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Oral history interview with Imogen
Cunningham, 1975 June 9

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Transcript

Preface

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The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Imogen Cunningham on June 9, 1975. The interview took place in San Francisco, CA, and was conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom and Louise Katzman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

LOUISE KATZMAN: What effect would you say your stay in Germany had on your decision to concentrate on portrait photography?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I didn't have that decision in the first place. I had my one decision when I left Germany, which was that I would have to make a living. I didn't think I was a better photographer than when I went to Germany. I thought I'd done a lot of scientific work which no one had paid any attention to. So I think everything that had any influence on me was something that just started. Everything is just a shock, you know. You don't do it all in one minute. I didn't make up my mind about what I was after like the students do nowadays.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What did you study in Germany?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Chemistry of photography.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did you photograph much?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: There?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, not too little considering the handicaps. I had a 5 x 7 camera. And when I left Germany the lab copied everything of mine. They made new negatives for themselves. They didn't ask me to give them up. They made transparencies and new negatives. I gave them everything they wanted. I photographed the head of the department, and I've given that photograph of him to the International Museum at Eastman House and to the Oakland Museum. They all have it. Also, nobody's ever paid any attention to the paper I wrote there that was published. But I've had one or two letters asking about the formula. My article was written solely in German.

LOUISE KATZMAN: We sent the paper to a friend who is a student of Henry Holmes Smith at Indiana University and he just translated it. He'll be sending you a copy of it.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: You mean the student is a German?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes. He speaks fluent German. So he translated it for us.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We have a xerox of it to go with your papers in the Archives.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I gave the original paper, all corrected and really a mess, to the International Museum. You'll find it in the next bunch of my trash. The president himself was the one I sent it to. I also offered him a print that was made of the lead salts that were used in substitution for the platinum. I don't know whether it's valuable or not. People are all on a kind of revival of the old now and they do gum prints and platinum. But it won't last. Platinum is just too expensive.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, the man who translated your paper said that he tried to find out if some of the chemicals were still available, and apparently a couple of them are not. He said he was going to do further research on it. He will be sending you a copy of the translation.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, he must be a chemist.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes. He works with Reg Heron at Indiana University so he's really interested in the scientific end.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's good. You see, I became kind of a drop-out in science after I came back to America.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Why is that?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you can't do both, can you?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, what made you decide to . . . ?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I didn't decide. I just didn't want to go on with school. I would have had to get a doctor's degree, and I wanted to photograph. I knew what photograph type wouldn't be in, in science, unless I just did ordinary things. And I thought I was better than that.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What was the situation like when you came back to the United States? It seems that today photographers are very supportive of each other and they keep in touch with what other photographers are doing. What was it like when you first came back?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: There were no photographers that I cared for. I had worked at Edward Curtis's studio. That's where I had learned to make platinum prints. I worked for him for two years. And when people ask me, "What did you know about Curtis," I say, "I knew that I met him twice in two years." He was always in the field and he didn't do anything about the lab work. That was all done by a German by the name of Muhr. He was very good. He had more influence on me before I went than anyone, and when I came back we were still friends. But the Curtis studio folded up shortly after that. I got married and, you know, things sort of happened.

LOUISE KATZMAN: So then would you say that you were not friendly with other photographers but that you were friendly with other artists like John Butler?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, he was a friend of mine. Yes, absolutely. I was a member of the Seattle Art Society before I went to Germany. You know, it was so funny. Most of the people that I met were architects and artists. I have a book of their history. Perhaps, I don't know whether it should be called art.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Do you think that influenced your work?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I was brought up on art. You see, my father thought I had a great hand at art and he sent me to art school on Saturdays. That was because of my report card in the general public schools. I had one teacher who was so keen about art. For instance, she put me in the back row -- the very last seat -- so that I could draw all the people in the room, if I wanted to, and when I had my lessons done. And those things influenced my father who said, "You should go to art school." So, on Saturday mornings I went to art school. I was always connected with it in some way or other. But he did not want me to become a photographer. Not on account of the money, which he knew nothing about. But he said, "Why should you go to school so long and just turn out a photographer?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: Just for the record. You said that before you went to Germany you were a member of the Seattle Art Society.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you cultivate contacts and built up your reputation in your early years?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you know people ask me that. When I came back, because of knowing artists perhaps, I fell into the biggest good luck anybody could have. I paid \$10.00 a month for a most charming old house. I've photographed it, too. It was owned by a man who built the Coleman dock. If you knew Seattle, you'd know the Coleman dock and the Coleman building. All his money was in that. He knew my father and he never charged me more than \$10.00, and he put on a bathroom, and a darkroom, and a sleeping porch.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I was born and spent my first years near Coleman point on the Puget Sound.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Where is that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: By Lincoln Park. I think that's where the Coleman home was, if I'm not mistaken.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I never knew the Colemans myself. You see, when I went there my father was out of business. He wasn't there anymore. He didn't do anything about me. He had gone to California and bought himself a ranch that was 10 acres of nothing.

