was jealous. [whispered]

PK: He was jealous. Well, I mean . . .

JA: Well, Morris had attained this national recognition overnight.

PK: Oh, I see. He wasn't jealous just that you were opening a gallery, but that you were connected with Morris, that Morris was like the star of this new gallery. Hmm?

JA: Well, I think. . . . Lorser maintained a very special arrogance in his teaching at Art Center School and his lecturing. I mean, he was a brilliant, brilliant man, and here was an artist who had achieved national [recognition-Ed.] and wonderful reviews in the New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune and the San Francisco Chronicle, and he had such a terrific recognition that I think Lorser kind of resented the fact that here was this young, unknown artist who could hardly speak, but who was just a wonderful artist. So, anyway. . . .

PK: That was sort of a bad start, I guess, in a way.

JA: It was a bad start. But, in two years, he and Helen [Lundeberg-Ed.] both came to the gallery and wanted me to represent them.

PK: Oh.

JA: So that was quite a switch.

PK: And you did.

JA: I did.

PK: For how long?

JA: Well, it was about three years. And then the same thing happened there. He accused me of using him as window dressing, but that the major sales that I would make to important collectors were made . . . mostly were Broderson's.

PK: Interesting.

JA: That's what really put me on the map was Broderson. Broderson is the artist. And that's where. . . . My major patrons were all great collectors of his work. Like. . . . See, that's a whole other story.

PK: Like Joseph Hirshhorn, for one, right?

JA: Oh, yeah, the major one.

PK: Sort of the main one, yeah.

JA: And that's a whole interesting story, too, about his own. . . .

PK: We'll have a chance to talk about that. Well, this is really useful, because I'm getting now, already, a better picture of the sequence of events and your interaction. . . . You're sort of, in a way . . . I won't say just jumping into the art gallery business, but surely you did make a pretty abrupt change from the career that you had pursued as an actress. Through Morris-partly through Morris, anyway, and your interest in him-into this art world. And it sounds like you made quite a splash. So that becomes part of the story.

JA: Yes. But, actually, it isn't such a jump.

PK: No?

JA: There's a very close association with the theatre and art.

PK: At that time?

JA: Oh, I think there always has been. People maybe didn't recognize it, but, as a matter of fact, I think when I first started the gallery one of the things that was so interesting to dealers in New York-especially Staempfli Gallery, Phillip Bruno, he was so impressed. He said I was the only dealer he ever knew who had ever been in the theatre. He said I was the only one. Well, of course, that's not true. Soon after I opened my gallery, there was a very fine character actor named Evans [Evans _____, or _____ Evans-Ed.]. He was a big heavy-set man, played a lot of character parts, and he had a gallery on La Cienega, not for very many years, but he's the only other person at that time who had a gallery who'd ever been in the theatre-or actually had been an actor. But what I mean say is that the association. . . . See, I always felt . . . I always treated my artists as though it was a script. Somebody said, "Here's the script of an artist," and so I always . . . my relation to him was interpreting him just as I would as an actress. I would involve myself, identify with him, and plumb the depths of his spirit or his mind or his heart. And that's what I did with almost all my artists. And I was very much in disagreement with many very superior-so-called superior-intellectual dealer and collectors who would come to the gallery and they'd say, "Oh, don't tell me anything about the artist. Just show me his work. I don't want to know anything about him." And really that. . . .

PK: How uninteresting.

JA: Well, I mean, it was stupid! Because how can you really get into the real heart of an artist without knowing anything about him. Bob [Baumgarten-Ed.] always says that I can tell you anything about any of my artists on back to the Crusades [laughs], because I always wanted to know all about them. And, of course, actually, that was one of the things, too, that people were so inspired about Morris, because he's just a unique artist. There isn't anybody. . . . Someday-I'll probably be gone-but someday his real value will be recognized and his importance will be recognized.

PK: He's a wonderful, very imaginative, visionary kind of artist . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . and technically superb, so I think you're probably right.

JA: Yeah. Well, it goes beyond. . . . Ben Shahn, for instance, was so impressed with him-with his talent and his philosophy, and at the time he said, "He is not only a great artist but he's a poet."

PK: When did . . . how did Ben Shahn see the work? Was it at the Whitney show?

JA: No, this was . . .

PK: Or at your gallery?

JA: . . . Edith Halpert. No. In New York. Downtown Gallery.

PK: Oh, at Edith Halpert. Morris showed there as well? Because you had a friendship with Edith.

JA: Well, I took his work to her. Terrified of her, because she was the most. . . . Really, to me, the most important gallery in America was Edith Halpert. And I think there were other people who agreed with me, too.

PK: Sure.

JA: Other dealers. But when I first took Morris's work to her I was almost afraid to even meet her. I didn't think she would even want to talk to me. And she sent for me right away, sat me down, took me to this fabulous tribute to the arts at the Plaza. That's how I first met Edith and showed her Morris's work, and she seized me and had me come to the gallery and work out the agreement with her right then and there. So that's how. . . . See, at that time she represented Georgia O'Keeffe. . . . I think Georgia O'Keeffe, at that time, had just left, but she had Marin and Dove and . . .

PK: Oh yeah, very important [art, artists].

JA: . . . all the great. . . . And that was my. . . .

PK: We have, by the way, all those records at the Archives of American Art, I think I mentioned to you. Just like your gallery records . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . are at the Archives, so are the Downtown. . . .

JA: Yes. And I have some of. . . . See, I have a whole lot of stuff I haven't given you yet.

PK: What?! Not more?

JA: Yeah.

PK: Oh, okay. [laughs]

JA: I have letters and stuff of my relation. . . . Correspondence with Edith I still have in my files.

PK: Oh, boy, that has to go with your papers. Yeah. We can talk about that later, of course.

JA: Yeah. But there were. . . . My story, I know, has so many facets, and it connects so many people that it would be surprising to a lot of people.

PK: Well, that's what I hope we'll be able to do with. . . . Before we forget about it, what about Ben Shahn? You mentioned him especially as somebody who seemed to admire Morris. Do you remember the occasion?

JA: Well, it was at the Downtown Gallery when he came to his exhibition, and Edith introduced me to him and he talked about. . . . He didn't really talk to Morris so much as just looked at his paintings and said to me. . . . It was hard for him to speak to Morris, because of Morris's not hearing that well. And often people would speak to Morris through me. It took me a while to separate. . . . When I was interviewed, for instance. . . . When he was interviewed in San Francisco at the time of his de Young Museum show, they wanted me to be there in case they couldn't understand him. So I was often present at all of his interviews just to be helpful, because sometimes he would rebel. Time magazine, I was interviewed by Bruce. . . . Not Bruce [Bliven]. A wonderful critic. Edith considered him the finest critic. Bruce [_____-Ed.]. . . . Well, I've got the. . . .

PK: I should know that but I don't offhand.

JA: My memory's pretty good except that my instant recall isn't what. . . .

PK: I think your memory is fabulous. How old are you?

JA: Eighty-four.

PK: Eighty-four. I mean, my instant recall is just about totally obliterated.

JA: Oh no! [chuckles]

PK: Oh, yes. I find myself searching and searching, and then sometimes it takes hours, and then it'll just pop in. [snaps his fingers].

JA: Yeah.

PK: It's like slow retrieval, like those computers that are old-fashioned and are real slow and when they search it takes them a long time.

JA: Yes.

PK: Nowadays, it comes like that. [snap of fingers]. So I don't think you have a thing to worry about in that respect.

JA: Well, everybody thinks my memory's good. Charlotte Sherman thinks that I have a great memory. [laughs]

PK: Who's Charlotte Sherman?

JA: Charlotte Sherman is Ben Horowitz's assistant, [head, hair]. . . .

PK: Oh, I know Charlotte. Of course. Yeah, of course.

JA: She's a lovely person, very intelligent, and we're friends through the years.

PK: I know her and him, of course.

JA: And he's a fine person, too.

PK: He represented, for years, Charles White-and others.

JA: Oh, yes. Sure.

PK: Well, let's see. It seems to me, if I can just sum up a little bit-or make an observation-that quite naturally we moved to that point in your life when you met Morris and then, to a certain extent, through Morris found your way into this art world and really had a kind of career change-that you rededicated yourself and at the same time extricated yourself from an unhappy marriage.

JA: Yes.

PK: And this sounds like a pivotal, sort of watershed, moment which presumably was in the late fifties. Is that so?

JA: Yes. I really separated myself, left my husband-and Morris's uncle-in 1958 or '59. It wasn't an overnight thing. It was gradual. What really gave me the focus was a painting that Morris did. It was called, On Possession. It was a commissioned work by Container Corporation on "Great Ideas of Western Man." There was a whole series called "Great Ideas of Western Man." And they called . . . they got in touch with me to see if Morris would be interested in doing a painting based on one of the great themes. This sprang from the Aspen Conferences.

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: Anyway, he was given a quotation from Goethe on possession. "What one cannot. . . ." No, "One cannot possess what he cannot understand." And Morris seized that quotation. He turned down another quotation which was not to his liking at all, and when he was given that quotation he just seized it and did this whole painting, which was about me. It was about me and my husband and Morris himself. And that's the painting that's now in the Archives of American Art.

PK: It is?

JA: It's in the. . . .

PK: National Museum of American Art.

JA: National Museum.

PK: Yeah. But in the Smithsonian? Oh, great.

JA: Yeah, it is.

PK: How did. . . .

JA: And that's all about me and my breaking away from my husband.

PK: What year was that?

JA: That was nineteen . . . oh dear, fifty. . . . Well, it was in the late fifties.

PK: Maybe 1958 _____.

JA: But it was exhibited at the Whitney show.

PK: Which was in '60.

JA: I think so.

PK: Okay.

JA: No, I mean, I'm trying to think if it was in that show. No, I don't think it was. It was in the de Young Museum show.

PK: But, anyway, it's from the late fifties, and so it really does. . . .

JA: But what that really. . . . It kind of made me understand. He related my story to Nora in *The Doll's House*. That's what he thought. He used to tell me that before I saw it. He said, "Oh, you're like Nora in *The Doll's House*," and I just dismissed it until a few years later I saw a production of it and I recognized it as my situation. It was a possessive thing that I had to break away from.

PK: It's all very, very appropriately literary, because the possession was a quote from Goethe and then, of course, he also compared you to Nora in *The Dolls House*. Ibsen, right?

JA: Yeah.

PK: So that's interesting. That tells me a little something about Morris already, that he had these kinds of interests and knowledge. I mean, he was given the choice of the Goethe quote, but obviously he knew the Ibsen play, right?

JA: Well, he was fascinated, of course, with. . . . He always had a wonderful perception of value and quality. Like, look, Tolstoy. After all, he did a whole series based on Tolstoy-and also Steinbeck. So he was inspired by. . . . And *Moby Dick* [by Herman Melville-Ed.]. He was inspired by great writers, even though he wouldn't read them maybe fully, but enough. . . . And also through theatre. A lot of things were communicated to him through theatre.

PK: That's very interesting, because what you're describing, of course, is a penchant-predilection-of most of the great romantic painters.

JA: Yes, that's true.

PK: You know, poetry, music, theatre, a lot of Shakespeare, for instance, and literature. And, well, again, this is something that we'll pursue more. And I'm also, of course, going to-I hope that we can make this work-but interview Morris himself.

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: He does want to, I hope?

JA: Oh yes. He said, "Oh, yes," he would do it.

PK: Okay. Good.

JA: And I said to him, "Now, I think it's good if you'd just . . . the two of you, without me." I said, "If you need me I'd be happy to be there, but it would be better. . . ." And he said, no, he could do it.

PK: Oh, yeah. We'll pay good attention.

JA: Yeah.

PK: Well, this is going to be marvelous. So what we have. . . . I think we've established-and you can tell me if you agree with this-a particular time-not a moment, necessarily-but a period, which must have marked, must have been one of the key periods in your life. And that is what we've just been talking about, particularly in the late fifties, the early sixties. This kind of emancipation . . .

JA: Um-hmm.

PK: . . . which then created the second, the new Joan Ankrum. What I would like to do now, because we've spent almost an hour-very well spent-talking about this, what I'd like to do now is go back and learn about the prior Joan Ankrum who, of course, wasn't called Joan Ankrum at all. What was your maiden name?

JA: Wheeler.

PK: Wheeler?

JA: Joan Wheeler. My middle name was Natalia.

PK: And you were born in this area? You lived in. . . .

JA: I was born in Los Angeles. My parents eloped from Stanford, where they were college students in Stanford. My mother transferred from Smith to Stanford, because she always longed to be in California. So her parents-my grandparents-followed her out here, and the first two years she and my father lived in the Los Angeles and San Diego area.

PK: This is after they'd gone to Stanford and then eloped?

JA: Oh, yeah. They eloped from Stanford.

PK: Did they graduate from Stanford?

JA: Yeah, uh-huh. I think I've shown you that picture. When they eloped, it was a big story, and there was a big banner stretched across the campus saying, "Little Lucy, queen of the [Thetas], married Raymond, King of the Betas. We wish them luck, this happy pair. It [caused, costs] us to eat, so friends beware." And that was published, oh, years later in the paper in Los Angeles, The Los Angeles Times. Somebody had sent it in, this photograph, and the paper said, "Who was this?" And somebody sent it to me. And I have a copy of it someplace.

PK: Well, hmm, this must have been. . . .

JA: But, see, my grandmother-my mother's mother-was an artist who graduated from the Cleveland Art Institute. That was my first introduction to what art was about, was my grandmother-who was deaf.

PK: What was her name?

JA: Her name was Harriet Lowrey. Her maiden name was Lowrey, but then she married my grandfather, whose name was Ozier-O-z-i-e-r-and they were both from the Middle West. My grandmother was born in [Cauhaga, Cahouga] Falls. [chuckles] Cauhaga Falls.

PK: Let's see, that's your maternal grandmother?

JA: My mother's . . . yeah. She was a beautiful, very talented girl who was a baby at the end of the Civil War. And my great grandfather was a captain in the Civil War, and I have his letters written from prison camp.

PK: You do?!

JA: He went down with the Sultana.

PK: What are you going to do with those?

JA: Well, I have 'em. [laughs] I guess. . . . I don't know whether the family would. . . .

PK: It'd be great if they could go to the Smithsonian.

JA: One of my nieces is doing a family history.

PK: Oh, good.

JA: But I don't think that. . . . I think they should go to a permanent place.

PK: Well, we'll talk about that later. But that's very interesting.

JA: Yeah, I have them all.

PK: Now this is your, wait a minute, these are your maternal grandparents.

JA: Yes.

PK: Your mother's side.

JA: My maternal. . . .

PK: And they were from the Midwest, and they were from the Civil War.

JA: Yes, my. . . .

PK: Yankees.

JA: At the end. . . . Oh, yes. And some of the letters move you to tears, I think.

PK: Well, look at. We're talking about this. Tell me a little bit about them. Tell us about those letters.

JA: Well, I have them. I could read it. I could show. . . . Just when he speaks of the love of his country, it kind of brings tears to your eyes because it's so felt.

PK: Where was he imprisoned? Do you remember?

JA: Yes. It was, oh, one of the big prisons in. . . . His name is in the list of a book about the Sultana. His name is in that book.

PK: His name was?

JA: His name was Lowrey. Deming Lowrey. Captain Deming Lowrey, L-o-w-r-e-y. And at the end of the Civil War this whole group from the prison were put on aboard the Sultana, and there was an explosion in the boiler room and that's what sank the Sultana. And my grandfather was a powerful swimmer, and he saved the lives of many of his men, and then he drowned.

PK: Oh, no.

JA: But when I went on this trip recently, on the Delta Queen, there on board was a book on the Sultana, and there was my great-grandfather's name listed as one of the soldiers who died on the Sultana.

PK: And so he never returned to your great-grandmother.

JA: No, never.

PK: He wrote letters and then. . . .

JA: Oh, the letters.

PK: Yeah, but then before he could return to her, he died.

JA: Yes, he died.

PK: Oh, what a sad story.

JA: And he never. . . . I don't think he ever saw my grandmother, because she was a baby. She had just been born.

PK: Do you actually have one of those letters that you could read a brief passage from?

JA: Yeah.

PK: Let's look. We'll turn this off. [Interruption in taping]

PK: Okay, then, you actually found those letters and materials related to your great-grandfather, Deming Lowrey, and a couple letters or some letters to [Liza, Eliza], your great-grandmother, which it would be fun next time it'd be nice to maybe read a little passage, but the important thing is that they are the parents of grandmother Harriet Lowrey Ozier . . .

JA: Yeah.

PK: . . . and you said-I don't know if it got on tape-but you said she was really an important person, a great inspiration to you, especially in connection with art. She was an artist, right?

JA: Yes.

PK: Was she a professional artist?

JA: No, she was never a professional artist. But when you think that she was a baby at the end of the Civil War, the fact that she was even allowed to go to art school, because in those days, an artist woman was almost like being a prostitute.

PK: So she actually went to art school.

JA: Oh yes, she went to the Cleveland Art Institute . . .

PK: Oh, yeah, you said that.

JA: . . . where she won awards for the best portrait painter. But she soon dropped out of it-marriage and motherhood and all that. But what was so amazing. . . was quite a factor in my understanding Morris. I actually adored my grandmother [Harriet Lowrey-JA], who was adorable. She was very pretty and dainty and. . .

PK: Did you say she was deaf?

JA: She was deaf. She lost her hearing in her early twenties. And I was so devoted to her and so interested in her past as an artist that when I met Morris it was almost as though it was fate, as though I were fated to meet Morris-because I understood him so well, because I understood my grandmother so well. Although she was well-educated, for those days, by the time she lost her hearing. . . She had been musical-she played the piano well and sang-but I understood how she felt-her sensitivity about her deafness but also her sense of humor. So when I met Morris and just. . .

PK: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, continuing this first session with Joan Ankrum. The date is-what did we say it was?-5 November 1997, and this is Tape 2, Side A. We were celebrating the memory of your grandmother just now, and you were telling how you felt that your experience with her-she was deaf-and your understanding of her really was a kind of gift, perhaps from fate, in terms of, you felt, preparing you for your life then, eventually, with Morris.

JA: Yes.

PK: So she obviously was very special. In what ways did she stimulate your interest in art? You said she taught you how to see. How did this happen?

JA: Yes. Well, when I was a . . . I couldn't have been more than about seven years old, and I used to love to go with her on drives out into the country. Somebody always would drive us and we'd be sitting in the back seat, and she had a hearing aid and so we conversed. I raised my voice quite a bit. But my grandmother, all of a sudden she'd say, "Wait, wait!" And she'd point to the sky. She'd say, "Look! Look! Look at the green! See that! Look at the green up there in the sky." I said, "Where? Where? I don't see any green." And she'd say, "Well, don't you see right around the edge of that cloud? Don't you see that green?" And I looked and looked and finally I saw it. And I think that that was the beginning of my learning to really look and really see nature. And I think I never to this day ever will walk out of a house or a building without looking at the sky. It's just sort of a natural. . .

PK: Did you look at the sunset the last couple nights?

JA: Yes.

PK: Whoo, wasn't that something?

JA: Oh, beautiful.

PK: Beautiful red and. . . .

JA: Just beautiful, just beautiful. Yes, we drove around to look at it. But I think that was a big factor.

PK: Well, did you ever see any of. . . . Did you ever see your grandmother painting? Did she give it up entirely?

JA: I never. . . .

PK: Drawing or anything?

JA: She gave it up, and I feel so. . . .

PK: That's really too bad, isn't it?

JA: I'll tell you, I think one of the reasons she gave it up was she did a drawing of my brother, I think, when he was a baby and showed it to my mother [Lucille Ozier Wheeler-Ed.], and my mother said, "Oh, it doesn't look like him." Which is very much what a mother would say. To this beautiful baby that she had and that. . . .

PK: Then to see what they really look like. [laughter]

JA: Yeah. [laughing] And she was so hurt that she never did another drawing.

PK: Oh no!

JA: Wasn't that terrible?

PK: That's terrible.

JA: The strange thing about it is that my mother started painting when she was dying. She started painting, and she was so good. Morris was very impressed with her painting. Said if she'd kept . . . she would have turned out to be a first class painter. She died. . . . She painted in an advanced group at Stanford.

PK: Oh, you mean she was. . . .

JA: My mother.

PK: Yeah. She studied art in college?

JA: Well, actually, no. She majored in English. She wrote very well. She wrote quite well. I even have a story that she wrote.

PK: So you have a really arty family.

JA: Well, yeah, everybody in my family was interested in books and painting. As a matter of fact, the first Van Gogh I ever saw-it was just, of course, a reproduction-I think it was in Vanity Fair magazine in Palo Alto when I was still in school, still in grammar school.

PK: Well, let's back up a moment here. You were born here in Los Angeles in what year?

JA: In was born in 1913.

PK: Okay. And your parents had met

JA: At Stanford.

PK: . . . at Stanford, presumably. . . . Well, do you remember what class they were in at Stanford?

JA: Yes, 1910. I have a picture of my mother with an article from the paper. I think I showed it to you about them. It said, "Stanford Campus gasps at Romance." It's the story of their wedding.

PK: And they were shocked because they didn't do it the proper way.

JA: Yes. Oh, that was just. . . . Their friends were furious.

PK: Sort of rebels.

JA: Oh, yes, they were furious with my mother because they wanted them to have a big wedding. So. . . .

[laughs]

PK: But they didn't want that. They were bohemians, rebels.

JA: Well, yeah. I don't know why it was. I never . . . I'm never sure.

PK: Well, do you think that there was this kind of a streak-I don't want to read it into this-but with your parents? Sort of, again, an individuality? A tendency to want to do it their own way?

JA: I think so. Yes, I think so.

PK: Did you see other. . . .

JA: Even my grandmother, you see, from the Victorian period. Did I see other. . . .

PK: Did you see other manifestations-especially I'm thinking of your mother-but either of your parents of, perhaps, an unwillingness or reluctance to follow certain prescribed paths and all? Although they did go to Stanford.

JA: Well, I think it was. . . . I think my mother, who was actually engaged to a very successful young man who was the number one family in Mansfield, Ohio. . . . She was engaged to him. And somehow she knew it wasn't right for her, and that's when she went back to Stanford and she met my father, fell in love with him immediately, broke off the engagement. Then, of course, this was a great disappointment to her parents, because she would have had this very easy life, but. . . .

PK: Were the parents then-your grandparents, maternal grandparents-in the Midwest at that time?

JA: Yes. My grandfather [Frederick Ozier-Ed.] was a very successful businessman. He was in the hotel business, and there was a hotel that he named for my grandmother's stepfather [Howe-Ed.]. It was named for him.

PK: The hotel?

JA: Yeah, the hotel was named for him. But see, my grandfather was from a very nice farming family from . . . Snaps Corners? Snaps Corners, in Virginia.

PK: Snaps Corners?

JA: Yeah, it was in Virginia. And his mother [Eliza Lowrey-Ed.] came to Ohio in a covered wagon. Slept. . . . I knew her. I knew both my great-grandparents. They were both interesting backgrounds.

PK: That must have been . . . when? When did they go to Ohio?

JA: Well, let's see.

PK: Before the Civil War? These are the great. . . .

JA: Yeah.

PK: Oh, before the Civil War?

JA: Yeah, yeah. It was before the Civil War.

PK: And they ended up in what town?

JA: Akron.

PK: Oh, Akron.

JA: But originally Mansfield, Ohio. The home of Louis Bromfield. Louie Brumfield is the same class as one of my uncles in Mansfield, Ohio. Louie Brumfield. Louie Brumfield's book was all about Mansfield characters. That's another. . . . [laughs]

PK: Well, okay, this is your mom's side. And what about your dad's side? Also from the Midwest? Or not?

JA: Yes, my father [Raymond Wheeler-Ed.] was born in Wisconsin.

PK: But no connection with the Ohio people in the early years?

JA: No, none at all. He was the son of a minister, his father [_____-Ed.] was a Methodist minister, a very respected romantic person. Very handsome. I have pic[tures]. There's a portrait of him.

PK: So is your background then. . . .

JA: Well, it's very Yankee. My father's side goes back to, actually, before the Revolution.

PK: Really!

JA: Yeah.

PK: A bunch of Methodist ministers?

JA: Well, no, no. They were farming people. I think, actually, Wheeler, they were from England-England and Ireland and Scotland. And I think Wheeler comes from Wheelwright. He probably designed wheels. Wheelwright, yeah.

PK: And so what about your mother's side? Were they religious folk? Did they have. . . .

JA: No, they weren't religious at all. They hardly ever went to church. I was really not religious either. But my mother wasn't. My mother was definitely nonreligious. She was almost . . . what do you call it? She was an agnostic, really. She wasn't an atheist, but. . . . Her first argument with my father was over the Immaculate Conception.

PK: Which he believed in?

JA: He. . . . And she was furious with him. That was the first argument they ever had.

PK: But that's what you needed.

JA: Hmm?

PK: That's what you needed, later on. An immaculate conception.

JA: Oh. [laughs] Yeah, that's true. Oh, gosh. Well, I had offers, of course. [laughs] I had offers that were . . .

PK: Attractive.

JA: . . . you know, I don't mean widespread but one of the doctors that I went to said, "Well, why do we bother with this?" I was getting artificial insemination, and he said, "Why do we bother with this?"

PK: Isn't that unethical?

JA: Of course. I wouldn't dare mention his name. He's very well known.

PK: He's still alive?

JA: No.

PK: No.

JA: No, he isn't but his . . .

PK: Well, then it's okay; you can say his name.

JA: . . . but his family is still alive. His family are all eminent doctors. [laughs]

PK: Really! I don't want to be nosy, but I have to ask this. Obviously you resisted this particular avenue to conception.

JA: Yeah.

PK: And on what grounds? Did you just find the idea offensive?

JA: Oh you mean. . . . No, I didn't resist artificial insemination.

PK: No, I don't mean that. I'm talking about the other course of action that had been recommended . . .

JA: Well. . . .

PK: . . . choosing a different partner. Conceiving with a different partner.

JA: No, I did have one experience, which was very distasteful to me.

PK: And this was to try to conceive? Or was it a true romance?

JA: No, it wasn't a romance at all.

PK: Of course, maybe that's part of the problem.

JA: Yeah. And so I. . . .

PK: Because you're romantic, see?

JA: Yes, I always was a romantic. It's true.

PK: And so that put you off to the idea.

JA: Yeah, uh-huh.

PK: This is no way to do it. Too bad you didn't conceive, I guess?

JA: Well it was funny because Bob [_____-Ed.], of course, he said, "If only you'd sent for me. [laughs]

PK: That would have been great! Bob being, of course, we'd better say, the love of your life now whom you rediscovered after many, many years.

JA: Yeah.

PK: Why don't you tell that story? Let's get that story down, okay? You and Bob. Because that goes all the way back. That really spans a big part of your life.

JA: Well. . . .

PK: Because you were, what, a high school kid in Palo Alto.

JA: Yeah.

PK: Your family obviously had moved from L.A. at some point to Palo Alto. Why don't you start with that.

JA: Well, see, what happened was that they moved right back to. . . . See, my grandparents came out and got my mother and my sister and me and brought us back to Ohio, where we lived there until. . . .

PK: Oh, after you. . . . You didn't live very long after you were born, here?

JA: No, just a couple of years. We were just babies. And so my grandparents wanted them to come back to Ohio, where they could look after us all better. Then my father was offered a business opportunity in California, so that's why we came back to Palo Alto, and so. . . . Where was I then?

PK: Well, I was just trying to get you located in Palo Alto because you were. . . .

JA: Oh, yes. So what happened was that. . . . It had never been my intent to go to college. I was always just involved with acting. I was always. . . .

PK: From how early?

JA: Oh, from the time I was. . . . Even in grammar school I was always in plays. And I had dancing and singing lessons and all that. And then when I went to high school my major successes were in English and acting, that was all.

PK: And you were at Palo Alto High School?

JA: And so I really was not. . . . Yeah, Palo Alto High School. Which was a wonderful school.

PK: Yeah, I remember it.

JA: Very small.

PK: Um-hmm. But in the shadow of Stanford.

JA: Yeah.

PK: We used to. . . . By the way, we were quite naughty. Just like Bob. My fraternity brothers and I thought it was fun to date Palo Alto High School girls.

JA: Oh, yeah.

PK: And they would come over to our fraternity sometimes looking for us, you know. They were pretty wild. You weren't like that, though.

JA: No, no. I wasn't wild, but my sister came very close to it. My sister was quite a belle. She was very pretty. She went to Stanford, too. But what happened was that I was not college material, and my mother knew it. She knew that I wasn't. I just liked. . . . I liked to write and I liked to act, and I wasn't interested in going to college. So mother didn't put any pressure on me at all. But she was so impressed with the Pasadena Playhouse, having seen a production of Lazarus Laughed. Now, see, my memory's pretty good about that.

PK: Yes.

JA: Because she saw that and she determined that that's where I was going to go to school. I was going to go to the Pasadena Playhouse. So I went to the Pasadena Playhouse.

PK: So it was your mom's idea, the Pasadena Playhouse.

JA: Oh yes. Yes, she was so impressed with this production that she saw-Lazarus Laughed-which had come to San Francisco, so. . . . And my mother had connections in the theatre. See, when she was at Stanford she was the campus star. She starred in the. . . . And she was such a good actress. And she was quite beautiful. She was such a good actress that she was offered the lead in the stock company of Lewis Stone, which was at the Mason Theatre in Los Angeles.

PK: Oh, here in Los Angeles.

JA: And she was offered. . . . They came to my grandparents-the Lewis Stone company-to say they had seen her in the production and they wanted her to be the ingenue in their new company. And they never told my mother, because they didn't want her to go into the theatre. They thought that would be terrible. So they never told her that until years later. But, anyway, my mother was a . . . in her company were all these wonderful people who literally became very successful in theatre. One of them was Maude Howell, who was George Arliss's stage manager for twenty-five years. She was a close friend of my mother's. And also Nina, who became [Cecil B.-Ed.] De Mille's assistant at Paramount. Nina Moise.

PK: Louise. Nina Louise.

JA: Moise. M-o-l-s-e. Nina Moise.

PK: Okay, M-o-l-s-e.

PK: Have you heard of her?

PK: No.

JA: She was a very important. . . . One of the first women producers.

PK: Really?

JA: She didn't actually produce on her own, but she was associated with Arliss.

PK: Did you ever know her?

JA: Yeah. She came to the house to see me dance.

PK: Really?

JA: She was out on. . . . When George Arliss toured in The Green Goddess. . . . He was the star of The Green Goddess, and he was touring and he came to San Francisco. And Nina. . . .

PK: Moise?

JA: No, no, not. . . . No, Maude Howell was his stage manager, and Maude Howell, of course, called my mother and said she was there and she'd love to see her. So she came down to my family's house in Palo Alto, and, of

course, then I was, I think, barely a freshman or sophomore in high school, and my mother wanted me to dance for her. And I did. I did this little tap dance. [laughs] Later I was almost cast in a musical in New York. I mean, my dancing. Not my acting, my dancing.

PK: But not as a little kid?

JA: Oh no, no, by that time. That was when I first went to New York from the Playhouse. I'd finished at the Playhouse and I went back to New York and got my first job right away. Very fast. I had a lot of quick successes, but then my personal life was . . .

PK: Interfered.

JA: . . . an anchor. Yeah.

PK: Well, you know, our great mutual friend, Catherine Turney . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . whom I will greet-I'll be talking with her-for you. But at any rate she always says, "Oh, Paul, now you better appreciate Joan. She was a wonderful actress, she's a wonderful actress." So she paid you that tribute.

JA: I was good. [laughs]

PK: If Kathy says it, I believe it.

JA: Yeah well, she's tough. She's been there, she's seen everything. So I'm very pleased that she paid me that compliment.

PK: It's true, it's true. Well, let's get back now. You're at Palo Alto High School.

JA: Oh, about Bob.

PK: About Bob.

JA: Well, so what happened was, as I say. . . .

PK: Tell me about Bob.

JA: Huh?

PK: Tell me about Bob.

JA: Yeah, well, what happened was, I was invited to a Stanford. . . . I think it was the Encino Ball, the freshman ball. I was invited by another guy that I had met. I think it was. . . . Oh God, I have to remember his. . . . Now you'd know his name.

PK: Really?

JA: Yeah. Later he became a lawyer, which he hated, and left and became a film critic. And he was the beau that invited me to go to the Stanford dance. I was dancing with him, and somebody came up and tapped on his shoulder and cut in. And it was Bob.

PK: Whom you had never seen before.

JA: No, I had never seen before. But he had evidently been watching me on the dance floor. And he came up, and so this. . . . I can't remember this. . . . I'll think of it later. [Spiel]. Oh, you'd recognize his name, because he had a kind of dramatic background.

PK: Well, we'll think about it later.

JA: He was tied in with the Bohemian Club later. Anyway, so Bob just was determined to see me so he. . . . We had this. . . . He was darling. He was very cute, and so then he came to see me at the house and started taking me out. And I thought he was a charming, delightful person.

PK: He was a freshman?

JA: I had other beaux.

PK: But not Stanford men?

JA: Well, one of them was, yeah. [giggles] One of them was a fraternity brother.

PK: Of Bob's.

JA: Yeah, one of them was Bob's fraternity brother. But it was never as amorous as Bob and I were. But he was very determined to finish his education, because from there he was going to go on to Harvard. And he worked his way, partly, through Stanford, and then he went to. . . . His father was killed in an automobile accident in San Francisco. His father was. . . .

PK: Oh, while he was in school?

JA: Hmm?

PK: When he was in school?

JA: Yes, this was when he was at Harvard. When he was at Harvard, and he had to leave and come back to handle the family affairs. And so, anyway, Bob and I started going together and dating. And he was very cute. Took me to a speakeasy. [chuckles]

PK: Ooh!

JA: Before that, though, we won a dance competition-I think I told you-dancing the Charleston.

PK: I don't remember that. Did you indeed?

JA: At the Saint Francis Hotel. Dancing the Charleston. In 1928. And . . . what's his name? Oh, the famous band leader?

PK: The most famous one?

JA: Yeah, at that time. Very, very famous one.

PK: Well, that's too early for Glenn Miller?

JA: Oh, well, it was about that time, yeah.

PK: Maybe?

JA: Oh, I can't think of his name. I just thought of it yesterday. You would know him. He was also married to Alice Faye. [Phil Harris-Ed.]

PK: Oh, yeah. Well, I can't think of it. But it was a bit _____, yeah.

JA: Anyway. So we went together all this time. And then, toward the. . . . I got very involved in acting in high school and I was chosen to play the lead in *The Rivals*, and I was pretty young to be playing the part of an aging belle. So I didn't even try to put make-up. I just played it through my acting. I pretended. And I made this big hit. And Bob wasn't there. He didn't even come to see me, and I was so hurt that he didn't come to see me. And afterward there was a party and Bob was there at the party. And I came in. He came over to greet me, to dance with me, and I said, "Well, you weren't there." And I said, "I was wonderful" And he didn't like that at all. He didn't like that at all.

PK: He didn't like that.

JA: "Oh, come on," he said. [laughs]

PK: What was his. . . .

JA: Well, he was so afraid that. . . . He knew that my interest was in the theatre, and he didn't want to get tied up with somebody who was going to be involved in the theatre.

PK: Did he not approve? Or did he realize that that would be a real career that would make it difficult. . . .

JA: Yeah, that's what. . . .

PK: . . . and you wouldn't follow him around?

JA: Yeah, that's what he says. So what happened was, anyway, he soon found out that I was going to go to the Playhouse. He came over to get me, to drive me to my family's summer home we had in Benbow. My family, we had a summer home. Benbow, you know where that is up north near Eureka? You've heard of Hotel Benbow? It's a famous hotel.

PK: Gee, really? I should know about this.

JA: Yeah, it's a beautiful place on the Redwood Highway. And Bob drove. . . . My family had a home there, near that place, which was going to be a great resort, which was right at the time of the Depression, and my family built this place, a beautiful big house. Bob drove me up there that summer and stayed up there. I remember how cold it was. And then soon after that I went off to the Playhouse and he went off the Harvard. And. . . .

PK: Well, I mean, you must have talked about what the consequences would be. Obviously you had a relationship.

JA: Well, yes. It was a romantic relationship.

PK: But not powerful enough to sway you in your resolve?

JA: Well, actually, no. The subject of marriage never came up even. But he could see the handwriting on the wall. He didn't want to have do. . . . But what happened was, I went down to the Playhouse and I took with me his picture that he had given me to keep, a picture of him, and I put it up in my room that I shared with some other girls that were young actresses.

PK: This is about '30? '29, '30 or something.

JA: Yeah, 1930. . . . Yeah, 1930-31. And my teacher, who was Morris Ankrum, he saw that picture of Bob. . . .

PK: What was he doing in your room?

JA: Well, he came to see me at this. . . . It was like a little-what do you call it?-it was a little boarding house, really, and there were three other girls. We all roomed together, and so we would have people to come and see us.

PK: Right near the Playhouse, no doubt?

JA: Not. . . . Well, it was too far away, but it was within walking distance-running distance. And he saw this picture of Bob, and he looked at it and he said, "No-o-o." Isn't that. . . . And I never forgot that he said, "No-o-o." Well, anyway, what happened was time went by-a couple years, or even less than that-and I had a call from Bob. He says he was here in Los Angeles and could he see me. And so I said, "Well, I don't know. I'm pretty busy. I have this. . . ." By this time, I was having a romance with [Morrie, Maurie] see? We would meet after rehearsals, and so I told Morrie, and he said, "Well, tell him we'll meet him at this restaurant. He mentioned the restaurant's name. I can't remember. But it was on Far Oaks, because it was a meeting place where we used to go after rehearsals. So we went and we met there, and that's the last I saw of Bob. He could see that I was romantically involved and. . . .

PK: So he came, presumably, to test the waters to. . . .

PK: Continuing the interview with Joan Ankrum, this is the first session and it's Tape 2, Side B. And, Joan, we have to let you fully tell this famous story of you and Bob. And you left us now-very sad moment-when he sought you out here in Pasadena and you went with. . . . You had a threesome with Morris and met for dinner, right?

JA: Yeah.

PK: And you said that it was clear to Bob that you were involved.

JA: Yeah.

PK: And that was it.

JA: And so then a few years went by, and by this time I was deeply involved with Morrie. We were practically living together, although not openly. But we were practically living together. And Bob went to see my mother in Palo Alto, and my mother told him where I was in Hollywood. I was under contract then. And he wanted to know where I was, and so mother gave him my address, but he never came. He never came to see me.

PK: He never tried to contact you?

JA: Never did, no. He never did then.

PK: Did he ever say why? I mean, afterwards, now that you're together?

JA: Well, I think he was just. . . . I don't know whether he was afraid that I. . . . He knew that I was involved with this guy, and he probably just didn't want to be. . . .

PK: Disappointed.

JA: Yeah, I think that was it. But he said that he never forgot me; he knew where I was all through those years. And he told me that he knew somehow that we were going to be together someday. I said, "Well, how did you. . . ." He said, "Because I'm a fatalist." And he said, "I knew in the back of my mind that we would be together." Now I don't know how he could mean that, because, after all, he did get married. I was married first. I was married in 1935, and then he was married in 1936. And he did come to see me. He came to the Playhouse. I was playing the lead in a wonderful play, a translation of a German play that had originally been produced by [_____-Ed.] Reinhard, and I made quite a hit in that play. And coming back stage to see me and to compliment me was Frieda Lawrence.

PK: Oh, really?

JA: And I was so thrilled that she would be so impressed with my performance. She was very warm in her praise of my performance. And so, just at that moment, I looked up and there was Bob. Bob was standing there with this pretty young woman. . . .

PK: His wife?

JA: . . . and he came up, but I was surrounded by these people. It was the opening of this show or soon. . . . Yeah, it was the opening. And I was getting all these wonderful compliments and here I looked up and here was Bob with this. . . . And I was just stunned. And so I kind of broke away from this, and he came up and he said, "I want you to meet my wife." And I just had this stab. You know, I was hurt that he. . . . Even though I was married. I was really hurt. And I said, "Oh," to Bob, "you finally got married." And I didn't say it with anger. I said it with. . . .

PK: Wistfulness.

JA: Yeah, wistfulness. But, as he told me later, his wife turned to him and said, "Well!" [laughs] She said, "Well!" And they left.

PK: Oh, no.

JA: Yeah. And I looked for him because I wanted to talk a little bit more, but he was gone. And then the only other time all through all those years was one day I was. . . . My husband was driving. At that time we lived in Altadena. And I was sitting in the back seat, and I had David and Cary-Cary was a baby-and we were driving along. . . . What was the name of that street? Like Huntington. It was around. . . . really Pasadena.

PK: Sierra Madre?

JA: Somewhere closer to. . . . Bob will tell you exactly where it was. He knows exactly. I looked up, and there was Bob in a car.

PK: Next to you?

JA: On the other side of the divider of the freeway. Here was Bob. And he looked up at me, and I said, "There's Bob Baumgarten!" And my husband stepped on the gas and we sped away. And I kept saying, "Wait, wait, I wanted to see him. I wanted to talk to him." And he was gone. And he said he tried to. . . .

PK: He saw you, too?

JA: Yeah. Oh, yeah, we looked right at each other. And, of course, he was naturally married and had children. Then years went by.

PK: So he was here in the area, though. You both were in the area.

JA: He lived in that beautiful area-in the San Rafael area-where he had his home. He built his home there and built a lot of those buildings, a lot of those homes in that area. Glenarm.

PK: Oh, really?

JA: Beautiful area. He built a lot of those homes there. After he got out of the airplane business, he became a broker in real estate. He bought and sold and built houses and everything.

PK: Now where was this exactly?

JA: This was in Pasadena. And his sons both went to La Canada Flintridge Prep, where my son David went. And we never bumped into each other.

PK: Well, at this time did he still know where you were or not?

JA: He had heard through a friend that I was somewhere in Altadena, but in those years he was traveling a lot, all over the world.

PK: And busy with his family.

JA: Well, yeah.

PK: Besides he shouldn't be thinking too much about you under those circumstances.

JA: He said I was always in the back of his mind.

PK: Now did you ever think about him?

JA: Yeah. Yeah, I did. He was never out of my consciousness.

PK: So he was like a soulmate or something. You [felt] connected.

JA: Yeah. Actually, his son Roger who is, after all, the son of Bob's wife, he could easily resent me, but he said, "Oh, no." He said that he thought we were actual soulmates-his father and I were soulmates. So I have no resentment from them. Although in the beginning, I was reluctant to get together. Bob. . . . Well, I told you how he first called me. See, we went to this reunion-Stanford reunion-and both my brothers were at this reunion. This was in San Francisco at the [Family Club], and so all of a sudden he looked up and here was my brother. He didn't recognize him right away, because he'd been a little boy last time he'd seen him.

PK: Uh-huh, brother ____.

JA: But my brother said, "Aren't you the Bob. . . ." He heard his name. He said, "Aren't you the Bob Baumgarten that used to come and date my sister?" And he said, "I'm Nelson." And he said, "Oh, my God!" So they had this long talk, and then my brother invited him to come over to his house in Palo Alto after the game. They had all gone to the Stanford game, so Bob went over to my brother's house in Palo Alto, and that's when. . . . And, of course, at that time Bob was married.

PK: What year was that?

JA: Well, this was only about ten years ago. Less than ten years ago. But by that time. . . .

PK: '88, '89?

JA: . . . Bob was getting married for the second time. His first wife had died and he was getting married for the second time.

PK: He was engaged.

JA: Yeah.

PK: Oh-oh.

JA: So Bob said he had often thought about looking me up, because one of his fraternity brothers was quite a famous person. One of his fraternity brothers was advised to get in touch with me to evaluate a painting of his collection. So he told Bob. He said, "Well, I know where she is." And he told him about the gallery. But even then Bob didn't. . . . Because he'd just gotten involved with this second, which had been a kind of a quiet thing, you see? But eventually ended in marriage.

PK: So he actually. . . .

JA: But it could easily have. . . . But, after all, this was a continuation of a relationship that he had had. This has to be very confidential because his sons. . . .

PK: They don't know it?

JA: They don't know it. They weren't all just enthusiastic about this second marriage, but they wouldn't know the details of it.

PK: Well, they should be happy then. So, okay, what happened then? So they actually got married. Bob got married a second time at about what? In '89 or something like that?

JA: Yeah, about '89. And so he didn't . . .

PK: And you still hadn't reconnected?

JA: Golly, yeah. So finally he did call me, and said, "This is Bob. Your brother gave me your telephone number." He said, "I'd like to see you, see what you've been up to these past sixty years." He said, "I haven't seen you for sixty years, so I'd like to find out." So I called him back and I left a message on his machine. I said, "Well, this is nice to hear from you." I said, "You know my number, you know where I am, so call me and come over and I'll tell you what I've been up to."

PK: Or I'll show you.

JA: Yeah. So, actually, it took me a couple of days to call him back, because I'm so changed from the way I looked when I was. . . .

PK: Well, yeah, but we all do.

JA: And of course he did, too, but there was still something recognizable.

PK: Well, what. . . .

JA: And so what happened was. . . . Hmm?

PK: What year was this when he finally made the call?

JA: 1992. '92. December 10, 1992.

PK: A very important day.

JA: [giggles]

PK: And so then he called you back and he came over.