LOUISE KATZMAN: So, was it by word-of-mouth that people got to know about you?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: You know, everybody nowadays, two days after they're out of school want an exhibit and expect one. Actually, what I did was to print up all the stuff I had done in Germany, put it up on my wall -- platinum prints (if I only had them now) -- and invite a list of people that I knew and their friends. They came and

looked at it and I had no trouble at all. I did everybody the kind of favor that they needed, which was "me and my children." I did it by carrying the 5 x 7 camera with 12 glass plates and a collapsible tripod and the straw suitcase on the streetcars to their homes. I didn't ask them to come to me because I wanted that difference.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, in 1914 Flora Huntley Mahschmit (?) wrote an article about you.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: She was an early teacher of mine.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Oh, I see. So that's how she knew your work.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's how she knew me. It was published in Wilson's magazine. I don't have that. I never kept my records.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, what was Wilson's magazine? Was it on art?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: On photography. Well, I'll tell you. You can find it in the public library, I think. Margery Mann has it. Maybe not that one, but she has a lot of copies of it, or she's looked at it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Then you married Roi Partridge and you moved to California.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, not immediately. We were married in 1915 and we moved in 1917.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you work out your professional accommodations with your husband as to who would provide support for the children; who'd take care of the children? How did you divide time for work and taking care of them all?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, up until we had three of them, I did. You needn't tell that. It's not very polite. But I did do a lot for him in the way of introducing him to He even joined the Art society. And, I'll tell you. Before he came to America from Paris I got a show for him in the Art Society. And then I had a lot of navy and army clients. I had tea parties in the afternoon and they came and looked and bought. In fact, I kept him a year in Paris. And I didn't know him. The gal that was working in my studio, the one that's my model, Claire; she knew him. And my father knew his father, and I knew his mother. So it was kind of funny, the thing around. You see, his mother called me to ask me to help her get his stuff out of customs when he sent it to Seattle. I did it in a minute. It was a problem to her, but it wasn't to me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did you have trouble finding time when you started to actively photograph again, after your children were born or when they were a little bit older?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I never stopped photographing, because I used my kids.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I thought there were a couple of years when . . . ?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, there were a couple of years when I didn't have a darkroom, but that didn't stop me from photographing because we took it to a place downtown.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Since both you and your husband were artists, was it difficult to work out the situation so that both of you would have equal time for work and children and home? Or was that responsibility yours?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I can't answer that question accurately. We kept no record. Enough got done and we survived.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That sounds typical.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Roi had to restrain himself on art because after the birth of the twins he was at Foster and Kleiser, billboard advertising. Because they knew that I had a camera and was a photographer, they asked him to do billboards. You know, to go out and photograph them. He did very good shots. And all I could see of it was from Twin Peaks. He would tell me in what direction the light was. I guessed at the exposure. He did it on 4 x 7 film and he did a darned good job. He took it downtown to a place for development. One day he came home and said, "You know, there's a new girl at Marshios now, and she comes halfway across the counter." Guess who that was. Dorthea Lange. And we became acquainted with Dorthea Lange. He then introduced Dorthea to Maynard Dixon, who was also at Foster and Kleiser. This is the way artists had to earn a living. It was just problematical what they did on the side, but they all did something, you know. Then, a man who had looked Roi up in Paris -- a man who was with Vickery & Adkins & Torrey Did you ever hear of that firm? You know where the building is and what it is?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Fashion now. But anyway, Mr. Torrey had bought Roi's things in Paris, so he was very influential. He recommended Roi as a teacher for a girls school in Piedmont. From Twin Peaks he commuted to Piedmont one day a week. He got one day off from Foster and Kleiser. I think that's correct. Then somebody on the staff at Mills College found out he was there and asked him to go to Mills College. From there he took the next step.