JA: He called me back and said, "When can I come over?" So I said, "Well, tomorrow," or something. So he came over and I had that little door, and I opened this little door first. And I looked down and could see. . . . My brothers had said, you know, "He has changed, but still he's very fit." So I opened this little door and he smiled. I opened the door and we stood there just looking at each other, just stood there. And we just threw our arms around each other, and he just lifted me right up off the ground. Just hugged me as though we'd never been apart. It was a very romantic moment. And so then I said, "Well, sit down," and so we just talked about things and he made remarks that I had no idea that he was even aware of-remarks about my family and how he had felt about my sister and my mother. He said that he'd always thought what a wonderful mother-in-law my mother would make. And I had never known that. He'd never told me that until this time. And he said, "Oh, I always remembered what a wonderful mother-in-law. . . ." And, of course, he was fond of my father, too. And he'd gotten tickets from my brothers to some Stanford event when they were kids. They all, of course, went to Stanford.

PK: So he felt-it sounds to me-as if, in a way, he was part of the family.

JA: Yeah. I've shown you that picture. David [Ankrum-Ed.] has the great big one, which is a wonderful one that the sculptor [_____-Ed.] did for me. Did you see that? It was three-dimensional. It was a combination of photography and three-dimension mirrors and. . . .

PK: Oh, I have to . . . I'm not sure.

JA: It goes back to my great-grandfather-pictures of him-and then it goes right up to the. . . . Includes Bob and me, and at that time I had no idea I was ever going to see Bob again-when that artist did this. And then at the very end it shows saying good-bye to my artist. And, of course, by that time-oh, I've had a lot of tragedies-my son [Cary-Ed.] died.

PK: You said a surfing accident.

JA: I haven't gotten rid of that. I still have nightmares about that. He died surfing.

PK: Yeah, when was that? You mentioned that earlier.

JA: It was in '89. '89. It hurts today just as it did. . . .

PK: Yeah.

JA: Well, I've learned to live with it, and being with Bob has helped me a lot, because otherwise I. . . . And, of course, my other son and my grandchildren have all been helpful. But you never get over that. It was so sudden.

PK: How old was he?

JA: He was thirty-nine. He'd gone back. . . . He was a rebel. He had been through the drug scene. He was very bright, and he'd been a firefighter and forest fire [fighter] and a miner for gold. [chuckles] And then he realized that he wanted to learn, so he went back to school—took him five years—and he'd just gotten his degree, and the next day he was going to. . . . Well, it was a summer graduation, so it wouldn't have been as important to him. He said, "Oh, I'm sorry it's not in the fall because I won't be wearing a robe." And so he wanted to come and take me out, to go out to have breakfast—oh, I can hardly speak of this—to celebrate, and I said, "Oh, I've promised Toddy. . . ." That's Dana Andrews' widow [Mary Tod Andrews-Ed.], who is a close friend of mine, and Dana was in an Alzheimer's hospital, and I would pick her up and go down to visit him because she'd been so supportive of me with Bill [Challee-Ed.] through his Alzheimer's thing. So we had this arrangement. We'd often go down there, and then she'd come stay over night with me in Laguna. So I said, "Oh, Cary, I've promised to go with Toddy to visit Dana tomorrow." And he said, "Well, we'll make it Tuesday. Is that okay?" The next day he was gone. He was killed the next day.

PK: Where did it happen? Where was this at?

JA: Well, he lived in Santa Monica. He had an apartment in Santa Monica, and he would surf right there in Santa Monica. And it was body surfing and he was expert. He was very good but he was. . . .

PK: It must have been a freak accident.

JA: It was. Because he'd been surfing there for years. And my other son David would always warn him. He said, "You shouldn't go so. . . . You should go further out." He says, "It's too dangerous getting those waves so close."

PK: The shore break.

JA: Yeah. And he said, "No, that's what I like about it. I like that strong wave." And that's what happened. Just completely. . . .

PK: Ooh, that's painful to remember.

JA: Oh, it's just. . . .

PK: What was his name again?

JA: Cary, C-a-r-y, Cary Ankrum.

PK: And he was the younger? Or the older?

JA: Yeah, he was the younger. And he had just come back from a wonderful. . . . He was on the United Nations study group that was sent. . . . Their class had won the award for the best class in social science, and he was sent back to New York with this group to study the. . . . He represented. . . . It was a simulated United Nations meeting. And he was so happy, you know, and it was just such a triumph for him. His picture was with the group in the paper and they interviewed him. He spoke and. . . . He represented Asia, I think. That was his specialty, was Asia. And it's not only the tragedy but it's all the things you regret. All the years of regrets that you had. [sighs]

PK: I understand a little bit because, although this interview isn't about me, but we're talking about something very sad. My parents lost my younger brother just before his thirtieth birthday. He was killed on a motorcycle and, you know, he was wild. He was a rebel, and he was actually in a very difficult time at that point. And he, frankly, had been drinking down in Santa Cruz and then was riding up to [Felton], actually, which is mountainous area and it was beginning to rain and he went too fast.

JA: Yeah.

PK: And it was. . . . I mean, of course, it was for me, naturally-I mean, I lost a brother-but for my parents, especially my mother, it was. . . .

JA: You never get. . . .

PK: Well, she never really got over that.

JA: You never do.

PK: And you always wonder. . . . In your case at least, it sounds like your son had brought things together . . .

JA: Yeah.

PK: . . . and he was actually at a very positive time. With my brother-and it's almost worse in some ways-it was not positive at all. His wife. . . . They were separated, and [there were] children, and he was a lost soul. And so that in some ways makes it even worse because you say, "What could we have done?"

JA: I know, I know.

PK: They have the regrets you're talking about.

JA: Yeah. But then, I think back, and I think, if only I had just. . . . He was always wanting to go on a trip with me, and I was always so involved with the gallery I couldn't go off. Things like that. And I dream about him still to this day. I dreamed one night he was standing in the door. The door was open, and he was standing in the doorway, and he said, "Come on, Mom." In other words, he was going into death, and he turned to me and said, "Come on," as though "Come with me."

PK: So this tragedy happened just shortly before Bob reappeared in your life.

JA: Yeah.

PK: That seems almost providential.

JA: Yes, it was. It really was.

PK: Well, tell again-I mean, I've heard this story-but tell again-we'll talk about something happier now-how was it that you. . . . Was it instantaneous that you decided, "Well, we didn't get it right. . . . We missed the first opportunity. We're not going to miss this opportunity." How did this happen? How did you decide that you were going to come together again?

JA: Well, what happened was that after that wonderful meeting we had, reminiscing and talking about my family and how fond he was of my family, he left to go, and so I walked out with him and I was just standing there and he said goodbye. And then he turned around, he came back, and he leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. And, oh, I was so thrilled. I was really quite thrilled that he'd come back to. . . . So I, "Hmm." You know, it was kind of nice that life had sort of come back. And so the next day he called me, and he said, "Would you go to a party with me? A Christmas party?" He said, "I'd like to have you go to this party. My son's the host, and I'd like to have you come to the party." It was a Christmas party. And I said, "Oh! Well, I think that would be nice, yes. I would like to." So he came and got me, and we went to this very nice house to this party. And we walked in and he introduced me to his sons, and one of them I thought was really quite chilly, quite aloof. And so I just said, "How do you do?" and I turned around and met some other people, and this one woman came up to me and said, "Oh, it's so nice to meet you." She said, "We've been looking for somebody for Bob." And I said, "I'm very busy." [laughter]

PK: "I'm not that easy and available."

JA: Oh, yeah, I made it very plain. It was just some friend, you see, and I didn't like that approach at all.

PK: Like you were hanging around just like your main occupation was finding a man, huh?

JA: Well, the implication was that, "Oh, well, we'll get you together!" You know, like. . . . Well, that was the end of that. So the next day Bob called me and was inviting me to another party, and I said, "Bob, I don't think so. I'm not comfortable. I really am not comfortable. I really. . . . I don't feel comfortable and I don't want to be. . . ." What did I say? I forgot what I said. Something quite ruthless. Oh, I know. I said, "I don't want to be a threat to anybody. I don't enjoy that." He said, "Oh, no." Then he was so. . . . I said, "I would rather just not continue."

PK: Well, you are hard-hearted.

JA: Oh, I was. And he said, "Oh, oh. . . ." I said, "Can't we just be friends?" And he said, "Well, we'll talk about it." [chuckles] "We'll talk about it." So I felt kind of bad about it, too, that I'd hurt his feelings after all that-you know, our romantic meeting. So I guess I. . . . I think I called him back and said, "I hope I haven't hurt your feelings." That's the time I said, "Can't we just be friends?" I called back and said, "I'm afraid I hurt your feelings by not accepting your. . . ." He said, "Oh, no, no." That's when I said, "It's just that I don't want to be a threat." He said, "Oh, no, no. Oh, no, no. We'll talk about that." So then he called me, kept calling me again, and pretty soon it just evolved. It just was a natural thing that I just sort of came to life again. And our whole romance came to life again.

PK: How long was this? This period of you resisting and his wanting to make sure that he didn't let you completely off the hook so that you would swim away again, how long was this period?

JA: It wasn't very long. And when he was complaining about it was a long way for him to come up and then couldn't I come over and stay with him, you see? [laughing]

PK: Where was he then?

JA: Well, he was in Burbank. He'd sold all of his-parted with all-dispensed, disposed of. . . . I still have a few pieces from his home.

PK: So you said, "Okay. Well, okay." Hmm. [chuckles]

JA: Yeah, well, it was just. . . . It was kind of a. . . . Oh, it didn't take too long. We'd been going places together, and he took me all these wonderful places. He wined and dined me, I will say that. He really. . . .

PK: Same old thing, see? It's the same old story.

JA: Yeah, it was.

PK: He seduced you. He courted you.

JA: Yeah, he made no bones about it. Yeah. And, of course, I enjoyed that. I mean, he knew that I was melting, or he wouldn't have continued. [laughing]

PK: You know, I must have met you. . . .

JA: At the gallery.

PK: Well, I think I met you before, of course, at the gallery, but when I came to your home. . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: Now when I came to your home to take a first look at things, and then we, of course, proceeded with bringing your papers into the Archives, Bob was there. And I remember almost immediately it became clear to me that this was not just a couple, but a couple with a kind of freshness and this romantic energy that usually you associate with very early on in a relationship.

JA: Yeah, that's true.

PK: Because you both were all sparkling and telling mealmost immediately told me this story.

JA: [laughing] Yeah.

PK: So at that time you must have really been, then, back together a fairly short time. Maybe a year or so. Is that right? Because this must have been three years ago or more when I came first. . . .

JA: Yes. Oh, yes, we were very romantically involved. Yes.

PK: But it seemed real fresh is what I'm. . . .

JA: Yes, uh-huh. Well, it was.

PK: Lucky me, I got to see it.

JA: Well, let's see. Was this when you came [into the, at the end of the] last show? When you wrote the letter? No, it was before that.

PK: I. . . . Yeah, this. . . .

JA: No, we'd been together then. . . .

PK: A couple years or so?

JA: We'd been together. . . . Next December tenth will be five years.

PK: Well. . . .

JA: So it was still pretty fresh.

PK: Very fresh, because this must have been at least three or so years ago.

JA: Yes, oh yes. It was.

PK: Because you've been here now over a year.

JA: Because at that time, he was living with me then.

PK: Yeah, there.

JA: Yes, there.

PK: My, my.

JA: At first he considered. . . .

PK: A love nest.

JA: Yeah. First he. . . .

PK: And Morris [Broderson-Ed.] was living next door.

JA: Yeah, and that was a little difficult in the beginning. A little difficult in the very beginning for Bob. But. . . .

PK: Well, I'm sure he knew you were a pretty independent woman and if he wanted to keep you he had to be flexible.

JA: [laughs] That's right.

PK: Well, you know, I think we should probably end here because. . . .

PK: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, continuing an interview with Joan Ankrum, gallery owner and a woman of many interesting experiences, both in the theatre world and in the art world. This is the second session. The date is 16 December 1997, and the interview is being conducted by Paul Karlstrom at the subject's home on Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena. Last time, Joan, we. . . . In fact, we've just now been reviewing a bit some of the areas that we covered in connection with your life and your career. We, I think, did a pretty good job just sketching in your life-family and so forth. And we touched, naturally, on the gallery and the reasons, I think, why you opened it up, and, of course, it always coming back to Morris Broderson.

JA: Yes.

PK: And I think that that's pretty clear, and so what I would like to do today is revisit that subject of the Ankrum Gallery, and perhaps in a chronological way just talk about how it grew, what happened, how it changed, how you attracted artists, who they were, who some of the clients were, and, you know, those kinds of things that may stick out for you as you think of the history of the gallery. So why don't we start with. . . . Let's make it easy and start back again at the beginning.

JA: My decision to open the gallery, that was a very important decision. The whole reason for my starting the gallery was to help Morris, and it was at the advice of this very important woman in New York at the Whitney Museum when he was invited to the Whitney Museum exhibit of Young America 1960. His painting, called The Chicken Market, quite large-six, seven feet-was exhibited prominently and attracted a great deal of attention and was reproduced in Time magazine, the New York Times. And that really was kind of breakthrough for Morris's national recognition as an artist-an important artist. So. . . .

PK: Here you have this photograph that we're looking at, which, eventually, will join your papers, his papers, at the Archives. But it's, I gather, you with Morris in front of that very painting at that exhibition, 1960.

JA: That painting came out of Morris's walks beside a chicken market which was in Hollywood, on Santa Monica, I think it was. And he used to go by this chicken market every day on his way back and forth, and it always pained him to see those birds, those chickens, penned up back of this barrier, this barbed, almost like a barrier. And there in front of this barrier were sitting these two. . . . No, one, I guess it was. The owner of the chicken market. And he was sitting there with his arms crossed like the keeper of the prison almost. One day Morris walked by this market and one of the chickens was outside of the fence. And he was so thrilled. He said it made him think of me. Freedom. That finally this bird was free.

PK: Now, were you free yet at that time?

JA: Well, I was just beginning to be free, yes. I was free to start the gallery and I was free from my destructive marriage, and Morris based a lot of his themes on the idea of freedom, and I was almost always involved in those themes. And he tied it in with Nora, The Doll's House, and, well, one of his great themes was freedom.

PK: What was it about that experience, this exhibition, though, that led you to think in terms of actually opening up the gallery? I mean, was there something. . . . Obviously there was the successful response to Morris and to his work. But there must have been something else that made you feel that you could go ahead with actually opening a gallery.

JA: Well, actually, it was this very important woman on the staff of the Whitney Museum, Alice Appleton. I think it was Alice. Anyway, it was the Appleton family, who were very influential in the cultural life in the east. And she was so impressed with this, and she was so impressed with my relationship and how I had started Morris, and she said, "Well, where is he going to be showing after this?" And I said, "Well, I really don't know because the gallery that he has been showing, that I helped organize his show for, is closing." She said, "Well, you should start your own gallery and you're the one who should help Morris and be his dealer." And I said, "Oh, I don't know that I could do that. I have two children, I'm married." At that time I was still married. And she said, "You started it. It's up to you to see it through." And it made. . . . She was so emphatic that I finally recognized this as a responsibility and not as an indulgence, which I had been feeling a little guilty about because I had spent so much time with him and pursuing ways to help him that I felt a little guilty, that maybe I had neglected my own family. But she emphasized it as my responsibility. It changed my whole attitude, and I said. . . . Really, it's the first time I had thought of really assuming the beginnings of a gallery, that I would actually be the owner and organizer of a gallery. By that time, of course, I had a relationship with Bill Challee, who was a wonderful actor that I performed with in the theatre. I had this relationship, so when I went back to Los Angeles and told him about this, that's when he decided to help me. And. . . .

PK: So he provided . . . he was a backer?

JA: Well actually he was a backer by the tune of a thousand dollars. [laughs]

PK: Wow! That's all it took?

JA: Yes, that's what he said. I said, "Well, I can't really start this because I really don't have the money." My husband controlled my money, whatever I had. And so he said, "Well, here's a thousand dollars. We'll go down and we'll put it in the bank and start an account for a gallery." That's how it began.

PK: What was his last name again?

JA: Challee. C-h-a-l-l-e-e. And he was a wonderful human being and a wonderful actor. He was one of the founders of the Group [Theatre, Theater] in New York, along with Franchot Tone and some of the great Group artists.

PK: How did you meet him? Had you been working with him?

JA: Yes. We played opposite of each other in Come Back, Little Sheba.

PK: Really?

JA: I played . . . what's her name? And he played Doc. I played . . . I've forgotten her name. But Morris actually did a painting based on my performance with Bill Challee. Challee played Jack Nicholson's father in Five Easy Pieces.

PK: Oh, you mentioned that last time, yeah.

JA: He was. . . .

PK: So he was a film actor but also stage. . . .

JA: He was mainly a theatre actor, but then when he left when the Group dissolved, he came out and did some things in film.

PK: So did you play opposite him. . . . Was that in New York? Or here?

JA: No, that was here.

PK: So he was obviously going back and forth, I guess.

JA: Well, actually, he concentrated mostly on film eventually. He was in quite a lot of movies.

PK: That's where the money is, right?

JA: Yeah. And that's the way you keep going. But then he also was in the real estate business on his own. But his wife had died. We met at that time, while we were playing opposite each other in *Come Back Little Sheba*, which my husband directed. The whole thing was very dramatic and could have been fatal. [laughs]

PK: It must have been a little difficult.

JA: It was. It was very difficult. [whispers:] I shouldn't go into this, should I?

PK: Yes! Are you kidding? This is your chance! [laughs]

JA: Oh, well. [laughs]

PK: Notice how interested I am. [chuckles]

JA: Well, he really rescued me from it. He was the first one to rescue me from my marriage. Aside from Morris. Of course, while we were rehearsing *Come Back Little Sheba*-which I think is the best thing I ever did in the theatre. . . . I played Lola. And it was with a company that was organized sort of like a stock company, which actually originated in Pasadena. It was a subscription, and it was quite successful, had a lot of people involved, including people that were quite well known in the theatre.

PK: Some film people, too?

JA: Yeah, well, like Dana Andrews and his brother, Fred [Austin], Maroni Olson, and. . . . [whispers:] Does that _____?

PK: No.

JA: Yeah. But, anyway, this really kind of rescued me-my relationship with Bill-because he made me feel that I was a person on my own, not just a kind of an accessory to my husband, who was very compelling. Morris Ankrum. And he had some wonderful qualities, he was a great director, but he had other lives [chuckles], and it eventually. . . . Well, he had certain problems-psychological problems-that were self-destructive and also contributed to my possible destruction. And it was actually Morris Broderson who first . . .

PK: . . . recognized it.

JA: . . . recognized it. He was the one who pointed it out to me that I was like Nora in *The Doll's House*. And then when Bill came along he furthered the understanding of myself through his understanding, and he also recognized Morris's unique qualities. Bill had been a devotee of the Stieglitz Gallery in New York.

PK: He was knowledgeable about modern art?

JA: Well, it was very instinctive. He had no formal knowledge, but he had a response to good art and he used to go to the Stieglitz Gallery, and that's where he met O'Keeffe and Marin and Dove.

PK: So he knew what a gallery involved?

JA: Oh yes, yes. And he was very helpful in determining the way a gallery should be. For one thing, he suggested this . . . not a white. . . . It was a very, very pastel gray. Everybody always thought that the Stieglitz Gallery was white, but it wasn't. And Bill was the one that recognized that, and when we were painting the gallery-when we were painting the building-he would test all the . . . very carefully, and he said, "No," and he was very good about remembering these. . . . He wanted the exact value of the Stieglitz Gallery. And he became quite a good friend of Stieglitz. He actually even helped sell one of Stieglitz's. . . . I think it was stories of. . . . "*Kindergarten Stories*," I think it was called. He helped sell that. Just out of interest. But we just had this bond. He thought I was just the greatest actress in the world. [laughs] But wasn't really but. . . .

PK: Oh.

JA: I mean, I don't know that he thought that I was the greatest, because. . . .

PK: But he did admire your work.

JA: But one of this wives had been a very important Broadway person.

PK: Who was that?

JA: [whispers a name, too softly to hear-Ed.] [Her initials]. . . . She died not too long ago.

PK: Really? Well, you know, you may remember as we go along.

JA: But he had worked with a lot of very. . . . Well, he was Bette Davis's first leading man in the theatre.

PK: Really?

JA: [laughs] Yes. First leading man in the theatre in. . . . It was the beginning. . . . Oh, gosh, it was a play called The Earth Between. He's mentioned in. . . . There's pictures of him in the catalog, which I'll show you, the whole history of the. . . . Oh!

PK: Well, that's okay. These things will come in their due course.

JA: Yes.

PK: This is very interesting, though. So that really is. . . . these were the circumstances and the people who, then, made the Ankrum Gallery happen. Was it called in the beginning Ankrum Gallery or Joan Ankrum Gallery?

JA: No, when we started Bob had suggested that it be in my name, and I said, "Well. . . ." I think Morris had even thought it should be just Joan Wheeler Gallery. I've forgotten now exactly. But I thought, well, Ankrum was an important name, because of all of his background in the theatre, and by that time I was known as Joan Ankrum more than Joan Wheeler. And we had so many friends in the theatre.

PK: So what was your professional name?

JA: Joan Wheeler.

PK: Wheeler, okay.

JA: In pictures and in the few Broadway shows that I did.

PK: So you were Wheeler professionally? ____ ____ _____. [chuckles]

JA: I was Wheeler professionally. Yeah, until I started the gallery. Then I became. . . .

PK: Ankrum.

JA: . . . Ankrum.

PK: Did you do that in part just to separate the two?

JA: Well, I. . . .

PK: You know, different identities-the theatre you and then the art dealer you?

JA: Could be, yes. Well, by that time I was known an awful lot as Joan Ankrum, Morrie's wife. But then, pretty soon, that evaporated and people knew me just as Joan. Didn't even. . . . Well, I guess it's ambiguous. . . .

PK: Yeah, sure.

JA: . . . the boundaries. But what happened really was when Morris made this big hit at the Whitney in New York, I don't think. . . . The emphasis was on my starting the gallery and Morris. The whole event was a very spectacular success, and that's what attracted so many artists to his show, because we had all this wonderful recognition of the people who were buying his work, who discovered him through the Whitney Museum show. And then here I open my gallery with my first exhibition, of course, was Morris Broderon.

PK: What year was that?

JA: That was 1960.

PK: Still '60.

JA: The official opening was '61, but I started the gallery and was working and selling out of the gallery in 1960.

PK: Probably the latter part. Probably late 1960.

JA: Well, right at the beginning, no.

PK: Really!

JA: [Joseph-Ed.] Hirshhorn bought three paintings out of my first show before it opened-before the official opening, which was '61. He came to the gallery and wanted to see it. Heard that I was having this show and that I was opening the gallery, so he wanted to see the paintings before the opening.

PK: So Hirshhorn was one of your first customers.

JA: Well, he was my. . . . My very first important, significant collectors and supporters was MacKinley Helm. MacKinley Helm, who was a famous. . . . How do I say? He was a noted art biographer, who had taught in the humanities at Harvard and that was. . . . When he acquired one of Morris's paintings from the exhibition that I organized for Stanford. . . . That's when he first heard about Morris's painting, was the Stanford show, which was a big show which I organized in 1958.

PK: Oh yes.

JA: So, anyway, that's what led to a lot of things was MacKinley Helm's interest. He was the first important person to urge me to open a gallery, aside from the woman at the Whitney. And he summoned me to his home in [Montecito] to . . . he was so interested in Morris and he heard about my relationship and how I had started Morris out, when he was fourteen, as an artist. He was fascinated with that and wanted to see me, so we came down to Santa Barbara, and he questioned me about my background, and he was very impressed with it. And he said, "You should start your own gallery." And that made it pretty emphatic for me, too, because of his experience and his knowledge. He'd written many books. Later he planned to do a biography on Morris, but unfortunately he died before he wrote the book. But he was a great expert on Mexican art. He was one of the great. . . . You don't know his books.

PK: So he started to collect information to write something about Morris, but just didn't. . . .

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: It was really a project he had begun?

JA: Well, his interest in Morris began. . . . As a matter of fact, he wrote the profile on Morris for his first show, before I started the gallery, but it was the gallery that I helped start that was. . . . [whispers question about recording process-Ed.]

PK: No, no, that's. . . . So he. . . . But was Morris's first show at your gallery, at your new gallery, that-what is his name?-Mister. . . .

JA: MacKinley Helm.

PK: Yeah, Helm. It was for that show that he wrote a little. . . .

JA: No, no, it was the one before that. It was a dealer who wanted to represent Morris, who had seen his work in a group show at the L.A. County Museum and had sent for Morris and talked to him, and he didn't. . . . Morris never trusted anybody except me. I was the only person he really trusted, and so he sent for me. He said, "There's this woman that wants to give me a show in her gallery and represent me. I want you to see her." So I went over and had a talk with her and I wanted to test her sincerity, and I said, "Well, everybody tells me that I should be Morris's dealer." She said, "Well, maybe we could work together." And I said, "Oh, no, I wouldn't want to be engaged in any financial part of it." I said, "I wouldn't want to do that. I would help you." I said, "I would be happy to help you with your gallery and bring you a mailing list and work all this out. But I wouldn't want to have anything to do with any money." I felt that it would destroy our relationship, which was absolutely pure. There was nothing. . . .

PK: You mean your relationship with Morris?

JA: Yes. It was not motivated by wanting to make money. And that's why he trusted me, because he knew that

that wasn't what I was interested in. I was just interested in his soul as an artist and as a human being. I don't know how else to say it. And he knew that. I think it was demonstrated by my first reaction when he brought me his drawing, when I saw his first drawing. And so then he couldn't understand why I was so excited about this. So the next day he brought me another. . . . This was fourteen. So he brought me another drawing. And I said, "Oh no, no." So he said, "That's when I knew what you meant." Because he knew that was just superficial, didn't mean anything. He understood what I was talking about.

PK: So I gather, then, that in the beginning there was really a great deal of interest in Morris. He was something of a phenomenon

JA: Well, actually he was. Right from the beginning. It was right when I first took his work, when I decided to help him, before I even thought about having a gallery. I took his work to. . . . Jarvis Barlow at that time was the head of the Pasadena Museum, and he had known my husband at the University of California in Berkeley, and he had been a great admirer of my husband, who was quite a star of his generation at Berkeley, at the University. So through him, that's how I met Jarvis, was through my husband who had known him in college. So I took Morris's paintings to Jarvis, and he was pretty impressed, but he said, "Well, the thing for him to do is to meet to Francis de Erdely, who was now teaching a class in life drawing." So I said, "I will, I'll show his work to Francis de Erdely." So he said, "You come and have you meet him with Morris." So Morris and I went to the Pasadena Museum, presented some of Morris's work, but he said, "Well, I'll accept him into my class, but he'll have to work very hard because of his deafness." He himself spoke with a heavy Hungarian accent, but here, of course, Morris having no hearing, it didn't make much difference whether he had an accent or not. So he entered this. . . . And I went with him to this first class because Morris . . . he was shy still. So I went with him to this first class and at the end of the. . . . It was a class of very accomplished artists, who were much older and more educated in the technicalities of art. So de Erdely walked up to Morris's canvas and he looked at this a long time. And at the end of this session he drew me aside as we were to leave, and he said [in Hungarian accent-Ed.], "Dis boy is a gen-ee-oos." And he said, "Now don't tell him that I said that. We don't want him to get the big head."

PK: Continuing this second-session interview with Joan Ankrum, this is Tape 1, Side B. And we were hearing a very interesting story about Morris's art instruction with de Erdely, and you were saying that he took you aside-de Erdely-and basically indicated he recognized that Morris was special. In fact, he used the word genius, is that right?

JA: Yes, he said, "Gen-ee-oos."

PK: "Gen-ee-oos." And so what was your response at that point? I mean, what. . . . JA: Well, I was pleased that he recognized it but it was no surprise to me, because I felt he was a genius myself. [laughing] But to have somebody of his stature and recognition as an artist, naturally I was delighted. So I said, "Well, he can come alone after this," but he wanted me to be with him. I really didn't want to feel that Morris was my possession. I was very aware of the delicacy of that, and I was very careful not to do that, not to act as though he was my puppet or something.

PK: How old was he at this time?

JA: He was only fourteen.

PK: At that time?

JA: Yeah.

PK: My!

JA: Fourteen. And so he accepted. . . . There was a rule that nobody could enter those classes. A life drawing class where the model was in the nude, you weren't allowed to do that under the age of sixteen. But they made the exception for him because of his deafness and his special need. So at the end of. . . . So we continued with his lessons. . . .

PK: Where was he teaching? de Erdely?

JA: At the Pasadena Art Institute . . .

PK: At the Pasadena Art Institute?

JA: . . . which later became the Pacific Asia Museum. But at that time it was the Pasadena Art Institute, that was donated. Her whole collection in the museum was donated by Grace Nicholson. You know that? That's a whole other. . . .

PK: That's a whole other story. So was that the extent of Morris's formal instruction?

JA: No. Then he was there for a year and recognized right away. One of his paintings was reproduced in the [Pasadena Star News, Pasadena Star News], which was quite extraordinary. And then he had another . . . I think it was one more year of study at the Museum and then de Erdely was hired by USC in the art department. And he said, "I'm sorry but I won't be able to teach Morris at the Museum any more, because I'm going to leave." I said, "Oh, what's going to happen to Morris?" And so he said, "Well, I'll see that he's admitted," because Morris didn't have the academic credits to enter a university. But Francis said he would see, that he would bring the greatest influence he could, to accepting him as a special student. So he entered USC at sixteen as a special student-which was a great opportunity for him because they had wonderful special-equipment instructions for the deaf.

PK: Who did he. . . . Well, did he study with others? I mean, he was in the program so he must have had other teachers as well. Any come to mind? JA; Well, no, de Erdely was his only teacher-in art, yes. And he had drawing, everything, with de Erdely. I know who else was there at the time, but I don't know whether I should mention this.

PK: No, who? Who?

JA: Was Ewing. But Ewing was a sort of. . . . He was entirely an antithesis of Ewing's. He was more realistic. Whereas de Erdely was more expressionistic.

PK: Right, right.

JA: And that's what. . . .

PK: I don't think I know Ewing. What was Ewing's first name?

JA: Edgar. Edgar. Edgar Ewing. E-w-i-n-g. He's still living.

PK: I'm just trying to think of what his work is like. I'm not familiar with it.

JA: Well, I can't remember the series.

PK: He must not be too well known any more. _____ ?

JA: No, I think you'd probably find his name in some of the old early books on. . . .

PK: But he had a reputation at the time, I gather. JA; Yes, he did. As a matter of fact, I had a client who had owned a couple of his paintings, Edgar Ewing.

PK: Well, let's get back to the gallery. I am interested in the success that Morris enjoyed and then maybe sort of speculating about some of the reasons for it. In your judgment-you must have thought about this-aside from the fact that he was a genius, as we have determined, what was it about the work that you thought was attractive, that really captured people's attention and admiration, I guess?

JA: I think the emotion back of his paintings came through to people. It would speak to people who were not all educated, sometimes, or sometimes the most extremely sophisticated viewers-like Mac Helm-people who had seen art all over the world throughout major museums and his own collection. But that's what seemed to. . . . Like Vincent Price, who was one of his early admirers. He was so moved by his paintings, which had. . . . Of course, some of his paintings suggested his lack of hearing, his deafness. [moves away from microphone (to obtain a painting?)-Ed.] And they were all so expressionistic but they also were lyrical. They had a poetry, and I think that this reached people without their really being conscious of what it was that was getting to them. But I had people who would see his paintings for the first time and burst into tears, they were so moved. And there was one client I had who came to his first show, and he spent a lot of time looking at the paintings and all of sudden he ran out of the gallery. And the next day he came back and he said, "I want to buy one of the paintings." And I said, "Oh, I'm surprised. I thought you didn't like them the way you fled from the scene yesterday." And he said, "Well, that's because I couldn't stand it. I was in pain, I was so moved by his work." And so he was one of Morris's early collectors. [Alan, Allen] Davis, his name was. But that's the way it affected a lot of people. And, of course, another client of mine had the same response. Burst into tears. Could hardly be able to explain what it was. It just got to them.

PK: That's interesting. And this is something that. . . . Did you find that a little bit surprising? I mean, that's not a usual response to. . . .

JA: No. No, I didn't because I was so closely involved with. . . .

PK: Let me put it this way: Was this also your response to it?

JA: Oh yes, I was always very moved.

PK: Emotional.

JA: And, of course, especially if it involved any kind of an experience. . . . People were able to identify with him. They just seemed to. . . .

PK: Would it be that perhaps they were sort of sharing what seemed to be his feelings that he brought to the work?

JA: Yes. People. . . . It was so hard for me because I was so close to Morris. As he said once, he had to figure out was he Joan or was he Morris? That came out more and more through the years to the point where he had to break away from me. There was a period that came that was very significant in my whole life-and his, too. But that's another long story.

PK: Well, I mean, we're going to need to talk about that sometime. Is this the moment? Why not? You brought it up.

JA: Well, it's very deep into the story. It comes later when. . . .

PK: I mean, if you want to save it you can, but we want to make sure we don't forget it.

JA: Yes. Oh, this is a very. . . . Someday you'll really have to read my book. [laughs]

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: I haven't finished. Because I go into that quite extensively.

PK: Well, briefly why don't you just sketch it in, and then if we need to expand more later, but since we brought it up. . . .

JA: Well, what happened was that he became under the influence of two people who had been art collectors, and they became very interested in Morris, and one of them was a psychiatrist-no, a psychologist, clinical psychologist [_____-Ed.]-and the other one was quite a well-known songwriter. And they were life partners, these two guys. . . .

PK: So they were gay men?

JA: Yes. And, of course, I had discussed Morris with them, because of the fact that they. . . . I met them originally through Edith Halpert. They were clients of hers at the Downtown Gallery, and that's how I originally met them. But so I didn't realize how bad an influence they were going to be, because what they did, they. . . . In my desperate search for somebody to help Morris with his drinking problems, they came to me and they said. . . . One of his interests was working with deaf students, and they said, "Oh, I would love to work with him."

PK: This was probably the psychologist.

JA: Yes. I would love to. . . .

PK: What was his name, for the record?

JA: It was Jack. . . . No what a minute, no. . . . that was the songwriter. The songwriter was Jack Lawrence, who wrote the song "Tenderly." And the other guy. . . . Oh, I can't. . . . For the moment I can't think of his name.

PK: Okay, later.

JA: But what happened was that I appealed to them to help, and they said, "Oh, yes," they felt they could help Morris because they understood. . . . He could work with them. . . . I think the psychologist was very interested in working with him so he could do a story on him

PK: Study, sure.

JA: So what happened was that Morris became estranged from me. He became alienated from me.

PK: Well, now how do you think that happened?

JA: Well, it was largely through his drinking, and I think they exploited his alcoholism by planting seeds of suspicion in Morris. "Where's the money?" As though I was. . . . They intimated that I was holding back money.

PK: What could their motivation have been? I mean, do you think that they genuinely admired Morris and his work, first of all?

JA: I think they did. Yes, they did.

PK: So what could have been the misunderstanding or their motivation in turning or appearing to turn Morris against the person who had done so much for him? You must have thought about it.

JA: Well, I did. It was just a purely selfish thing, as far as I could. . . . And a lot of people said, "Oh," when they heard the story about how, and, oh, so eventually Morris. . . . They had their stockbroker, their business adviser, come out from New York to investigate my records of my . . .

PK: Your gallery.

JA: Yeah, of my relationship with Morris.

PK: What year was this, about?

JA: Well, let's see, oh, dear. It was at least ten years into the gallery.

PK: So in the early seventies?

JA: Yes, yes. Early seventies.

PK: Was Morris enjoying a considerable success at that time?

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: And you were selling works, right?

JA: Oh yes, of course. But the strange attitude that he had toward me, which was so strange. We went to New York for one of his shows, and Morris suddenly said that he wanted to leave the gallery. And I was just as though somebody had put a knife in me. I said, "Why?" He said, "I just want to be on my own." And I thought, "Well, maybe. . . ." I just accepted it. But then, as this alienation toward me developed, they advised him to get all of his paintings and leave, accompanied by their-what do you call it?-their tax investor or their accountant.

PK: Broker, or. . . ,

JA: Yeah. They came to the gallery with Morris and demanded, or requested-in writing, also-that all of his paintings be given to Morris. And all of the records and everything. And they went through all. . . . Oh, it's a terrible story. A terrible story. So you can imagine what I went through. And Morris didn't explain anything to me at all. He just said that that was it. This came. . . . I felt like Lizzie Borden. I'd just been hit with the ax.

PK: Wow!

JA: And so that, of course, was. . . . What happened was that he suffered terribly. He left the gallery and. . . .

PK: But they convinced him that he must do this for his career, right?

JA: Well, whatever it was, they. . . .

PK: He never said. Morris never really explained to you.

JA: Well, he said that they were. . . . He didn't come right out and say it, but he implied that they said that I was dishonest, that I was keeping money back from him. And, of course, they could see, because the accountant went through. I had saved every check I had written, every business. . . . Even he said, "I couldn't find anything." It was all there. But it was just that Morris was. . . . He was a distorted. . . . His whole nature had been distorted through alcoholism.

PK: What about this: Had he, by that time, recognized his own sexual preferences, his own sexuality?

JA: Oh, well, he had for. . . . Let's see, I'm trying to think. Oh, yes, he never made a secret of his. . . . He used to. . . . I don't know, maybe unbeknownst to me, maybe he had never really have faced the fact that he could be honest about it. But, of course, they knew. These guys knew that he was. . . .

PK: Yeah, I was just speculating. I guess, perhaps, wanted to ask you if you thought they then exploited that aspect. as well as. . . . Not to equate it with alcoholism . . .

JA: No.

PK: . . . but to make him feel more trusting or comfortable with them because they were homosexual.

JA: They may have. It was such an insidious, subtle thing.

PK: I mean, did you ever feel that at the time that that was being, then, used in a way to. . . .

JA: No, I really didn't. I didn't feel that. I was very sympathetic, and I have many, many friends who are gay, and I think they all accepted me because they understood my understanding of Morris. So I didn't ever have any hostility. The only thing I can think of is that once they said something about it to me. I said, "I just don't tell everybody that Morris is gay."

PK: Right.

JA: And I think that they thought that I was wrong. And I said, "Well, I think that's up to Morris. If he wants to tell people. . . ."

PK: Well, yeah, otherwise you're using it as a publicity mechanism.

JA: Well, yeah. I mean, I didn't. . . . Naturally all of my friends from the beginning knew it, and, after all, I was the one that rescued him from this terrible feeling of guilt when he was a boy, when he was thirteen and fourteen. I was the only one that he could relate to and confide in. But I never felt that they were sexually interested in Morris.

PK: Well, I didn't mean that so much, not necessarily, but that they were part of a culture, we would call it now, gay culture . . .

JA: Well, yes.

PK: . . .and that they somehow, perhaps, made him feel that that's where he belonged. You see what I mean?

JA: Yes.

PK: At least for. . . .

JA: But I think it was because of his condition, of his alcoholism. Because it was almost like using somebody's. . . . He was distorted. His thinking was distorted. He knew me. He knew that I. . . . He couldn't have felt that I was . . . if he hadn't been distorted-psychologically or mentally. He knew that I didn't have a dishonest bone in my body, in the relationship to [him-Ed.].

PK: It must have been very painful.

JA: Oh, it was, oh, it was so painful.

PK: Did you see him during that time at all?

JA: Oh, yeah. Well, what happened was, the day that he went off with these guys, Bill [Challee?-Ed.] and I were sitting there, and we were both just dumbfounded. So I said, "I'll just have to close the gallery." I mean, that's the whole reason for being was to. . . . My relationship with Morris was [as close as, to close] the gallery." And so Bill said, "Well, yes, of course." So that night I went to sleep, and the next morning I woke up and I said, "Well, I'm darned if I'm going to close this gallery. When I think of all the artists that count on me, I'm darned if I'm going to close this gallery. I'm not going to do it." So I came to Bill and I said, "I'm not going to close the gallery." And that, of course, was the very. . . . And what happened to Morris in the meantime, as soon as people found that he was no longer with the gallery, everybody was after him-dealers were after him-and he just . . . he couldn't. He just couldn't agree to make any commitment to anybody else. He couldn't do it. And he got more and more and more into drinking, until he was just absolutely desperate. But if I saw him on the street or in a restaurant, I wouldn't speak to him. I wouldn't even have anything to do with him. And finally he became really desperate, and one of the other dealers found him in a bar, just out, and called me and said that he had brought Morris home to his place because he was in such desperate condition. And he said, "Will you talk to him?" And I said. . . . Oh, I know, he tried to get Morris on the phone to talk to me, and, of course, Morris wouldn't. And so finally he said, "Now, he's right here." He said, "Will you talk to him?" And I finally said, "Well, I'll listen to him." So he shouted as much as he could into the phone. Said, "Can I come over to see you?" And I finally said, "Yes." And he broke down over the phone, and ten minutes later he was calling from another gallery up the street. Bill and I sat there and watched him through the window, and he was like something you couldn't recognize.

PK: How so?

JA: Well, he was completely . . .

PK: . . . disheveled?

JA: . . . drunk. Absolutely disheveled. [phone rings] That's the office phone. Maybe I'd better answer it. It might be something. . . . [Interruption in taping]

PK: Intermission. We tried to answer the phone, which was unsuccessful. Okay, here we are again. Morris had just called and was going to come over and you, and Bill were sitting there and watching him come into the gallery.

JA: Yes, it was just. . . . He was really unrecognizable. But he came in, kind of staggered in, I think. . . . [JA begins to cry-Ed.] He went all around the gallery touching everything. And he said, "Oh, I'm here! I'm here!" I had a. . . . You see I can hardly tell you about it to this day.

PK: It must have been unbelievable.

JA: It was. I mean, he was just so. . . . He sank to his knees on the floor and just sobbed, as though he was just rescued from some terrible hell. It was as though. . . . I just couldn't. . . . I just. . . . But I was so hurt that I couldn't even cry.

PK: So you couldn't really respond to him _____, the way you can

JA: No, I couldn't. Now. But it took me quite a while to respond. It was as though I was outside looking at like some strange movie, it was so unreal to me. And I just couldn't. . . . I was just like an outside observer, just a cold observer. It was as though the whole heart had been plucked out of me in relation to him, all those. . . .

PK: Did he ask to come back to the gallery then?

JA: Oh, yes. Oh, no. [meaning she wouldn't have turned him down-Ed.]

PK: What did you say?

JA: I don't know that he really said, "Can I come back?" but he demonstrated it, of course, and I didn't say anything, but he. . . . Oh, I know. I think what it boiled down to, he said. . . . I don't know whether it all happened that night or whether it was the following day, but he said he wanted me to help him. I said, "Well, if I help you stop drinking, will you stop? If I find some help that will really help you. . . ." And that's really what. . . . And he said, "Yes," he would. But it took me a while. I made all kinds of appointments for him and he wouldn't show up at them, so it still wasn't. . . . But it was the emotional involvement, that I reaccepted him, but even that took a little while.

PK: Like the Prodigal Son.

JA: Yeah, it was really. . . . And you can see even today I was so deeply hurt. And. . . .

PK: This second session with Joan Ankrum, this is now Tape 2, Side A. And, Joan, I'm sorry we got interrupted at that point because you obviously have deep feelings about Morris's return and then, I guess, the difficulties that you had in trying to help him overcome his alcoholism.

JA: Yeah. And, actually, I wasn't able to get back my real emotional feeling for Morris until he came back, said I want to come back to the gallery and make a list of all . . . renew . . . actually identify a lot of my slides and paintings. So that's what he did. He said, "I needed it." I said, "I needed all this information" for his records. So he came back, and we went over some of the slides of the paintings that I had sold for him, things in collections and now in private collections. But there was one painting that he had given me at the time of. . . . Oh, well, it was actually a painting. . . . Oh, no, it was a painting based on his Japanese series that he did. And it was a painting of two. . . . It was from a famous . . . the Japanese historic paintings that were based on the ancient legends. The Kabuki paintings. And it was a painting of this man bringing in on a platter the heads of these two people. And when he showed me the. . . . Well, we'd looked at the slide of this painting, and I said, "Morris, is that supposed to be Bill and me, those two heads?" That's the way I interpreted it. That's the way I had interpreted this painting when he had left the gallery. And these things came out of this Japanese experience, and to me that's the way I interpreted them. And he burst into tears, and he said, "Oh no, no, I never meant anything like that." And he broke down and wept. And that's when I broke down and sobbed, and both of us together just wept. And it just. . . . So that was when I really got back my feeling for Morris, which I had really lost there for. . . . Well, you can imagine, not even being able to speak to him. I'd see him in the street. . . .

PK: How long of a period of time was this between his announcing he wanted to leave the gallery and then the reunion?

JA: It was just a little under two years.

PK: Oh, fairly long.

JA: Yeah.

PK: What happened to these two wonderful fellows in the meantime? Were they still in the picture?

JA: Well, no. What happened was that they had asked me to. . . . Before we had this falling out, they had asked me to participate in an exhibition of Ben Shahn paintings, because of their. . . . I've forgotten now what the connection was. I guess they owned them. And they said they could get me these on consignment. Are you familiar with Ben Shahn's work?

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: Well, they were editions, and they were original editions. I mean, they weren't photographically reproduced.

PK: Right, no.

JA: I don't know, maybe they had bought them. I think that was it. They had bought this big collection, and they wanted me to sell them for them. I said we could go half, fifty percent, and expenses, and fifty percent in the. . . . And I was interested, because Ben Shahn had been such an admirer of Morris's work from. . . . So what happened was I had the show, and then with this interruption about Morris's fate they. . . . I still had several editions of the things that I'd showed, so when we settled our partnership. . . . This was kind of a partnership just for that one exhibition, and they wanted to settle it, and I said, "Well, do you want the paintings or do you want money?" And they said, "It doesn't make any difference to us. I think we want the money." So I gave them the money and I kept my share of the. . . . which I eventually sold, of course. But that was when we became not friendly any more. [laughs] They were so greedy.