LOUISE KATZMAN: That's very important. I didn't know how he had gotten to Mills.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That was it. That was under the influence of a man who is dead now. My mind is vacant on names, but I know him as well as anything. He's dead and all of his family are gone.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, the network for meeting people was, of course, very different here in San Francisco than Seattle because Roi was teaching and you had just come here. How did you get to meet the artists and photographers then?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Here?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes. When you first moved here.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, we lived on Twin Peaks, and there I had three children. Very young, you see. I had a friend whose name was Helen McGregor. She worked for Francis Bruguiere to have a day of what you might call photographic communication or just to give her a helping hand. My sister, who was a nurse, had one day off. She came to rest me from the children and have a day with kids. She liked that. I went down to the studio and spotted. That is somebody that I have a letter about now. Can I give them something that Bruguiere did in San Francisco? Oh, he died in England.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Get it out of your historic head. He photographed San Francisco and he particularly photographed the Palace of Fine Arts in its early day.

LOUISE KATZMAN: And he went to England?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He went to England to stay. He cut out this country.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Not Coburn?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh no. Coburn was earlier. I knew Coburn too. I have a letter from Coburn.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We can figure out the date.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I can do it by looking on my shelf. I have to have that name.

LOUISE KATZMAN: It was Helen McGregor.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, she's well-known. She took over the work of a man in London. In other words, it's just one of my name things.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I think it was Breitenbach.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It was Breitenbach. He was never great.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You have a couple of letters from him.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I know him pretty well. I'll tell you where he went.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I met him in New York a year ago. He lives in the top of an old building with many, many books and photographs.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He was a very knowledgeable person. He went to Washington, D.C.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Library of Congress, Curator of Prints.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's right. That was Breitenbach.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But that's not the one you're trying to think of.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. He wasn't what you'd call an active artist. No, that's not the one. When I need

names they drop out of my head; when I don't need them they drop back.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, to get back to you as a photographer and you as working in San Francisco. Was there any effect of your private life on your career?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Who can judge that? Of course there was. I had a hell of a life at times. You know, you can't bring up three kids of the same age without working at it. I didn't have what you'd call work at that time. I worked, but I didn't have what you'd call "work." I never showed. I didn't do anything. You know, people weren't so avid about it. We didn't mind cutting out a few things and doing what we had to do. When I tell you that I thought of going out to another person to sit and do work for them, why that shows you that I was trying not to be out of the field. I didn't have the letters that I have now. It's a horror now. Of course, archivists welcome that. They just have a dozen typists fixing the answers.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Was there any pressure from the society around you when your divorce came about? Did that have any effect on your career?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, if it did, I didn't pay any attention.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you find living as a -- not really a single woman -- but nonetheless as a woman on your own with children?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I didn't have children. My eldest son was 16 and my twins were 14. All of us went to work.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You once said something like, "I'm glad I had only boys. Now the girls do everything. But in the end, they're just second-class citizens anyway." Do you still feel that way?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, they think they are.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Do you think they are?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Not I. I never let myself get into that category. But that's what the squawkers say.

LOUISE KATZMAN: But you did say that. Did you feel that at the time?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Not for myself. I never thought about men and women very much.

LOUISE KATZMAN: But were you afraid it might be true if you had girls?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think girls aren't as much of a help. They may be, but I never had them. How do I really know? That's terribly presumptuous. Where did I say that?

LOUISE KATZMAN: That was in a letter.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: She's collecting my mistakes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you become involved with the community of photographers existing in the 1920's -- pre-Group f/64? You know, today we have publications and art books. There are gallery shows and people go around.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I had a lot of prints shown in all kinds of places. I don't know. Margery Mann has done that research and it's somewhere.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, I meant how did you get to know the people? How did you meet the Bristols and Ed Bissantz and the people who were involved in F/64?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, Ed Bissantz isn't a valuable member of the photographic group. He just takes it up and quits and takes it up and quits, then starts in on pottery. He's just a good conservative friend of mine.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How were you able to meet these people?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I'm sure I can't remember at all how I met Ansel or anybody around here. But I went in a very wide society of rich people when I was the wife of a professor at Mills. Mrs. Spreckels entertained us. Not personally, but we were invited with the hoard [horde?]. they knew what I was doing. I had shows. And you'll be surprised, but the print that I get \$150.00 for now -- the woman who ran the shop on the campus decided that it was worth selling and she sold it for \$5.00.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This was at Mills?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: In the shop.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you meet Willard Van Dyke and those people that later formed the Group f/64? Again, was it a similar kind of situation?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I'll tell you how I met Willard, if I can. Maybe Willard would know it better than I. Willard was photographing when he could, and he was working in the gas station. A friend of mine had a very elegant car. In fact, she came to the ceremony at Mills the other Sunday. She lives in a most beautiful house in St. Helena. She had an elegant and expensive car. And you know the thing that's on the front of a car? What do they call it?