PK: Well, they certainly caused. . . .

JA: A lot of pain.

PK: . . . a lot of pain and a lot of trouble

JA: For both Morris and for me, too.

PK: Yeah. Obviously. . . .

JA: I think in many. . . . They were very immature-very immature people.

PK: Sounds to me like what they did was detach him from his fundamental security. . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . which was you and the gallery.

JA: Yeah.

PK: It seems pretty clear now.

JA: Yes.

PK: And whether or not they recognized it, who knows. But maybe. . . . That's a hard way to learn a lesson, but you have must have, at some point, thought, "Well, maybe Morris had to experience something like this to see for himself that. . . ."

JA: Well, no, I never thought. . . . I often blame myself, because I thought. . . . I wrote about that in my story, too. I said, "What have I done?" I said, "Maybe it's my fault. Maybe I made him too dependent on me. Maybe it was my doing. Maybe I made him into such a noble figure that it was almost impossible for anybody to live up to the nobility that I attached to him. Because to me, you know, he was just absolutely this noble figure. And, of course, that is my tendency. I did the same thing with my husband, you see. I didn't accept. . . . I denied a lot of the truth because I said, "Oh, that isn't the real person." See, so I accepted a lot of it. Which is a little bit. . . . One of my weaknesses, I think, is that maybe I don't really face reality. Which is sometimes harder to do-to really face the real facts.

PK: Well, in connection with Morris, what specifically do you mean? The fact of his drinking? Or that. . . .

JA: Well, no.

PK: . . . perhaps you'd constructed around him an image that . . .

JA: Yeah, that . . .

PK: . . . was a burden to him.

JA: Yeah, that's what I mean. Yeah, that it was almost he couldn't live up, maybe, to this noble picture that I had of him . . .

PK: Interesting.

JA: . . . of not being interested in money. And then when I found out that he could think. . . . I remember once that I was objecting once to too high a price that he had on this painting that somebody was interested in buying for a museum, and he didn't think it was enough money. And then Bill and I both said, "Well, Morris, it's terribly important for this museum to have this painting." He said, "They didn't paint it. They didn't know how hard, you know, how much. . . ." And Bill was very affected. He said, "Yes they did paint that painting." He said, "A great, great many people painted that painting!" And he really gave it to Morris. He really just really got through to him. And he gave up and finally agreed that that price was okay. Because there were people who believed in him and fought for him and . . .

PK: Right, exactly. Supported him.

JA: . . . supported him, and so that was quite an emphatic step for Morris.

PK: Well, it seems to me that he, at some point, had to. . . . This was part of his education, his understanding, how, well, he wasn't isolated. I mean, in a positive sense he wasn't isolated, and maybe his deafness quite naturally had him isolated. You provided, of course, a kind of lifeline . . .

JA: Yes, I think that's true.

PK: . . . and my guess. . . . I don't want to sit here pretending I'm a psychologist but I suppose I should put it in the form of a question. But do you think that he really did come, perhaps, to resent what he saw as a dependence?

JA: Yeah, I do. Yes, I do think that.

PK: And that that was largely, then, what made him vulnerable to these other. . . .

JA: Yes, I think the very fact that he resented the fact that he was dependent on me, and I think that had a lot to do with it. And also he had this mixed feeling, because for a while, like a youngster, he really was kind of in love with me. But it wasn't anything that. . . . I have to get a Kleenex. [Interruption in taping]

JA: I think there were only two females that he ever had that feeling that he was almost in love with. The other one was a lovely girl who was an art student and was a very good friend, was a wonderful girl. And I think she and I were the only women that he ever felt that way about.

PK: Now he drew or he painted her didn't he? Am I right in that?

JA: No.

PK: Her image? There's some female images in his work.

JA: No, I think. . . .

PK: I thought maybe you told me at one point that one was a friend, somebody. . . .

JA: Well, one of them was a deaf girl that he had known since when they were children, who is still alive, and I don't think he ever painted Dorothy. Her name was Dorothy [_____-Ed.]. We could ask him. That's another thing I wanted to ask you, when you wanted to see Morris.

PK: Oh yeah. Well, we'll talk about that.

JA: But, anyway, he identified with me so closely that what happened was when I got my first baby, when I adopted my first boy, he was kind of hurt because. . . . He wasn't mean or unsympathetic, but he was kind of hurt because all my attention went to this baby. Before that, my whole life was focused on Morris. And here all of sudden. . . . And that was when he was living with us in Altadena, and he said he felt then he had to go and live

away from me. But this, of course, was before I started the gallery, long before I started the gallery. But that's how close we were. [door opens] Hi, dear. [Interruption in taping]

JA: I think that right from the beginning people-including MacKinley Helm-one of the things that interested them was our relationship, because you don't often find this, they tell me, this kind of a relationship that begins practically almost in childhood. Fourteen. The closest, everybody said, was it was like Vincent [van Gogh?-Ed.] and . . .

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: And also another association that I felt strongly and so did Morris was, you know, the famous wonderful writer that was blind. See, that's. . . .

PK: I'm trying to think, myself. Well, that'll come back to you.

JA: Oh, it's ridiculous. Story, pumping the water, she realized how to talk.

PK: Oh, Helen Keller.

JA: Helen Keller! I couldn't think of that name! He painted Helen, he did Helen Keller. As a child, he painted her. But Morris and I saw that play together in New York with Anne Bancroft and. . . . See, this is what I mean about my instant recall.

PK: No, that's all right.

JA: And we saw it together and we just . . . I just broke down completely. The relationship was so similar, even though one was sight and the other was hearing. But it was the communication. The relationship and the understanding that was so deep. And I could hardly sit there when they came to the scene where she pumps the water and she says, "Wa-wa." Oh, even now I could break down, because it was like with Morris, when I first communicated with him when he was a child-I mean, when he was a youngster. And when I could break through the wall of his not hearing. It was just so similar that I just went to pieces. He did, too, but not to the extent that I did. Because I'm older, I guess that's why, but I think that's what a lot of people sensed in a lot of his paintings. They felt it; they didn't know exactly what it was. But I think that that's what moved so many people right from the beginning-from Edith Halpert and almost everybody that I associated with, in relation to his work and the gallery, that was what. . . . And that's really what. . . . I think that art, this is the great communicator-if it's true, if it's right. It's like another painting that Morris did in his first show. It was a black family, and this man-I think it was a janitor-who cleaned the buildings in the area and he came into the gallery, and he saw that painting and he was so moved. There's nothing here like that at all. These black forms that were very expressionistic, not any linear thing but just like a mass of closeness. And what Morris wanted to do. . . . He had seen these black people on the beach and he was so impressed with their closeness that he painted this painting. You could just feel the blood running through, that they were so united, they were so close. And here's this ignorant black man who had never probably even looked at a painting before, and he just couldn't get over it. He said, "That's . . . ooh. . . ." I asked him, I said, "What's your favorite painting in the whole show?" And, of course, that's the one. He said, "That's. . . ." But that's the kind of thing that people could identify with.

PK: It's remarkable that this seems to have been very much a shared response among many different people.

JA: Yes.

PK: And it seems to me that it's a fairly unusual phenomenon. I was going to ask you, in the nicest way possible, if you felt that Morris's handicap, his deafness, wasn't a part of the attraction. But I must say, when I look at the work, when I look at his work, there's nothing in the imagery that would clue you to the fact that he can't hear.

JA: No.

PK: This is something you have to get by just reading about him or ____.

JA: Yes, yes. And then later, of course-later, like in some of the Japanese themes-he sometimes used the sign language in a very expressionistic. . . . Like he'd use the sign language and they would be like birds flying. Or he'd use them as weapons. They were very expressive. But, as a matter of fact, the first painting-one of his paintings in the Whitney Museum show-some lecturer was going around talking about the various paintings to a small group of people, and so I was so interested in what he had to say that I followed around. I followed him so I could hear. This was his first week of the show at the Whitney Museum. And he came to this one painting. He said, "There's something curious about this." Now this is before the reviews had come out, so the show was new. And he said, "I would say that this artist. . . . There's something wrong about this; I think this artist may have no hearing." He said, "It could be both ears, but I think it's mostly in this ear," and he pointed out one. And I was so

impressed with this that I approached him, and I said, "Excuse me but I happen to know this artist and I heard what you said. You were right, this artist is deaf." And he was surprised and he was amazed and. . . .

PK: What did he point to, to indicate why he got that. . . .

JA: Well, actually, one of the paintings is an odd formation, and it's like a very . . . an emphasis on this . . . like a hole in his ear. And then later, I think, some people heard about his deafness and elaborated a little bit on it-like even Vincent Price. He was touched by the fact that he was. . . . And he could interpret a lot about his life. I think he even mentioned that in a lecture he gave once or a speech that he gave once. I don't know, but I think also it aroused the irritation of some people. Like some other artist said, "Oh. . . ." [spoken in a "curdled" voice-Ed.] There was even the suspicion that I had played on the fact that there was deafness. And, of course, I didn't.

PK: So sort of for the sympathy vote, as they would say.

JA: Yeah. Of course, I never did that. As a matter of fact, I used to turn down requests for shows of deaf artists, because I didn't want him to be so identified with that. It was a hard thing.

PK: Yeah, it would be.

JA: Yeah.

PK: What other. . . . You mentioned a few collectors, a couple of whom seem to be connected with the entertainment industry or with Hollywood. Do any others come to mind? Collectors of Morris's? Or, for that matter, beyond Morris. What about the gallery in general and some of your other artists. We haven't even talked about them. You know, among those who would come to your gallery regularly, was there a contingent that would represent the entertainment industry?

JA: Well, I had quite a few clients that bought from me, bought a number of the other artists also. But I think originally they were attracted to Morris's paintings. But what surprised me was, in that period when Morris was alienated from the gallery I found that people kept coming to the gallery as though it was still here. And so I really for the first time realized that they had come to the gallery not just for Morris. And so that increased, improved my self-confidence in myself in representing others, because I realized that it wasn't just for Morris that they came to the gallery.

PK: Ah, so that's what you thought previously?

JA: Oh yeah, I thought the only reason they came, really, was for Morris. And then I realized, well, that isn't the only reason they came. They might have come originally, but then they got interested in some of the other artists.

PK: Well, tell me a little bit about some of the other artists. Who were the ones that you remember especially well or who were with you a long time or were successful?

JA: Of course, actually. . . . I told you the story about Feitelson and Lundeberg. I was very fond of Helen's work-more than his. And then, of course, I loved Irving Block's work, and he was one of my favorites right all through that time. And, also, Morris was one of. . . . He came to the gallery, really, partly because of Morris. And also Hans Burkhardt. Hans Burkhardt I was sort of proud to have, but I never really. . . . He wasn't one of my favorite artists. Then there was Fritz [Schwaderer], who was a German artist that I kind of rediscovered. And Phyllis Manley was another one that I was very fond of. Marilyn Lowe. I think I have to get out a list of the others.

PK: Okay. Well, we can actually talk about them next time. I was just, actually, curious to know in light of the fact that you discovered that your clients didn't necessarily come just for Morris.

JA: Yes, I found that they really loved the gallery.

PK: There must have been one or two artists who were more successful than others in your stable-I guess that's what. . . .

JA: Yes. Well, I think in the very first years of the gallery, the two most successful in terms of money were Morris and Shirl Goedike, who had originally come to the gallery because of the success that I'd had with Morris, left another gallery to. . . . Goedike's first success was in San Francisco at the Legion of Honor. He had a big smash hit there, but he also had quite a following through his musical background. He had been a . . . I'm trying to think. But, actually, I think my gallery was different from most galleries.

PK: How so?

JA: Of course, I suppose everybody feels that.

PK: What do you think?

JA: Well, I found that I . . . When I went to New York for the first time and went into some of the galleries when I was first investigating galleries to represent Morris, I was very much disappointed with their attitude of unfriendliness. It was such a cold . . . and unless you had your checkbook out and re[ady] . . . that's what I never liked. And I couldn't stand people coming in and saying, "What's a good investment?" Actually, somebody once said that to me. "Tell me, now, what is a good investment?" And that's when I actually said, "You can leave. Right now. The door is open."

PK: You did?!

JA: Oh, I did. I kicked a couple of people out for that reason, because that's what they wanted to know-what was a good investment. And I said to this [one, woman, one woman], "You know, I would never sell you a painting." No, I said, "I would never sell you a Broderson." She asked to see his work and she said, "Which one is a good investment?" And I said, "I don't think I would ever show you a Broderson." Because of that request. [whispers:] I don't think I'm telling this very well.

PK: No, we get the point.

JA: [laughs] But I actually did. Oh, and then another. Once a very successful man in the business world, mostly the hotel business, the Las Vegas world. . . . He was owner of one of the big. . . .

PK: Wrapping up this second session with Joan Ankrum. We want to make sure we finish this story. This is Tape 2, Side B. You were talking about some of the people who came into the gallery and those that you didn't like their attitude about, really, what they were interested in, in Morris.

JA: Um-hmm.

PK: And there was this Las Vegas casino owner?

JA: [laughs] He came into the gallery and he looked all around the gallery, and he said, "Do you know, I don't see anything here that's a good investment. I wouldn't buy. . . ." I said, "Mr. Jones, you get out of my gallery and don't you ever come back!" [shouting] Oh, I was really very disturbed because he. . . . Well, it was such an insult. And I was so enraged that Bill [Challee-Ed.], who was in the back of the archives-in the storage place-storing something, he came rushing out. He thought that I had been assaulted by somebody because I was so angry with this man. And the man just stood there for a long time. Bill came in and he [the man-Ed.] said, "I didn't do anything, I didn't do anything." [laughing] But he left. And several months went by, and one of the other artists bumped into him on the street in front of the gallery. And he said, "Why is it, Mr. _____, that you never come to the gallery anymore?" [name purposely omitted-Ed.] He said, "Oh, that Mrs. Ankrum! I'm afraid of her. I would never. . . . She doesn't want me in the gallery. She won't let me in the gallery." [laughing]

PK: But he was going to other galleries. I mean. . . .

JA: I don't think he. . . . What he did, he had a collection of ceramic birds. They were probably valuable from an antique point of view. But that's the only thing he ever. . . . Oh, he did buy three paintings from me before we had this explosion. They were modestly priced and one of them was displayed at the Beverly Hills library. [laughing] It was thought highly of; it was a beautiful painting. It was by Phyllis Manley. He had bought one of hers. But they were very modestly priced. And he was probably agreed that they weren't valued at thousands and thousands of dollars. And they were just emerging artists.

PK: Right.

JA: But he wanted to somebody to say, "Oh this is going to be worth. . . ." Once somebody said to me, "What is this painting going to be worth in a few years?" And I [said-Ed.], "Mr. 'Smith', that painting is going to be worth exactly what you're paying for it today." Because I refuse to say to anybody that that particular painting was going to be worth all that money. I mean, it would be dishonest. I said, "The only way that you can ever guarantee that something is go[ing]. . . . An old masterpiece that has been proven through generations and generations, that' s the only way you could say, 'Oh, this is going to be worth a great deal.'"

PK: Did you find that. . . . I mean, obviously, you've now cited some memorable examples of philistines, we'll call them, who really don't apparently have much feeling for art or even maybe interest, but over all did you feel that those who came to the gallery were genuinely interested? I mean, could you tell this from conversations, the comments that were made? And did you feel over the years of the gallery perhaps, well, an increasing sophistication or understanding on the part of those who came into the gallery?

JA: Well, I think so, because I ran into somebody, oh, a few years ago, who was one of my early collectors and

she's quite a known person of very comfortable means, and we met at a big convention, one of the national conventions-art exhibitions-and I hadn't seen her for quite a few years. And she rushed up to me and she said, "I want. . . ." She gave me her name. Of course, I recognized her but I didn't want to intrude because she was with some new husband she had and I didn't want to. . . . So she said, "Oh, you taught me. You gave me my first interest in art, and I've never forgotten it." And I've had other people tell me that-which makes me feel as though I did contribute something to a lot of people. They tell me, from the letters that I've had. So I feel that. . . . Well, I tried to have people look at a painting for what it was and not for what it wasn't. Because some people would come in and complain about, "Oh, it's too real," or "It's too abstract," or it's this. . . ." Instead of letting the painting tell them, they wanted to tell the painting what it should be. And even artists can do this. Even another artist can come in and look at a painting and say, "No, I think he should have done this and that." Another artist criticizing! This is just amazing to me.

PK: What did you talk about when. . . . Of course, it would depend on which artists were being exhibited at the time but can you recall, by way of example, any exchanges that you might have had or might have had with customers when they'd come in? You know, the kind of dialogue you might have around a work of art or a show? What were the kinds of things that you like to talk about and that they seemed interested in?

JA: Well, if they would ask questions, I would try to ask them, "Well, what do you see in that, yourself?" And I think that's all I tried to do. Although, naturally, I liked to tell them about the artist. I would tell them about his background or what his influences were or I might point things out to them. But I remember one very sophisticated dealer who came out from New York. He was a partner in a gallery in New York and he was quite well known for the gallery. And he came into the gallery, looking around at the paintings and I started to tell him. . . .

PK: Did you know who he was?

JA: Yeah, I knew who he was but I didn't know him very well. I just knew him by his name. I've forgotten now what his name is; he's no longer living anyway. But I started telling him a little bit about one of the artists that he was looking at. And this just didn't happen to be Morris either, it was another artist I always liked to tell people about. And he said, "Don't tell me anything about him. Just don't tell me anything about the artist at all." And I think that was the attitude at the time, which I thought was against all common sense, because how are you going to. . . . A real artist isn't separated from his work. He's part of it. He's in there. His blood and guts and everything are in that painting. And so all it does is to augment your understanding of his work if you know something about him as a human being.

PK: So you would often, then, let the visitors to your gallery quietly enjoy the works on display. . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . but that what you would give them, and were happy to give them, was basically some biographical information. . . .

JA: Yes, yes.

PK: . . . on the artist. _____.

JA: . . . when they showed an interest. And they were always very interested. They would really ask about an artist. I mean, I didn't really try to. . . . My emphasis was not on immediate sell, but then were sometimes . . . some artists that would say, "Oh, you don't really try to sell my work." I had a couple of artists object that I sold somebody's paintings better than somebody else's or better than his, and I had that to deal with at times. But I found that people that came to the gallery were so delighted to connect with something in their own. . . . One of the most moving experiences I ever had in that respect was when I was showing the work of [Harry-Ed.] Lieberman, this wonderful Hasidic painter who was in his eighties. The last show I gave him he was eighty-three. And, of course, he had always painted Jewish themes, you see, ever since I showed him-right from the beginning. And they were quite unusual, unique paintings. I never saw anybody like him at all. And this man came into the theatre. . . . I mean, came into the gallery! [laughing] You can see . . .

PK: It was a slip.

JA: Yeah, it was a slip. And he was interested in these Lieberman paintings and I started talking to him about them and all about Lieberman. And he bought. . . . He finally ended up resisting a lot of the things, but he finally. . . . But he told me. . . . Well, he was moved to tears. His eyes filled with tears and he later told me that those paintings, what I told him about the artist, reunited him with his father that he had rejected because of his Jewishness. In other words, he didn't want to be identified with him that deeply, but he identified with him so deeply that he went to Israel and lived in Israel for a while. Took his family there. He told me all this.

PK: Because of Lieberman.

JA: Yes, because of that show. And it reunited him and it reestablished his feeling with his father that he had closed off. And I actually confronted another client that I had who was quite a distinguished doctor and he took this violent hostility toward the Liebermans.

PK: Really?

JA: And I said to him. . . . Well, somehow it came about-I don't know that I was that brutal-but I said, "Could it be that you don't like your background?" And he was Jewish. And it was true. I know it was true. He finally admitted. . . . I forgot. It came about not just boom! But that's what I've always said about that art is the great communicator. Now some people think that music is the greatest communicator, because that can't be destroyed, that music. . . . Some people think that music. . . . Well, for some people it is, maybe.

PK: Well, of course, it's quite abstract. Maybe that's ____.

JA: Yes. Yeah, maybe so. And it is a touchstone, releasing emotion.

PK: Oh, right.

JA: But that's what. . . . Whatever does it, something, it's usually in some art form that emotion, I think, is released.

PK: Well, it seems to me from our conversation today that your relationship to art is very much focused on the emotional, evocative qualities of art.

JA: Yes.

PK: And I realize that, I don't know, maybe this would be overstating it, but in some of these stories you've told and then talking about people's responses to Morris, that you see art as having this transformative capacity, the ability to actually change people or ____ _____. Is that right?

JA: Absolutely, I do see that. I've had illustrations of it all through the years.

PK: And so is this perhaps one of the main ways that you've taken personal pleasure, gotten your own fulfillment . . .

JA: Yes!

PK: . . . by being involved with selling art and with the art world in ____ _____.

JA: Oh, yes. Yes. The closeness that I've had with the artist's expression and the truest artist, that's been a great fulfillment of my life, much more than it was in the theatre, although I had moments in the theatre that were wonderful. But isolated, very isolated. Not a continuous feeling.

PK: Would you describe yourself, then, almost as a facilitator or-let's say-a matchmaker.

JA: As a what? Yeah, yeah. I think yes.

PK: Like a matchmaker-bringing people together, introducing them to artists and works of art . . .

JA: Yes, it is.

PK: . . .that has an effect on them.

JA: I think so. It is a kind of matchmaking.

PK: That's a nice way to think of it, don't you think?

JA: Hmm?

PK: Don't you think that's a nice way to think of it?

JA: Absolutely. The matchmaker. As a matchmaker. It's true.

PK: Well, I think this might be a good stopping point. And I like the idea of the matchmaker . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . to sort of conclude this session.

JA: Yeah, I think that's very true. That's very true. I think that's really what it's been all about. And people have confided in me that have never been able to confide in other people. And it's because of the proximity of the art. People come [to me] and tell me very personal secrets about themselves. And I think that that came about through my sharing my feelings of the artist and their work. And it's really true. You'd be surprised at some of the things that have happened. [laughs]

PK: Well, that would certainly fit with your ideas of art as a means of communication . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . in different ways. Well, listen, thank you. I think that we can wrap this up and look forward to a next session.

JA: Good! [laughter]

PK: Now we can get some lunch.

JA: Well, thank you. I enjoyed it.

PK: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, a continuing interview with Joan Ankrum. This is the third and final session. The date is February 5, 1998. [This date was later corrected to February 4 by the interviewer-Ed.] The interviewer for the Archives, as usual, is Paul Karlstrom, and the interview is being conducted at Joan Ankrum's home in Pasadena. Joan, we have covered a lot of ground. It's a little difficult to remember exactly where all we've been, but the two main themes, I think, that we've concentrated on-first of all, your own story and your involvement with the theatre and as a young woman, your involvement with men around the theatre, your marriages . . .

JA: [chuckles]

PK: . . . but I think the main thing that came out of that was the story of your own kind of seeking independence-going out on your own-and one of the key elements of that, it seems to me, then it brings it right into the art world-your own entering into the art world through the artist Morris Broderson, and then, of course, opening your own gallery. So finally we end up with those two threads that have gone throughout the interview, and what we're going to do today is, really, conclude those threads or follow them right up to the present: the gallery and Morris.

JA: I see.

PK: And then, of course, touch on other things as well. A story that you didn't get to tell last time, and we saved for this time, is about Agnes De Mille and Edith Halpert. And you had an anecdote, a story, and what was that? Why don't you tell it?

JA: When Morris had his very important show-his first solo show at the Downtown Gallery-the show contained the series that he did on Lizzie Borden. These were paintings that he did having seen the ballet that Agnes De Mille choreographed quite a few years ago. Well, I had not met Agnes De Mille at the time, so when the show opened I was there, of course, in the gallery and I was just in Edith's office and she came rushing in, and she said, "Oh!" Edith said, "You have to come out here and talk to this woman. This is Agnes De Mille." She's saying, "I don't know how to deal with her. You talk to her." So I went out and introduced myself to Agnes De Mille. She was absolutely overcome-emotionally overcome-with the show, which composing all of the Lizzie Borden paintings. And she said, "Who is this artist?" She said, "It's as though he got inside my head." She said, "How does he know all this?" And Edith was alarmed, because she thought that Agnes De Mille was objecting and she thought she was going to be sued for copyrights or something.

PK: Plagiarism, maybe.

JA: Yeah. [laughs] She thought that. . . . Whatever it was, I had to reassure Edith that that wasn't her point at all, [that-Ed.] she was so moved by the paintings. And she said, "I don't understand how he knew exactly everything about my interpretations of Lizzie, because it was as though he had x-rayed my head." So she was so impressed she bought one of the paintings for herself.

PK: She did?

JA: Yes. And that painting was. . . . Well, it was in the show, of course.

PK: From the series?

JA: Yes. Yes, she bought it.

PK: Do you remember which one?

JA: Yes, I do. I have it in my file in my papers. [laughs] I don't have instant recall, but it's just. . . . Oh dear. . . .

PK: Well, we know what it is.

JA: Yeah, we know what it is. I have a slide of it and a color reproduction of it. And I borrowed it back for another show later. We borrowed it back for a couple of other shows. But she was just so impressed that later she wrote a beautiful tribute to Morris for some publication, which is in my papers, the story. But it was kind of amusing in that Edith thought she was going to sue her. And she was so relieved when she found that. . . .

PK: She was just so moved by. . . .

JA: Yes, she was so moved.

PK: Well, Morris seems to-in your experience; you've said this before-he seems to have-or his work seems to have-that kind of emotional effect upon people.

JA: It does, it does. So much so that. . . . I don't know if I. . . . There's another story when I first opened my gallery . . .

PK: I think you may have told that but. . . .

JA: . . . about the religious paintings?

PK: Yes.

JA: And the man came in and said, "Is this man anti-Semitic?" he said. Did I tell you?

PK: Yeah.

JA: Well, another . . .

PK: And you said, "No. What do you mean?"

JA: I said, "Oh, he's not at all." I said, "What makes you think he would be anti-Semitic?" And he said, "Because here are all these religious paintings of Mary and Christ and all these symbols of Christian religion." And I said, "Well, he isn't anti-anything." I said, "It seems to me that perhaps you might be anti-Catholic." [laughs]

PK: What did he say?

JA: He said, "Yes, I am." [laughs]

PK: Very strange.

JA: Yes, he said, "Yes, I am." And he said he took those symbols, meaning that he was. . . . Oh, it was a very strange interpretation.

PK: Well, you mean, Morris's interpretation of religion is strange? Is this what you mean?

JA: Well, no, I thought it was this Jewish man who was objecting to the paintings.

PK: Oh yeah, well that's. . . .

JA: He interpreted them as being anti-Semitic.

PK: Well, everything's self-referenced with this guy.

JA: Well, actually, Morris . . . his paintings seem to touch the nerves in people, and sometimes on the defensive and sometimes they're very aggressive in their response.

PK: That's sort of a bizarre response, because then what he's not allowing . . . he's carrying it further. Any time there's that content-the content that would be associated with Christianity-any religious art of that type he would think the artist was automatically anti-Semitic. So this guy is just . . . he's got a problem.

JA: Yeah, well that's. . . .

PK: So that doesn't actually tell me much about Morris ____ ____ ____.

JA: No, no.

PK: I mean, that's this guy's problem, you would see then probably confronting any religious art that's. . . .

JA: Well, Morris has an uncanny understanding of women and their sense of isolation or alienation-and their loss. And I don't know whether it's that he transfers his own feelings, which are very close to a woman's feeling. . . . Except that his feelings are all sort of . . . they transcend any specific situation or character. But people who came to the gallery because they were so taken with his painting called The Possession. . . . It's the quotation from Goethe on possession. And everybody-mostly women-identified [that with] so strongly. And they would say, "Oh, it's just like me," or, "It's just like my relationship with my husband or my therapist," or "my mother or my father." And he seems to be able to arouse that kind of feeling-identification-just through his paintings.

PK: Just like in the Agnes De Mille story.

JA: Yes.

PK: Well, what about religion? Does Morris have any background in religious experience?

JA: Oh, no. As a matter of fact, his maternal parent-his mother-was very anti-religious, and at one time, he was visiting his mother's place up in Big Bear and they passed in front of a church and a nun came out. He was then about twelve, thirteen, fourteen, around there. And he was so stunned when he saw the habit and this figure that just . . . this completely covered . . . and he was so moved that he went up to his mother. . . . In those days he could hardly speak. He hadn't learned to speak very well. And he seized his mother and he said, "I want to. . . . Take me there! Take me there!" He saw that she came out of the church. He said, "Take me there. I want to go there, I want to be there." And that was his first manifestation of his needing or wanting. . . . He was moved by the serenity, I think, and also the fact that she was enclosed, she was contained. In a way, she was imprisoned. But she was peaceful. And it's as though Morris understood that, because he is enclosed. He was en[closed], especially as a child. He was under wraps and isolated. And there were times when he was very happy, but. . . . As long as he was painting or drawing, then he was happy. Or enjoying nature. He had a very, very deep association with nature.

PK: Let's see if we can backtrack a bit and try to remember where we left off with Morris. What I would like to do right now is just finish with Morris.

JA: Yes. All right.

PK: With due respect, of course.

JA: Yes, of course.

PK: I don't want to finish him off. Just for the purpose of the interview. You certainly brought him. . . . You brought your story along through that very difficult time when he left the gallery for a while and really turned away from you.

JA: Yes.

PK: And we discussed that at some length, and the emotional, well, really, suffering that you felt, and then eventually he did, too.

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: So we know that. But I don't recall. . . . Well, first of all, when was that? When did you get back together again? When did you finally decide, yes, we'll show Morris again? We'll let the past be the past.

JA: It was about, I would say, about nineteen seventy. . . . Between '72 and '75.

PK: Well, why don't you sketch in, then, the situation following that. Like, at some point, Morris came to live with you. How did it develop? How did your relationship with Morris, then, play out over the next, well, several decades? Two decades?

JA: Well, he . . .

PK: Up to now.

JA: The story about his coming back to the gallery, did I tell you that?

PK: Yeah.

JA: Oh. Then. . . .

PK: I want to know what happened afterwards.

JA: Well, he never came back to live with me.

PK: No. He had been living with you before.

JA: No.

PK: Not at all?

JA: No. Except when he was first starting to paint. That was the only time he lived with me.

PK: Okay, well, what happened after he came back?

JA: Then, let's see. . . .

PK: You described how you decided finally, yes, you would show his work again, you would represent him.

JA: Well, that's when he came back. After almost two years of alienation, that was when he begged to come back, and he did. So we worked together kind of listing all of his paintings. And it was at that time that what he thought was a misunderstanding. . . . But it wasn't a misunderstanding to me, it was a real rejection. But I finally realized that it was because of his alcoholism, and so I arranged to have him get some therapy and that finally helped. And he joined AA. It was a struggle but he finally did.

PK: And he broke with these other men?

JA: Yes, yes.

PK: We know that. And he then managed to dry out, as they say.

JA: Yes, yes.

PK: Did that stick? I mean, did he. . . .

JA: Oh yes, he only had. . . .

PK: To this day he doesn't take a drink.

JA: Oh, no, he hasn't had anything for, let's see, it's. . . .

PK: It must be twenty years.

JA: Close to that.

PK: Yeah.

JA: Yeah. Close to that. He doesn't even smoke. He stopped smoking, too. Well, he had a show. He had his show in. . . . After we got together again, he did have one more show-at Staempfli [gallery-Ed.], I believe.

PK: Well, don't worry about it. I mean. . . .

JA: Anyway. . . .

PK: Joan, let me just say that, you know, obviously, you're not obliged to remember every detail of this. But there's a general story of your relationship with Morris that then plays out over the years, and it has certain high points. Like at some point, he did come to live with you-at least, next door, maybe not with you, in that building where you lived before.

JA: Oh, oh, oh. Oh, yes.

PK: And so there must have been some sort of benchmarks along the way in your relationship and the gallery itself-for instance, changes in location perhaps. This is the kind of thing that would be useful to know.

JA: Oh, well, it's when I sold the gallery and he didn't have any place to live. So that's when I bought the property.

PK: What was the street?

JA: ____ Park. It was on this. . . . Where my house was? On Orange Drive.

PK: On Orange Drive.

JA: Yeah, not in Orange Grove. Orange Drive.

PK: Orange Drive. Now, you've moved from Orange Drive to Orange Grove.

JA: Yeah.

PK: And that's, of course, where we went through your files and picked up your papers. When was that? When did you close the gallery?

JA: In '89. And I sold the building and bought this other property. And one of the reasons I bought this particular property was that it was like a duplex but it was side-by-side, and so that could provide a home for Morris because his other place, that he'd had for quite a few years, which was just off Doheny Drive, he could no longer live there anymore. He had some problems with the landlord. In other words, he wanted to rent it to somebody else. So he had no place to go. So one of the reasons I chose this particular place was there's plenty of room for his studio, and he was very happy about that. It was wonderful. Then he adjusted to the relationship that I had with my girlhood sweetheart, who was now my permanent companion. [laughs]

PK: Right.

JA: And he did very well to adjust to that and. . . .

PK: Well, he probably approved, too.

JA: Oh yes, he . . .

PK: Because he likes Bob.

JA: Oh yes. But he also. . . . He was tickled, because he knew that. . . . See, Bill had died-Bill, who was my partner and who was exceedingly helpful to me in the years of the gallery. We were really partners in the gallery before we finally married, for practical reasons. I didn't want to get. . . . I never wanted to get married again, because my first marriage was too difficult. I didn't want to get married again, but then so Bill and I lived together for almost twenty years. And then we were obliged to be married to protect the gallery and to protect me from being wiped out, because he had Alzheimer's, you see. So then I had all these tremen[dous]. . . .

PK: He had Alzheimer's. I didn't know that.

JA: I had a lot of pain in my life. I really did. [chuckling] But as Beth [_____-Ed.] said, I kept reinventing myself.

PK: That's a good way to put it. So Bill had Alzheimer's. Then this was at the time. . . . Did he live with you on Orange Drive?

JA: Yes. No, no, no. He had died. He died in '89, and my son-my younger son-died a few months after. So I lost both [my son and-Ed.] Bill, who was really an angel and he was a beautiful person, sensitive and philosophical and very original. He was a very fine. . . . We had met in the theatre, playing opposite each other. He was an original member of the Group Theatre and, of course, was in a lot of famous plays including Golden Boy.

PK: So '89 was a pretty bad year.

JA: It was a terrible year. And then selling the building, I had to assemble . . . I had to move. There was a deadline, because the man who bought it, it was essential that he move in at a certain date. So. . . .

PK: Was this the same La Cienaga building?

JA: Yeah.

PK: So your gallery was always in the same place?

JA: No, this was the third place right on La Cienaga.

PK: Okay. Not in the same building but on La Cienaga.

JA: The first one was one that originally was Terry DeLapp Gallery. That was my first one. When he moved, I took

that place. Then I was in a big building at 910, which used to be the Diner's Club Building and Lawrence Harvey wanted it. Lawrence Harvey, the actor. He kept following me around-following us around. He wanted the building himself. He wanted to buy the one [on, at] 910. He wanted to buy that building and I said, "Well, I'll sell it if you'll find me another place." [laughs]

PK: What was the address of the first one? Do you remember?

JA: Yeah. 657.

PK: That was the first one?

JA: Yeah, 657. 657 North La Cienaga. Then the next one was 910.

PK: And then. . . .

JA: And then Harvey wanted that building.

PK: Why did he want it?

JA: Well, he had another career-of collecting and selling antiques. It gave him another. . . . I guess it was another tax consideration. And he wanted that. So he and his real estate person, which was Coldwell-Banker, they found me this other location. And he was also on a deadline. He had to. . . . So we moved the whole contents of the gallery right down La Cienaga Boulevard in the middle of the night. Paintings, everything. We never even stopped the functioning of the gallery. People came to the gallery even though we weren't. . . . And we remodeled the new one.

PK: Where was that?

JA: That was at 657. That's the one that was 657. Oh, gosh, it's. . . .

PK: Oh, well, we won't worry about it.

JA: I usually know it like that, but right now I. . . . So anyway. . . .

PK: Was it up the street? Or down the street? Towards Santa Monica Boulevard? Or up towards Sunset?

JA: It was very close to Melrose Place, where Melrose Place deadends into La Cienaga. It was a focal point. It was really the center of the art activity at that time. We were right at the center.

PK: Right near Felix [Landau] Gallery.

JA: Right across the street.

PK: I'm not sure I was in there, too. Now wasn't that location next to where the Ferus Gallery used to be?

JA: No.

PK: Very near, though.

JA: It was on the other side of the street. Ferus was on the same side of the street that Landau was.

PK: Really?

JA: Ferus, yeah. Ferus was on the same side of the street that my first gallery was. It was south of mine, just a little south.

PK: Well, when did you make these moves? Do you remember that? I'm just curious.

JA: Oh, gosh.

PK: When did you, do you remember. . . .

JA: I think I was at the first gallery, I was there a little less than three years. Then the second gallery, I was there until. . . . [picks up a photo album?] Well, here's the second gallery. No, this is the Palm Springs show. Oh God. [Exasperated at being unable to remember]

PK: Oh, well, it doesn't matter.

JA: All right. Anyway, I was in the second gallery quite a while, and then we decided we should own our own building. We just rented that one. The second one we just rented. That's the one that Lawrence Harvey . . .

PK: . . . helped you find.

JA: Because it had an elevator. It was a big gallery. So, moved to . . .

PK: Well, the final location. We won't be concerned about that.

JA: I probably have it in brochures.

PK: The third location, and you were there about how long?

JA: Well, I was there. . . .

PK: Who was next to you?

JA: What was his name? You know, he was also a pianist.

PK: Hmm. Liberace?

JA: No, no. Well, Liberace was across the street. Yeah, Liberace actually was across the street.

PK: Really? Oh. Did he have a gallery?

JA: Well, it was a shop, a piano shop.

PK: I didn't know that.

JA: Yeah, and he would often be in there.

PK: Did you know him?

JA: I don't think I ever met him, no. [laughs]

PK: That's great.

JA: But I know that we celebrated the hundredth. . . . No, the twenty-fifth anniversary we celebrated in that last 910 gallery. And I was there. . . . Altogether, my whole gallery spanned close to thirty years, so. . . .

PK: And you closed in '89?

JA: Hmm?

PK: You closed the gallery in '89?

JA: '89. My last show was there, was in '89.

PK: Was that a show of Morris?

JA: Yeah. Had a show of Morris.

PK: Did you do one show of Morris each year, at least?

JA: No, I didn't do it that often.

PK: Not that often?

JA: No, more like every other year.

PK: To give him a chance to build up the work.

JA: Yes, because it would be too much pressure on him.

PK: Were you able to sell most of his works _____ ?

JA: Oh, I would sell the show out.

PK: Each time?

JA: Practically.

PK: All the way up to '89?

JA: Yeah, practically. Well, pretty soon the price is getting higher, but I didn't sell it out maybe completely, but eventually everything sold.

PK: What was the high market for Morris? You know, the. . . .

JA: Well, the highest. . . . The one that I sold was close. . . .

PK: Continuing this third interview session with Joan Ankrum, this is Tape 1, Side B. We were talking about the history of the gallery, the different locations in different buildings-three different locations you had on La Cienaga-and the closing in '89, and then the fact that your last show at the gallery was-appropriately-a show for Morris. Because, if I remember correctly, your first show . . .

JA: Was Morris.

PK: . . . was Morris.

JA: Yes.

PK: So that makes a neat package. And I was interested also to hear actually how the market treated him. I mean, how his fortunes went. Apparently he had a real solid group of collectors.

JA: Oh, yes. But they just grew. They just actually grew, just from my first show. It was such a success and the collectors who sought him out were so important. People like MacKinley Helm and Joseph Hirshhorn and . . . important collectors. And, of course, the fact that he had been in the Whitney show, Young America, 1959.

PK: Were most of the collectors local or at least West Coast, or in California? I mean, Hirshhorn obviously wasn't, but he used to come and buy. . . .

JA: Well, actually, yeah. They were all originally. . . . After he had a show at the de Young Museum, that's what aroused a lot of interest among important collectors like MacKinley Helm, who was really a major influence on me, because he was the one that urged me to open a gallery.

PK: I remember. I remember you telling me that.

JA: Yeah.

PK: So Morris, then, remained for you in the gallery something of a mainstay except for that unhappy time.

JA: Oh yes, yes. Morris's and my emotional life-our inner soul life-was just so interwoven that, in a way, Morris. . . . I think I realized a lot of my inhibited creativity-inhibited because I no longer was acting. And a lot of my unrealized creative expression, it went into Morris. And that's why he himself felt so intertwined with me that sometimes he didn't know whether he was Joan or Morris. That's what he said. "Am I Morris or am I Joan?" That was one of the reasons he felt that he had to break this bondage.

PK: Well, am I correct in understanding then that after that difficult time between you and Morris with the alcoholism, coming under bad influences and so forth, that after that when you became reunited, that it was a pretty even personal and professional relationship . . .

JA: Oh yes. It was still. . . .

PK: . . . not marked by any real low valleys or anything like that. Pretty even.

JA: Oh yes, we reestablished our closeness, and we never had any other break, any break again. It's as though he was so remorseful that he just couldn't do enough for me. He would do anything that he thought. . . . We both made certain sacrifices economically.

PK: Did the shows-the sales-generate enough income for Morris to be able to really support himself well with. . . .

JA: Well, he did for a number of years.

PK: But not now, you said?

JA: No. He hasn't for. . . .

PK: Well, why is that?

JA: Well. . . .

PK: I mean, is there a change in the pattern of collecting?

JA: Well, he isn't represented by a gallery. Of course, he was at Staempfli. He was represented by, of course, Edith, when he showed with Edith, but that was many years ago. And then Staempfli did well with him, and when Edith died, there were other galleries that approached us. And I turned down two very important galleries.

PK: Why did you do that?

JA: Well, because the one I chose I felt had a better understanding-or a really aesthetic appreciation-not based on economic. . . . It wasn't based on commercialism.

PK: You mean this is recently, after you. . . ?

JA: Oh no, this was when Edith died and I had to choose another gallery to place him. And two important galleries sought him, through me, and. . . .

PK: Well, which ones were they?

JA: [whispers] [Well, I don't think I should mention that!]

PK: Why not? That's the story, isn't it?

JA: One of them was Kennedy, and the other one was. . . . Kennedy and. . . . Oh, gosh.

PK: Did Millard Sheets play a role at all in that?

JA: No, no. Actually, he played a role in Morris's career, because he was on the jury that gave him one of his first awards.

PK: But he wasn't a factor afterwards? I would be curious to know if. . . .

JA: No. He was. . . .

PK: I think Millard might have liked. . . . Well, obviously, did like Morris's work.

JA: Oh yes, he did. He praised it. Oh yes, he praised it. But he was very involved with other artists. As a matter of fact, with one of my artists that I first showed, was Phyllis. . . . No, not Phyllis Manley. Oh, she died not too long ago-a wonderful artist that he worked with that she's worked with for many years. Hertel. Susan Hertel. Yeah, that's the one I meant. But we established our. . . . I think that we were on a better basis. It was not so interdependent. He had been too dependent on me and I had given him too much unreasonable nobility. [laughs] In other words.

PK: Too much adulation.

JA: Well, I had built everything on the nobility of his character, which was almost unfair.

PK: So then he had to leave. . . .

JA: Yeah. I based my security on the nobility of his character. That's what I did.

PK: Did he feel this? A kind of pressure, perhaps? Not wanting to disappoint you, of course? Sort of a burden, maybe?

JA: I think maybe he did.

PK: Did he ever say anything?

JA: No. The only thing he said that was like sticking a knife in me was when he first announced he wanted to be on his own.

PK: Oh yeah. Well, of course, that was many years ago. Let's try to finish with Morris. Because Morris is going to get to tell me his own story.

JA: Yes, that's right.

PK: It's not completely up to you to tell his story.

JA: That's right.

PK: But to kind of wrap this up, when I first visited you on Orange Drive and then shortly thereafter we actually got your papers for the Archives, I think maybe that was the first time I ever met Morris. I knew of him and I do recall very well we went around and up to the other side-I can't remember how we did it exactly, whether it was internally or we went outside-but we went then to the other part of the duplex, and there was Morris and a very interesting sort of colorful space. It seems to me it was a bit crowded with things.

JA: Yes.

PK: Shortly thereafter, you sold the house, which is another interesting story we can touch on briefly, but, obviously, Morris had to find another situation. You were moving . . . presumably, had already decided to move here, to this place . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . on Orange Grove and Pasadena, where we are now. And tell me about the sort of process of preparing Morris to, then, take this new step-find a place, move out on his own. Did that go real smoothly? Did you help him find his. . .

JA: No, no. Bob and I searched every place to try to find a suitable place for him. No, Bob and I searched different areas that. . . . Actually, he wanted to stay on that side of the. . . . He liked the west side. He liked the activities there.

PK: Does he go, actually, out to openings and things like that some[times]?

JA: No. He never has.

PK: So you're not talking about art activities so much. Just activities.

JA: I don't. . . .

PK: Well, you said that he's interested in the activities on the west side, so I asked you if. . . .

JA: Oh. Well, he likes to just walk around and look at the shops, and he likes the people. They're more interesting. He likes to look at the people and go to his old haunts like art-supply places and . . .

PK: Well, no, it's familiar.

JA: Familiar, yes. He liked that.

PK: And so now he's set up there, and I guess there's not all that much to tell about it. He's doing okay. He's working, right? Is he producing?

JA: Yeah. He's doing some. . . .

PK: So where does he show?