PAUL KARLSTROM: The hood ornament.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Hood ornament. She saw something in Europe and bought it and put it on her car. And when she came into the gas station where Willard was dispensing gas, he said to his colleague, "We should get acquainted with her and look at that insignia." He spoke to her not like a dispenser of gas, you know. She liked him and she was my friend. I think that's where we had some kind of contact. I don't remember what exactly it was. Then I got acquainted through him. And he worked for -- oh, maybe this is quite a long time later, when he took the house that was Anne Brigman's.

LOUISE KATZMAN: The Brockhurst house?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did you work for WPA, too?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. Willard worked for WPA. And the girl with him was John Edwards' daughter. They had a darkroom there. You know the thing I missed there, that I've always wished I'd done. Anne had a tree growing out of her room. The room had been built around that tree, and she had her shower under it. You see, she had the pipe put in with water spray and that. In the corner was the "john" that was only concealed by mosquito netting. At that time it used to be one in big squares. And I always wished I'd photographed somebody on the "john." Now people would have done it. But back then I only thought about it and I didn't have the nerve. I don't remember seeing it after Willard took hold of the place.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where is this house?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It's gone now.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where was it?

LOUISE KATZMAN: In Oakland.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: 6 -3 Brockhurst, or some such number. I don't think I could even find it now. It's gone in any case. It's been torn down. It was a real shack.

LOUISE KATZMAN: And so you began to meet these people through other people and then you came together through your common interests?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't know how much anybody remembers of how he met this person or that. I don't remember now, for instance, how we managed to make a kind of a friend out of Dorthea Lange and Maynard Dixon. But after she met him, it was really . . . I don't know why he was in love with her or she with him, or what love means. But anyway, before they were married, Dorthea (who had the results of terrible polio) wanted to learn to dance. Maynard didn't know how. So by that time she had a studio next door to the one that was Vickery & Atkins & Torrey. It was a print man. A man who had only prints. I don't remember his name at the moment. But she had the basement room for her work. And she had an upstairs room that opened onto a little courtyard. One night we had dancing lessons there. She and the Partridges paid for teaching us how to dance. Of course I know how, but Roi didn't, and Maynard didn't, and she didn't. So, it was really fine to learn ballroom dancing, because by the time Roi went to Mills College, he was an expert. In his way of life he never would have learned it. But he had learned.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And now he dances all the time. That's his big therapy.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's right. But that's because of his extremely dancey wife, who dances only ethnic dances.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Square dances and folk dances.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Folk dances.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Just another point. How old is May Ellen? [Roi Partridge's wife]?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I have no idea. I think she's retired from school teaching, so she's past 65. But she's a good 15 or 20 years younger than he is.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think what Louise was getting at, in asking about how you met these different people, was if it was something to do with art or photography that caused different people to seek out one another. Was there a sense of need for a community? Or was it more of a social thing?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think mostly I met them on social occasions. But, you know, I really can't remember unless I have some memory of a certain person. For instance, in Seattle I can tell you how I met Claire, and how she happened to come into my life. She was a portrait painter of miniatures only. That's about all she had done at that time. And she needed a place to work. She had a place for as long as I was there for no rent at all. She just came in and worked when I could make her an appointment, when I didn't have one, or when I was going out. It was a very good arrangement.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did Horace Bristol and Alfred Sawarata enter into your life? See, the other part of it is the fact that in the correspondence there are letters that just begin, but there is no senses of where these people came from.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. I haven't always saved letters from Horace. I should have. But I got out of the community. His first wife was a very good friend of mine. She killed herself for very good reasons, but not what I would call very good reasons. I'd never kill myself for a man. I wouldn't do it for anybody. I believe in euthanasia. But the only really good reason for going out of this life is an insufferable illness, I think, and taking your own choice of doing it. My father said at 98, "If I ever had a terminal disease, I would just turn my face to the wall." He was a bit of a Buddhist anyway. A pacifist. So he might have been able to do it. But he was 98 at that point, and the next day he walked into the bathroom and fell dead. So he never had to do it. You know, it's silly to keep people alive who have a terrible disease.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: The doctors are realizing that now.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's not doing them any favors, that's for sure. It's a type of torture, really.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It's a real type of torture. I think doctors can tell the point of near death. And they should put them out of their misery.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How did you get to know about other photographers' work, such as Adams and Weston? I know that he had written a letter about your work, having seen it in a show, but what was the system by which you were able to find out about other photographers?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, of course there were some publications at that time. Not very good ones, and you wouldn't like them. But, you know, Margery Mann is now going to write something on the pictorialist movement. Well, I think, when I went to New York before 1934, that I was a member of that automatically without knowing it. You know what I mean?