JA: He doesn't. No place. Well, oh! Well, excuse me. He had a show at [Sherry] Frumkin, but he wouldn't make a commitment. He wouldn't make a firm commitment. So she doesn't continue to represent him, really. And so he can sell directly out of his. . . . And, of course, I don't have any connection at all anymore finan[cially]. . . . I mean, I don't take any commission at all, of course. [sotto voce:] But I have to help him. I don't like people to know that I have to do that.

PK: No, I mean, it's the reality. It seems to me that one would wish that he would find a gallery where he feels comfortable . . .

JA: Yes.

PK: . . . about really entrusting, then, that responsibility to the gallery, so that he doesn't have to try to, in effect, market himself and sell for himself while he's trying to work.

JA: Yes.

PK: What about Mendenhall Gallery? Did you talk. . . .

JA: Well, yes. As a matter of fact, he's shown a definite interest. And he has yet to come over to Morris's studio. See, Morris has these two little, like little cottages. . . .

PK: I'm sort of surprised because I would think that Ted would . . . that this would be a real good fit. Morris and . . . But, anyway. . . .

JA: No, I think so. He has said he was very interested, and that he's waiting to see. . . . See, Morris doesn't paint fast.

PK: No, no. Not fast.

JA: Not at all! And he has certain things that he's waiting. . . . He wants him to do the kind of things like these very detailed. . . .

PK: Oh, yeah. Over there over the [cabinet].

JA: Yeah, his self-portrait.

PK: Fabulous self-portrait.

JA: Which is a wonderful painting. And the one of my granddaughter. The Challee one-the Challee in my bedroom. The baby. That's what he wants. He wants him to do a series of still lives with tapestries in the background. Well, it's kind of a delicate thing. I've never told Morris what to paint. But if he could present it in such a way, if I could present it to Morris in such a way, that. . . . Now he wants to bring certain objects that he owns, evidently, for Morris, and Morris can arrange the composition, but he wants him to utilize certain art objects. He doesn't want him to put any figures or any human. . . .

PK: Morris doesn't want to do that.

JA: Well. . . .

PK: Does he?

JA: I don't think he understands it quite. That's why I said, "Well, you'd better come over and talk to him, then." So he says he wants to talk to him and see. But I know Bob Barrett . . . I don't know if he thinks that's the ideal gallery for Morris. I don't know.

PK: Hmm.

JA: Do you know Bob Barrett?

PK: Yes, I met him here.

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: I actually met him before but, remember, you had a very nice party here?

JA: He's a terrific fellow.

PK: And he's head of. . . .

JA: He's very bright.

PK: He's head of what now?

JA: Well, it's tourism.

PK: For Los Angeles.

JA: Uh-huh, and he's very intelligent, bright, and has wonderful taste. He has a wonderful family. They're wonderful people.

PK: Oh, yeah, I remember them being very nice, indeed. And they're interested in Morris. Is that right? Now, did he work for the museum before?

JA: No, he. . . . Fresno?

PK: Yeah.

JA: Oh, yes, he was head of the museum. I worked with him.

PK: That's what I thought.

JA: Yeah. I did several shows with him. With Morris and also Kathryn Jacobi and a couple of other people.

PK: Let me ask you just a couple more questions about Morris so that we don't use all your time on Morris Broderson.

JA: Yeah, okay.

PK: 'Cause this is Joan's time.

JA: [chuckles]

PK: But you raised a very interesting issue, I think, when you mentioned that this gallery owner, Ted Mendenhall, whom we both know, is trying to choreograph, in effect, Morris's work-by giving him the ingredients, giving him the still life subjects. Then Morris, of course, gets to arrange them, basically. He doesn't even get to choose them. But more interesting than that-which I frankly think is a very bad idea; I'll go on record as saying that. . . .

JA: Um-hmm. Well, because it's. . . .

PK: . . . and I'll tell Ted the same thing if he asks me. But what's really interesting is that Ted doesn't want figures, and I think, personally. . . . I wonder if I should ask you what you think, but I will say that I think that these figures and portraits, faces, that Morris does are extremely haunting. They have a very strong, evocative spiritual quality. And I'm not saying that you can't get that in still-life objects, but I think it's rather peculiar that. . . . I would think Morris should be or would be encouraged by a dealer to go with the figure and with the human presence, don't you think? What do you think about that?

JA: Well, I was always a strong believer in not imposing any particular direction of object, because it's so important for the artist to do that. That's part of his being, is to decide it. See, that's the whole thing.

PK: Otherwise it's hack work.

JA: Well, yeah. And so it's very difficult for me, and yet here he is in the position where he needs to have representation. He needs to have a gallery. So I just don't know what to. . . . See, I know what he's talking about. From a practical standpoint, about actually selling, it's very true. A lot of people who collect will not buy a human being. Because it's like another person in their house. Like a man. I remember, I had a client who's wife objected to a painting that he bought. This was another artist. He bought a very romantic painting, but it involved a woman, and his wife made him bring it back. And my judgment was that she considered it a rival. And I think that's true.

PK: So did you find it was more difficult to sell work with people in it?

JA: Oh yes, actually, unless it was. . . . See, with Morris they were so interpretive. They weren't exact, realistic portraits, but those are the ones that are the hardest for a dealer to sell.

PK: Did Morris ever do-I don't know that I've seen any-but did he ever do nudes? Did he ever, say, have models that he worked from?

JA: Oh, yes. Yeah, I'll show you.

PK: Okay, later.

JA: He did a whole series based on Hair of nudes that were really kind of a little startling. One of them was reproduced in Art In America.

PK: How did they do? How did they sell?

JA: I think I sold almost all of his paintings that he did in relation to Hair. Of course, he painted Agnes de Mille. He did a wonderful. . . . It was really a drawing. It was beautiful. Agnes done from the back in her wheel chair when she was . . . toward the end. And he did a wonderful painting of Naomi.

PK: Hirshhorn?

JA: Yeah. And her father bought it, although he objected to it because. . . .

PK: Why?

JA: He objected because it was not his idea.

PK: It wasn't flattering in the way that he thought of it.

JA: Well, he said, "It doesn't look like her," and Naomi said, "Well, it may not look like me outside, but it's me inside." What Morris had painted was Naomi inside.

PK: Did he work. . . . But did he actually. . . . I'm interested in his working method because it's very painstaking. Did he actually have live models that he would engage? Or did he work from photographs? Say with. . . .

JA: No, he worked. . . . Some of his things he had a sitter, somebody sit. Of course, he worked from Naomi. She posed for him.

PK: Well, certainly the portraits would be. . . .

JA: Yeah. He really didn't like too much working from models because it got in the way of his privacy. [chuckles] But he didn't work from photographs. Once in a while he would make a quick sketch of somebody on the street. But he didn't use models too much.

PK: Well, what about the nudes?

JA: Well, he just saw the performance of Hair.

PK: And so. . . .

JA: From memory.

PK: From memory? That's what I'm getting at.

JA: From memory, yes. Most of them are from memory. He didn't do any. . . .

PK: Oh, I see what you mean by Hair. You mean, the musical-the stage production.

JA: Yes, he did a wonderful painting of a male nude that he did from a sculpture. He bought this piece of sculpture-he still has it in his studio-a beautiful piece of sculpture, and he painted that. A male nude, a frontal male nude. So he was. . . .

PK: Well, do you. . . . Excuse me, I didn't mean to interrupt. Okay. Do you feel that if he did get the proper gallery representation that there would be much more activity-again, a renewal of interest in his work? Because it seems a little bit as if it's. . . .

JA: Yeah. I think there would be.

PK: Because times they do change and. . . .

JA: Oh, yes. And, of course, it is a bad time. I think it's a horrible time in art right now.

PK: I mean, that is the question. Where does Morris, then, fit in now?

JA: Yes, it's very difficult. People. . . . He didn't even want anybody to review his show at Frumkin, because he knew the kind of things that they reviewed and what they would say about. . . .

PK: Did he express this to you? I guess he must have.

JA: All he said was. . . . I said, "Morris, didn't Sherry send any notices out to any of the papers or any of the magazines?" He said, "No." He said, "I told her I didn't want anybody to review my show." He was so afraid that they would be savaging.

PK: I should go over and look at his recent work.

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: I mean, I guess I have to because I'm going to do an interview.

JA: Oh, yeah. It's very easy to find. He's in this little place. It's a charming little place. It's two little. . . . He has to have both of them. One. . . .

PK: What street is it?

JA: It's right on Fountain.

PK: Oh, I know Fountain. Fountain and what?

JA: It's right off of Highland.

PK: That's easy to find.

JA: We go over there quite often. We take him to El Coyote, that's where. . . .

PK: We all ought to go sometime.

JA: Oh, yeah!

PK: I used to go there all the time!

JA: When Morris and I. . . . In the beginning of my gallery-and Morris, and our association-we would go there for dinner and have martinis.

PK: Ooh, that sounds good.

JA: And, of course, I did, too. And, of course, now he doesn't have anything. Hasn't for years. And when we'd come back from New York after one of his shows, the first thing we'd do is to go to El Coyote and celebrate with martinis. [laughs] He's the one that turned me on to martinis.

PK: He doesn't drive?

JA: No.

PK: So he can't. . . . Of course, he could take a bus. I wonder if he ever goes down Santa Monica Boulevard to Barney's Beanery.

JA: No. He never did like Barney's Beanery.

PK: No? Which, of course, brings us to another subject we mustn't forget. Ed Kienholtz. Because you said you had some memories or stories about. . . .

JA: Well, I have an anecdote that's kind of amusing.

PK: Oh, good.

JA: When I was first starting the gallery, my first location, which was. . . . I've already forgotten the. . . . This is ridiculous.

PK: Oh, well.

JA: It was a little tiny gallery and we needed to have more space, so I needed somebody to get more hanging space. So I needed somebody to make panels and make it suitable for Morris's paintings and my kind of gallery. So I asked somebody, I said, "Do you know of anybody that could kind of help us with this setting up our new gallery?" They said, "Oh, call. . . ." and gave me the name of our framer, that I used to use for framing Morris's paintings. So I said, "Do you know of anybody?" He said, "Oh, yes, I know. Call. . . ." And he wrote down the name: "Edward Kienholtz." So I said, "Oh, all right, I'll call him." He said, "Well, he does do some work, some painting, and he's just up the street from you." So he said, "You call him." So I said, "All right, I'll call him." So I didn't know who he was from Adam at that time. He wasn't known at all. And so I called him and asked him if he would come to the gallery and give us an estimate. So here was this nice guy who came in, and he took careful measurements and measured everything and gave me some kind of an idea. It was terribly expensive. For us. We just couldn't afford it. We only started the gallery on a thousand dollars, really. On Bill's thousand dollars.

PK: So you couldn't use him?

JA: No, so no.

PK: But he was very nice and. . . .

JA: Oh, he was very nice about it, and he was very nice about Morris. He thought it was wonderful that I was helping this. . . . He was very intrigued with Morris as a personality, as an artist. But Bill said, "Well, I'll do it myself." So that's what he did. So Bill built the panels, and he did all the adjusting that he could do. We had a wonderful landlord, of course, at the time so that was a big help. But that was. . . . I never saw Kienholtz again.

PK: Really?

JA: Never saw him again.

PK: But he was supposed to be there at Ferus.

JA: Well, he was, but I was, of course, oh, absolutely overwhelmed with the activity in my gallery. And getting it ready for Morris. For Hirshhorn's appearance.

PK: Well, why don't you. . . . Oh, well, we're coming to the end of the tape. Let me put a new tape in, okay?

JA: Yeah.

PK: Okay. It's flashing. Here we go.

PK: Continuing the Joan Ankrum interview on February 5 [sic], 1998, this is the second tape, Tape 2, Side A. And we have been dancing around our subjects, sort of moving back and forth from one to the other. You just told an interesting story about Kienholtz and your one contact with him, and it does make me want to ask, again, about some of the other people who were there on the street, on La Cienega at that time, when you opened up the gallery and then, indeed, over the years that you were there-you know, any of the particular connections you may have had with other dealers and other galleries, and some of your memories of them and what it was like and. . . .

JA: Well, Heritage Gallery, Ben Horowitz, we were always very good friends. He started the Art Dealer's Association and he organized exhibitions, which involved me, also. And he organized an exhibition for the Palm Springs Museum that involved three of the galleries. It was [Camarra, Chimera]-Camarra died many years ago-Camara Gallery and his gallery, Heritage, and mine, which represented twenty-two contemporary artists of Southern California. And that was an exhibition in the old Palm Springs Museum before the new one was built. Maybe that's what this is. [sound of paper rustling]

PK: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

JA: So that was very pleasant. And across the street there was a wonderful print gallery. European. . . . Oh, dear, I can't remember the name of it. And then, of course, Esther [Robles] was next door . . . practically next door to me.

PK: I remember that.

JA: Yeah. Not the first one but the second gallery.

PK: Right.

JA: I can't think of the one that. . . . He represented [José Luis-Ed.] Cuevas. He was right next door to me.

PK: I should remember that myself, but I don't. Well, the print dealer was O. P. Reed.

JA: Oh, I know him. Oh, he was a partner of Landau Gallery-O. P. Reed. I knew him.

PK: But didn't O. P. . . . Well, maybe O. P. was in the block below. But O. P. had a gallery on La Cienega.

JA: Well, he was a partner with. . . .

PK: Felix.

JA: . . . Felix, yes. They were partners.

PK: But when I visited O. P. Reed in the, I guess, late sixties. . . .

JA: And he moved further south.

PK: Further south, yes.

JA: Yes.

PK: Because when I visited, he had his own small space.

JA: He was a very fine dealer.

PK: Oh, very important.

JA: And he was a great admirer of Morris's.

PK: Ah, he was?

JA: Yes. He admired him a lot. And. . . .

PK: What about Jake [Zeitlin-Ed.]? Did you have much to do with Jake?

JA: Oh, Jake. Oh, yes, we were good friends.

PK: Let's talk about some of these people.

JA: Jake, my first show, when I got out the brochure that I sent out, it included a little map-of my gallery and a few others. And he came over to the gallery and he said, "Why didn't you include me in here?" He was quite hurt that I hadn't included him. But we became good friends. As a matter of fact, he asked me to lobby with him in Sacramento, so we went up together to Sacramento to lobby against the freeway going through. They were fighting. . . . They wanted to put the freeway right down La Cienaga. And so we all fought that because that would ruin us all.

PK: Well, it didn't happen.

JA: No, I didn't. But I don't know that it was our lobbying. But. . . .

PK: What freeway was that going to be?

JA: Oh, which freeway was it? It was from Beverly Hills. . . . I think it was to. . . .

PK: It was one that was never built, in any event.

JA: Yeah, it was never built. Yeah, we became good friends. And then what happened was, when I had an exhibition, a wonderful photographer, Mariana Cook, who was very, very gifted. . . . We gave her her first show. I wasn't too interested in photography, but she was so unusual and seemed to really penetrate into people's psyche. And it all began because she was so moved by Morris's show, which she saw in New York, that she wanted to know if she could photograph him. I met her in New York. And her father was a famous psychiatrist. Now no longer, but [he's, he was] a wonderful collector of art and a wonderful person. And, of course, she's very importantly connected with some of the great people of our time, including. . . . Well, her father's brother was a. . . . Delivered babies.

PK: Oh, well, an obstetrician.

JA: A pediatricist. No, not a. . . .

PK: Pediatrician. Pediatrician?

JA: Pediatrician? Obstetrician? Obstetrician, I guess.

PK: OB/GYN?

JA: Yeah, obstetrician. Because he delivered. . . . Whether he was delivered by. . . .

PK: Does it matter?

JA: Some famous person was delivered by Mariana's uncle. And, of course, her aunt is Martha Graham, you know.

PK: Oh.

JA: And when I had her show, we just had a. . . . And that's when Jake. . . .

PK: Martha [Graham] came?

JA: Oh, not Martha Graham. Katharine. Katharine Graham, who's-you know who she is-editor of the Washington Post.

PK: Yeah, yeah. Uh-huh.

JA: No.

PK: Oh, yeah, you told part of that story, I think. That connection.

JA: Did I? Oh, dear!

PK: No, no, I'm not sure. I'm not sure. That's good.

JA: Well, she became a very. . . . Mariana is a wonderfully talented person. And she had her first show, and what happened was that when I had her show, Jake saw the show and asked if she would photograph him.

PK: What's her last name?

JA: Cook.

PK: Cook.

JA: Mariana Cook. She's the one that did the whole book on fathers and daughters [_____-Ed.].

PK: Oh, right. Now she's doing a book on couples [_____-Ed.]. She's supposed to call us up.

JA: Well, right now she's doing. . . .

PK: Did she do you?

JA: Well, she's going to do Bob and me. Couples.

PK: Yeah, that's what I mean.

JA: But, no. Right now she's doing a story of five generations of women [_____-Ed.]. Is it four or five? And that's coming out first, and then she's going to resume her work on the other one.

PK: Well, what about some of the other. . . .

JA: Dealers?

PK: Yeah, and just the scene. What it was like? Because, you know, you were there.

JA: Well, actually. . . .

PK: You know, how much of a sense of community there was, did you feel like you were in something interesting?

JA: I think the most feeling of community we had was when we were asked to present shows that would provide funds to help the new museum.

PK: Oh.

JA: To help fund the new museum.

PK: You mean L.A. County?

JA: Yeah, the L.A. County. So that's when I had Henry Miller. That's when I had the Henry Miller show, which. . . .

PK: Oh, tell me about that Henry Miller show.

JA: Haven't I told you about that?

PK: I don't think so. But tell it again.

JA: Well, what happened was one day-this was in the very first gallery-one day this man walked into the gallery and looked around. I said, "Say, are you Henry Miller?" And he was stunned. He said, "You're the only person that recognized me." He said, "I've been in all the galleries on La Cienega. All over. Nobody recognized me. You're the only one." He said, "Would you like to see my paintings." [laughs] And I said, "Well, yes." He said, "Well, I. . . . He turned to his friend, who was always with him-I think his name was [Gray, Grey], Joel Gray-and he asked him to go back to the house and bring some paintings in. So he said, "Will you look at them?" And I said, "Well, I'd be glad to see them. I've never seen any of your paintings." But naturally I was. . . . I've always been a reader, I've always read everything, and I knew who he was. And so he brought in the paintings and I looked at them very carefully. And I said, "They're a lot better than I thought they'd be."

PK: [laughs]

JA: And he loved that. He said, "You can have my show." [laughing] He said, "You can have my show." "Well," I said, "Of course, I can't do it for sometime because I'm pretty booked up." So he said, "Well, we'll figure out a limited time. So that's what we did. We figured out a lim[ited]. . . . And, of course, that was the big hit of the whole occasion. People were lined all. . . . This was right after Capricorn, after the censorship had been removed.

PK: Oh, yeah, Tropic of Capricorn.

JA: Yeah, Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn. First it was Tropic of Cancer was the first.

PK: Right.

JA: So I've written a lot about that in my. . . .

PK: Did you know Anaïs Nin?

JA: Oh, yes. She wrote the catalog for one of my shows.

PK: Well, see, you haven't told me about that yet.

JA: Oh, yeah.

PK: That's interesting. How well did you know her? Did you get to know her socially?

JA: Well, I only got to know her because I had the show Varda, and [Jean?-Ed.] Varda. . . . See, what happened was. . . . It was right at the beginning of the gallery, very early in the gallery. My first gallery. And it was after Morris's show, though, at the de Young. Henry Seldis wanted to go up to cover the show at the de Young, and we all went up together. He said, "Now I want to take you over to show you some paintings by a wonderful Greek artist. I want to show you these paintings." So I said, "Fine. Okay." So he took me to Sausalito and we got on the boat. You know about the. . . .

PK: Well, I just . . . I never. . . .

JA: Were you ever there?

PK: Never went there. I sort of missed it. But I, of course, knew all about Varda. In fact, we have [the] Varda papers in the Archives-his passports and so forth.

JA: Well, I have that one in my office. You've seen that one. That's a Varda envelope that he used to write to me.

PK: Anyway, so you were introduced to him.

JA: Well, we went up to this wonderful . . . what seemed like a pirate ship. This I wrote in my story, I wrote about it. It was like a. . . . And he showed us all around and he said, "Oh, I'd better give you these wonderful sandwiches." So he gave me these raw oyster sandwiches. I said I managed to drop mine overboard when nobody was looking. I didn't have to eat it. [laughs] But, anyway, he was so intrigued and said, "I would like to have an exhibition in. . . ." . . . Because he'd. . . . [pauses, thinking] That's how. . . . I'm trying to think. Anyway, that's how it started. So he sent me these paintings and. . . .

PK: This was in the early sixties?

JA: Paintings! They were really collages.

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: Yeah, oh yes. It was sixty. . . . Oh, I'll have to look it up. All my brochures, you see, are over at the ____.

PK: Right, right.

JA: And, of course, one of my dearest, closest friends, who was very helpful to me right from the beginning, was one of his collectors, Peggy Porter. Her name was Peggy Converse at that time. We were very close. She went to Stanford. She was ahead of me. She was older. Now she's getting on. She's not well at all. But, anyway, several of my friends that knew a little bit about San Francisco. . . . See, Peggy was a kind of a toast of. . . . My friend Peggy was a toast of San Francisco when she was still going to Stanford. She played the lead in Fashion. That's a whole other story. But she was one of my closest friends always. Knew my first husband before I did. She knew my first husband in Carmel when she was married to Ed Converse, who was a shipping guy.

PK: So she was the collector of Varda?

JA: Well, she was one of the collectors.

PK: And introduced you to Varda?

JA: One of the early. . . . No, it was Henry that introduced me to Varda, on the ship. But we had a show. He was lots of fun. I sold his show out.

PK: Now did Anaïs Nin write the. . . .

JA: Oh, she wrote a wonderful. . . .

PK: For Varda? For the Varda?

JA: Yeah, I have a copy of it in one of my drawers.

PK: That would be interesting to see.

JA: Yeah, it's charming. She wrote a delightful. . . . I have books that she's autographed to me, to Joan. . . .

PK: So that was how you two met?

JA: That's how I met Anaïs Nin, yeah.

PK: Because Varda said, "I know this interesting woman writer who will write something about me." Is that how it happened? Was it Varda's idea?

JA: She just came right to the gallery and said that she was going to write it for me. So I thought that was great. That's how I met her. Yes.

PK: But Henry Miller came much later?

JA: Well, let's see, not a lot later.

PK: Well, no. No, no, about the same time.

JA: It wasn't a lot later.

PK: Well, so did. . . . I mean, after all, they were connected at one point. Did you do any socializing with either of them? Or was it pretty much business?

JA: Oh, no, this was just the gallery. Gallery deals. But she was very. . . . [She's just, She was just] a very nice person. She was very nice. And I knew somebody else that she knew. Oh, I know, it was when she. . . . I guess I also knew Frank Lloyd Wright's. . . . She was married to Frank Lloyd Wright's nephew, I think it was. I can't remember if it was a son or his nephew. Frank Lloyd Wright's nephew. [laughs] Lloyd . . .

PK: Lloyd Wright?

JA: . . . Wright. Lloyd Wright. Yeah, she. . . . I think they were married. They weren't just lovers. I think they were married. I remember meeting him. But my whole social life was centered in the gallery. Except on occasion somebody very interesting would invite me someplace. [laughs]

PK: So you didn't keep up too much with the theatre people?

JA: Well, oh, yeah, a lot of them were. . . .

PK: But I mean outside the gallery. Maybe some of them you would invite to the gallery . . .

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: . . . but outside of that, would you say your social life in some ways remained even more with the theatre people?

JA: Well, no. Some of them I had. . . . Like Dana Andrews, who was one of my. . . . His wife [Mary Tod Andrews-Ed.] is still. . . . She's getting forgetful, but she's younger than I am. But, see, Dana and I played opposite each other at the Playhouse.

PK: And you visited him, I think, when he was hospitalized.

JA: Oh, yeah. He had. . . . Oh, that was much later. We spent a couple of weeks with them in Balboa when they had their place in. . . . Oh, he owned two big yachts. We were all very close friends. And, let's see, who else at that time was. . . . Of course, Peggy Porter, who was my closest friend, and Don. . . . She eventually. . . . After she divorced Converse, she married Don Porter, who was a very fine actor who I worked with. We did shows. Even when he became a director. He just died recently. Don Porter. He was quite a well-known actor, played with-what's her name that. . . . Gidget. He played her father in that whole series.

PK: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JA: He was a very successful actor. The Candidate.

PK: Did he collect art?

JA: Hmm?

PK: Did he collect art?

JA: He and Peggy were among the first. Peggy was one of the first to buy Morris. And he has a little watercolor that he fell in love with of Morris's, that he took with him every place he went on the road. He made a big hit in Barefoot in the Park in New York, and he always took this little painting and hung it in his dressing room wherever he went.

PK: Oh, that's charming.

JA: So, you know, we had quite a few friends still in the. . . .

PK: What about the. . . .

JA: Of course, Franchot Tone came to the gallery, because he was a very close friend of Bill's. He and Bill were friends in the Group Theatre.

PK: Did you have much to do with, well, David Stewart?

JA: David Stewart?

PK: Yeah.

JA: Oh, I can tell you a funny story about that.

PK: Well, good, tell me. That's what I want, a funny story.

JA: Well, before I was even open, somebody stopped by David Stewart's gallery. He was right across the street from my location, and I wasn't open yet, but this person came into his gallery and he said, "Say, do you know anything about this new gallery that's opening pretty soon, right opposite you?" And he said, "Do you know what I think about her?" He said, "Well, I don't know that she knows anything about art, but she comes on like Hildegard." [PK explain joke? (or am I just dense?)-Trans.] [laughter] But he was a little bit. . . . I think he was a little bit. . . . Well, Joe Hirshhorn told me that the other dealers were all jealous of me.

PK: Of you?

JA: Yeah. That's what he told me. I didn't realize that. I said, "Oh, I don't think so." He said, "Yes, you don't know." He said, "I know." Because he would go around, and they would all make disparaging remarks about me. Not all. Certainly nobody like. . . . Not the Heritage Gallery. Not anybody like Ben. He would never. . . . He was never anything but generous. But I had. . . .

PK: He was a very nice man, very nice man.

JA: Oh, yes. No, he's very, very, very nice. And Charlotte is just a lovely person. Charlotte's a wonderful gal. But some of the. . . . Well, they were compet[iters].

PK: What about, oh, the dealer. . . . Now, see, I'm forgetful. Wrote books, dealt with pre[-Columbian?-Ed.]. . . . Raboff. Ernest Raboff.

JA: Oh, yeah, he was always very friendly to me.

PK: His gallery was fairly near you at one time, isn't that right?

JA: Yeah, it was across the street and south. He was always very generous in his admiration of Morris and my gallery. He was very nice. And so was. . . . Starts with an O. A very successful gallery. He represented Cuevas originally. Oh, I can't think of his name!

PK: I can't either.

JA: Oh, I know it so well. See, this is. . . . When he closed his gallery, he wanted me to take his artists. When he closed his gallery, he wanted me to just take over his whole stable.

PK: I was probably in that gallery myself, but I can't remember.

JA: It was on Santa Monica. Oh, and he loved to fish. He was always going off on fishing trips. He showed Cuevas and some other well-known artists. I can't remember his name. I know it so well. Simon! It's close to Simon. [Silvan-Ed.] Simone. Simone.

PK: Simone.

JA: Simone Gallery.

PK: Oh yeah, yeah, I remember that.

JA: Yeah. See, eventually I do. . . .

PK: It doesn't start with an O. [laughter]

JA: Well, maybe his first name starts with an O. Wait a minute. Oscar? Is it Oscar Simone?

PK: Doesn't matter.

JA: I think it starts with an O.

PK: What about. . . . I was intrigued. You mentioned that you had a show for Jonathan Winters.

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: Yeah, well, tell me a little about that.

JA: Well, let's see.

PK: What was your connection? How did you. . . .

JA: Well, he was very impressed with the success of the gallery and the fact that . . . the people that were collecting from me. So I had a call one day from this gentleman, and it turns out that it was. . . . Oh, God, I. . . . A famous publicist. Famous public relations. . . . He was Jonathan Winters' manager. [Spoono], [Spoodo]. Anyway, he called me, this man on the phone, and he said, "Now, I would like to arrange for you to have an exhibition of Jonathan Winters' paintings." And I said, "Well, I've never even seen his paintings. I don't know. I don't know that I would be interested." [laughs] I mean, I knew who Jonathan Winters was, but I wasn't going to give him a show just because he was a well-known movie person. And I said, "I'd be glad to take a look at his paintings, but I can't tell you that I would give him a show. It depends on what his paintings are like." I was very . . . you know, quite indignant that I would. . . . And so, let's see, they brought the paintings in, and they were very appealing. They were charming. You know, he was a naïve. You know, he's self-taught. So I said, "Well, yes, I could give him a show." And he said, "Well, of course, you wouldn't take any commission, would you?" And I said, "Well, of course!" He said, "Well, you'd be getting all this publicity. You shouldn't need a commission." And I said, "No, thank you, I'm not interested." I really turned him down cold.

PK: So you never gave Jonathan Winters. . . .

JA: Oh, yes. Then they came around. They said they agreed to my commission, which is what it was for everybody.

PK: What was that, by the way?

JA: Thirty-three and a third percent.

PK: Thirty-three and a third.

JA: Maybe it was forty by that time. I started out thirty-three and a third, then raised it to forty. I never took more than forty, even when my artists would urge me to take more. They said, "You should take more. Everybody's

taking more." But I said, "Well, I'd rather take less and sell more paintings."

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: So, anyway, so that was it. Oh, he was very severe. It had to be all set up in the bank and had to go directly to the bank. Nothing could be taken care of except through. . . . It was very. . . . But it was fun. He entertained us a lot. He used to do imitations of me.

PK: He did? [laughter] Well, did you then establish a kind of relationship with him?

JA: Well, yeah. We had a friendly relationship.

PK: I mean, did you visit his place or anything like that?

JA: Well, yes, I was there once.

PK: Where was he? In Santa Barbara, I believe or. . . .

JA: No, it was before. . . . He bought my friend's house. He bought the Dana Andrews house. And, of course, I'd been there at parties at Dana's. And when I saw the new house, of course, it was entirely different. And then he also bought. . . . He bought another house-in Malibu, I guess-that. . . . Anyway, he was all. . . . I had all these dealings with my friends.

PK: Did he bring in a lot of new visitors to the gallery? Hollywood types and so forth?

JA: Actually, not. . . .

PK: Not too much?

JA: Not too much, no. Oh! The show was. . . . At the same time I had to agree to show his publicist's wife's paintings, and I said, "Well, I don't know about that. I'd have to like her work." Well, of course, it was Vernon Scott's wife [_____-Ed.]-who's mentioned in the book I'm reading right now. Quotes him a lot in this book. Vernon Scott. He's a big A.P. . . .

PK: Did you like her work?

JA: Yes, it was delightful. She was completely self-taught. Very much influenced by. . . . Oh, the famous primitive painter, whose work I've also seen.

PK: Grandma Moses?

JA: Hmm?

PK: Grandma Moses.

JA: No. The guy. Well, Grandma Moses was also an influence, but there was another. . . . a man. Famous. Used to show on La Cienega. His paintings get big, high prices now.

PK: Streeter Blair.

JA: Yes, Streeter Blair. Streeter Blair, I knew of course, too. He wanted me to show him.

PK: But you didn't want to?

JA: Well, I didn't because at that time I was already showing Harry Lieberman. And I didn't want to have so much emphasis on self-taught, primitive painters.

PK: What was Vernon Scott's wife's name?

JA: Jane Wooster Scott.

PK: Jane? Is she still around?

JA: She does. . . . Yeah, but she doesn't show any. . . . See, for a while she did show some. She wasn't very satisfac[tory] . . . wasn't a very good . . . she really didn't behave very well.

PK: Oh.

JA: She was very. . . .

PK: This is Joan Ankrum, Session 3, Tape 2, Side B, and we're going to wrap up a few points.

JA: Yeah. Well, actually, Joe had a very. . . .

PK: Okay, so now we're going to talk a little bit about another famous friend of yours, Joe Hirshhorn.

JA: He had very warm feeling for me and was very. . . . He was charmed with the whole story of Morris' and my relationship. He was very touched by that and that's what made him such an absolutely, hundred percent loyal supporter of the gallery. And people used to gossip, thinking that we were having an affair, which is not true.

PK: Not true.

JA: Absolutely not.

PK: But he liked you?

JA: [giggles] He was very interested but. . . .

PK: But you weren't.

JA: [Whispers:] Never, never, never. [Normal voice] And made it very clear, and for a while he was quite upset with me.

PK: Was he married to Olga [Hirshhorn?-Ed.] then?

JA: No, this was just before he married her.

PK: Before Olga?

JA: Yeah. And, as a matter fact. . . . Yeah, see, I knew Joe before Olga did, because he came to the gallery. And then he had me out to the house.

PK: Where? In Greenwich, you mean?

JA: In Greenwich, yeah. He had me out to the house.

PK: Yeah, I was there once.

JA: At that time he was carrying on with Olga but they weren't married yet. [laughs] But, anyway, soon after that. But I never. . . . But people used to suggest that. But also people used to suggest. . . . I always got such good notices from Henry Seldis, that Seldis said to me, "You know, I'm going to have to stop giving you such good notices because people are asking me if I've been sleeping with you." Really! There were a lot of people that gossiped about me.

PK: Well, you know, that happens.

JA: Yeah.

PK: That happens. People need to be entertained.

JA: I was completely disinterested in anybody but Bill. He was. . . .

PK: Well, did Joe Hirshhorn. . . . He bought Morris Broderson. Were there others of your artists. . . .

JA: Oh, yes! Many. Many others.

PK: I can't remember. Did you handle Irving [Block-Ed.]?

JA: Oh, yes.

PK: That's right. And Joe. . . .

JA: That's who first brought Irving from me.

PK: Ah, I see. Yeah. Because, you know, Al Lerner was always very, very high on Irving.

JA: Well, of course, they were very good friends in school.

PK: Oh, I see.

JA: They were very close friends. And, of course. . . . See, Joe had me meet Al Lerner right away when he came to my hotel to buy a Broderson. And then he said, "Oh!" He said, "I want you to. . . . Oh, you've got to. . . ." That's when Al heard about it, because he called Al, and so. . . . And he sent Morris and me to meet Al, at the Hirshhorn Foundation, before the. . . . The museum was just a story to happen. But when I had turned Joe down, I said, "I'm not going. . . ." When Joe asked for a discount I said, "Oh, no, I can't give you a discount." But he said, "You gave the Whitney a discount." "Oh, but," I said, "that was a museum." He said, "Well, I'm a museum." [laughs]

PK: ____ ____.

JA: Oh, I've told you that story.

PK: What an operator.

JA: That's a long story.

PK: What an operator. No, you didn't tell me that story. What?

JA: Well, see, he called me up and he had seen the show at the Whitney and he'd heard about me so he got my telephone number. I was staying at the Taft Hotel. And so he called and he said. . . . I couldn't understand him; he talked so fast. He said, "This is Mr. Hish-hash," something like that, and he said, "I've just seen the work of Broderson at the . . . " and he said, "I'd like to see some more of his work. I'm going to come right over." I said, "Oh, no, that wouldn't be convenient." [laughing] I didn't know who he was. And so he was just so insistent. He said, "Well, look. I'm going back to Canada. That's where my home is." That was when he was still uranium king of Canada. He said, "I'm going back to Canada, and I have to leave in the morning, and I want to come over before I leave. And I'm going early in the morning. So I'm going to. . . . I insist on coming." I said, "Well, it will take me a little while to get in touch with Morris. He's on another floor. He's up on the second, you know, above me. But I'll see what I can do." He said, "Well, all right. Then I'll be over. . . ." and he mentioned the time. So I thought, "Well, he must be somebody important." So I got Morris to come down. I didn't want to be there alone. This strange man was coming to my room at the hotel. So I got Morris, and Morris was there, and knock on the door, opened the door, and here was this guy, with a cigar in the corner of his mouth and a fedora on his head-which he was taking off right away. He said, "How-d'ya-do? How-d'ya-do?" You know, greet just like an explosion. He exploded into the room. And he said, "All right, where are the paintings? Where are the paintings?" And I said, "Well, I can show them to you. They're rolled up." They were all mixed media and pastels and on paper. So Morris and I unrolled them and we kind of stood them up around the hotel room. And Joe went over and he looked at each one very carefully, and he said, "I'll take this one and that one and that one. How much?" I said, "Oh!" I said, "They're not for sale." [laughs] He couldn't believe it. He said, "What do you mean they're not for sale?" He said, "I want to buy them." I said, "Oh, no, they're not for sale." I meant it. I was not going to sell them. He said, "Well, why did you bring them?" And I said, "Well, I only brought them to show Mr. Baur"-John Baur, who was the director of the Whitney. "I just wanted him to see the new direction that he'll be [taking-Ed.], because it'll be a little different, so I just want him to see what direction he's going." Of course, it was just before that I had sold one to them, you see-to the museum. Personally, to Baur and what's his name?

PK: Lloyd Goodrich.

JA: Lloyd Goodrich. And the other one that was a registrar. They all said, "Oh, they're all so great. Which one shall we get?" And that's how they. . . . Then they asked for a discount. They said, "Of course. . . ." I named the price, and they said, "Well that's, of course, without the discount." I said, "Oh," I said, "I don't know about that." And he said . . . "Oh," he said, "It's customary." And I was so new, and I was absolutely inexperienced. I was just. . . .

PK: It's true though, isn't it?

JA: It was absolutely true. Oh, I was completely inexperienced, and I said, "Oh well. . . ." He said, "It's customary." And I was embarrassed because that's. . . . He said, "Everybody, every artist gives the museum. . . . When a museum purchases they always give them at least a ten percent discount." So Joe knew that. He said, "You gave the museum. . . ." I said, "Yes, but they're a museum." And Joseph, "Yeah, but I'm a museum." [laughs]

PK: Was that . . . at that time . . . what did he mean he's a museum? He was a museum. . . .

JA: He had the Foundation.

PK: Yeah, the Foundation. He hadn't made the arrangement yet with the gifts to the Smithsonian.

JA: No, no.

PK: That came later.

JA: Yeah. And I lived all through that period, too. But so. . . .

PK: What did you think of Hirshhorn in terms of. . . . You know, he was certainly a very colorful and flamboyant collector of. . . .

JA: He was very likable. Of course, I liked him because he was so crazy about Morris's work. But he was so knowledgeable.

PK: But didn't he always try to sort of buy wholesale-"That's what _____ [sound signifying generic name?-Ed.] said"-and try to sometimes buy directly from the artist and get them to give him a very special price, throw in an extra work or so. Did you ever hear anything about that.

JA: Well, he never did it to me. I think he trusted me. If he bought quite a few things, then he would indicate that he got a commission. That would be. . . . And I didn't resent it. I mean, I appreciated it because I knew how important it was. And also because I had gone to Baur and told him that I had turned him down. He said, "Oh, that's the greatest thing that could happen to Morris is to have Hirshhorn's interest." And he said, "Oh, no," he said, "That's the greatest thing that could have happened." I was testing to be sure that he was legitimate-Hirshhorn. "Oh," he said, "That's the greatest thing that could have happened to Morris." And, of course, that's what it turned out to be. And he never went back on. . . . When he said he was going to buy something. . . . That's the way I sold a lot of things. I'd send him slides. Naturally, he would want to see the paintings. That's the way he bought Burkhardt. He wasn't that crazy about Burkhardt, but he had promised me. He had put a hold on one, a slide that I'd sent him.

PK: Oh, he didn't like the Hans Burkhardt work that much?

JA: Well, I wouldn't say he was one of his. . . . Later, I sold him quite a few of his early works, drawings and things. [But] I sold them. I would not say that he was one of his favorite artists. Block was, Irving was. And, of course, I sold him [through a, first show]. And the painting that he bought from me was in the inaugural show. Of course, Morris was, too. But there were a lot of artists he bought that were delighted to be in his collection.

PK: Oh, sure, of course.

JA: Like Melvin Schuler, David [Kreitzer], and Phyllis. . . . No, not. . . . Of course, Lieberman. And, oh, quite a lot of other artists now. I have to look at my list. I'll give you a list of. . . . We had a show for the Olympics occasion. They were all asked to have special shows. So I had a show, all the artists that I represented. It was called "The Olympics Show"- "The Olympics Summer Show." And so that gives a list of practically all the artists that I represented. And I have a whole list of that. It's in the. . . . See, a lot of the stuff that I still have which, naturally, you'll have. . . .

PK: Um-hmm.

JA: And I hope I'll eventually find my letter from Anne Frank's father [Otto Frank-Ed.].

PK: Oh yeah, that would be important.

JA: I have a copy of it, but I don't have the original. Somebody . . . they swear they brought it back, and I think they did but. . . . Did I show you that picture of Miep [Gies-Ed.]? Did I just show it to you?

PK: No.

JA: Miep is the one that brought the food. She wanted. . . . Originally, her co-writer on the Anne Frank book called Anne Frank's. . . . "In the Attic," it was called. They came to the gallery to look for Morris. I didn't know who. . . . they called up first and said want to be sure that Morris was going to be there. They said they wanted to use his painting on the cover of the book.

PK: Oh, yes.

JA: And I didn't know who they were at first. And when they introduced themselves, "This is Miep, and this is her. . . ." we just burst into tears, it was so moving to think that here was this. . . . But the publishers didn't want to use it because they wanted real photographs. They didn't want an artist's picture of it. But I have a wonderful letter from him praising this wonderful portrait that he did of "my daughter Anne." It's a wonderful letter. And it just kills me to think it's lost-the original's lost-even though I have the copy.

PK: Well, to wrap up. Let's. . . . The occasion for this interview, as it turns out, really is, aside from the fact that all your gallery records and papers and those things related to Morris are at the Archives. . . .

JA: Or they will be all.

PK: Well, most of them are.

JA: They're all dedicated. They're all. . . .

PK: What we have is quite a bit, so. . . .

JA: With this you'll have a lot more.

PK: Well, maybe I'll be gone by then, and I won't have to. . . . [laughter] But, at any rate, this of course is the main reason, the main occasion for wanting to have this interview as well.

JA: Yes.

PK: But there's another reason, which I want to ask you about, for the record. And that is a book that you've been writing about your, I guess you would say your memoirs, perhaps, your experiences, that attracted the attention and the interest of the woman who actually ended up buying your house.

JA: Yes.

PK: Bess Broderick, the actress. Why don't you, just real briefly, tell about that, about the book. How you met Beth and the interest that she has taken in the book and in you.

JA: Well, I had my house when I closed my gallery. . . . Oh, no, no. The gallery was closed now and I'd moved into this house in the Hancock Park area, but I wanted to sell it because. . . . Oh, gosh, I've forgotten now. I guess I wanted to sell it because I was. . . .

PK: Well, maybe because you wanted to move here with Bob.

JA: [laughing] Yes, that's right. I'd forgotten exactly why. That's right. It wasn't quite appropriate for my permanent companionship. So there was a sign on this. . . . A very attractive young woman. . . . Oh, I think first it was the real estate people came and saw the sign, said they wanted to bring a client. So they came back, brought this client, and we became friends. She decided she wanted the house. She was so anxious to have it as soon as possible. And so she met Morris, who was also right there, and we became friends through this transaction. She wanted to know all about Morris and I told her all about Morris. And then I told her that I had been writing a book about my whole relationship with Morris and the gallery, how I'd started the gallery and why and all that, and she said, "Oh, I'd love to read it." So I said, "Oh, well, sure, I'd be glad to have you read it if you want to." So she read the book, and she was so excited about it, she said, "I have to do this book. I have a production firm and I would like to do a production. I would like to do a film based on this book, but I would like to publish the book first-publish it as a book first. And she was just very, very taken with this book. And then a lot of coincidences happened after that, but we became very good friends. And she was also an actress, very good actress, and is currently engaged in a series that she was doing.

PK: Sabrina, the Teenage Witch.

JA: Yes. And then it was a funny coincidence, because my son had played in the first spinoff. It was called. . . . Oh gosh, I can't remember. He played the lead. He played the. . . .

PK: The spin-off from Bewitched?

JA: Yeah. It was a funny coincidence, and it made a lot of money on that film.

PK: So this, though, is a project that you want to do after and you're hoping that. . . .

JA: I would like to publish it as a book first. Because I think it always does better as a book. Sometimes it works the other way around. Sometimes a film is made and the book comes out afterwards. But usually it's the other way around.

PK: But this is something that. . . . You've obviously put time into this book. You've also put some time into this interview, and they, of course, overlap and cover some of the same ground.

JA: Yeah.

PK: But the book itself is something that you would really like to see come out. And so I guess what I'm asking, is this something you're going to be returning to and working on for your next sort of occupation for a while?

JA: Well, otherwise, if that doesn't work out, I would probably just leave it. [laughs]

PK: In the Archives?

JA: Although my son is also very anxious to [get it]. [laughing]

PK: I do hope it works out. Because your story, Joan, is very interesting.

JA: Another one that was very keen for me to do it was Mariana Cook, who is a very good writer herself and who has had her work published.

PK: Well, they ought to get together with you and help you then. Move it along, rather than just saying "What a good idea."

JA: Well, we'll see.

PK: Well, listen, I want to thank you. We've done, oh, I think well over five hours of interview in these sessions, and I appreciate it and I'm looking forward to-rather soon, I hope-setting up a session or two with Morris.

JA: With Morris? Good. You'll find that. . . .

PK: Thank you for your patience and. . . .

JA: Well, I've enjoyed it very much. I miss the old activities, and so it's nice to have them kind of refreshed.

PK: That's right. Well, that's part of the fun of something like this.

JA: Yeah.

PK: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

JA: Okay.

[End of interview]