LOUISE KATZMAN: She gave a lecture on that down at the SPE [Society of Photographic Education] meeting at Asilomar.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes, I know. Did you go to that?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes. Very, very good. It was excellent on the pictorialism of that time. She had a couple of your photographs in the slide presentation. So, there were some magazines existing at that time?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I was published very early in Wilson's and in another one. And there was a little magazine that I've always wanted to find. Maybe it was Wilson's. It was 14" wide and about 12 or 13" high. It had a wonderful article on platinum, with illustrations of how a platinum print looks when it's finished printing. You know, it's not definite and it's very difficult to judge. You have to have printed quite a while to know that. Another thing, when I was learning at Curtis's, I worked for six months without anything in order to learn. I didn't waste paper and they didn't pay me -- you know what I mean? I got the job at the end of that time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you had to work with no salary and/or compensation for six months.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, that's what I did. I offered to, and that's how they took me on. Nobody does it

nowadays. They want to be paid.

PAUL KARLSTROM: In the very beginning you mentioned this German technician, a Mr. Muhr, at Curtis's lab. You said that he was extremely influential on you before you went to Germany.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, he was such a good technician.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. And that was really what developed your early interest in photography?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No, no. It didn't develop anything that I hadn't already thought of. But I never met anybody much before that time. You see, I was in academic school work. I didn't associate with active photographers. In fact, I didn't know any.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he gave you technical experience and expertise.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I watched him and so I did. I guess you can look at all the things that Margery has. There are photographs of me that he did. She thinks they're remarkably good. They were a bit stilted. They were a product of the time. But he did all the portrait work that came into the studio. Curtis didn't do anything in the studio. He just came and unpacked his bags and packed them up again and left. He was very different from his brother. The historic society in Seattle is now keeping a record of it because his negatives were sent to them. He was a man who did nature. He was interested in ecology before the work was invented. He really and truly was a marvelously generous man. Edward wasn't. Ed was a determined egoist and didn't see anybody who was inferior to himself. But when I came back to Seattle once, on the job that I was doing for Cornish School, Ashel gave me his studio and his darkroom for nothing. That was a key to the Coleman building. He wouldn't take a penny. He was a man who worked, you might say, day and night. He only slept by dropping off, apparently. He'd sleep two hours at a time, and then no more. It would be a long time and then he'd work and he'd take another few nips at sleeping. funny, isn't it, that some people, like they say, are built that way.

LOUISE KATZMAN: So, now we're back to San Francisco, or the Bay Area actually, and I have a question about the Group f/64. That is, although it only existed as a unit for one year, why do you think it had such long lasting influence? It was very loose.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Unexplainable. Absolutely. We weren't all geniuses, believe me. I think if you asked to see the whole show that's at the San Francisco Museum, you'd realize it wasn't all great stuff. Not by any means. Nobody was avid about it. I think perhaps Weston was a little more remote because he was away, and then he went to Mexico. So, there were lots of reasons for our not being actively together. We didn't live near each other, nor live together. The business of ganging up was just to talk about photography. It was not really like an organization, as I saw it. I understand that Ansel has a different point of view about it than I do.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What's his point of view?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think he thinks he gave the name to it. And I know he didn't. It was Van Dyke.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Willard Van Dyke gave the name?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Van Dyke was more of the motor power of it than anybody. My notion.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did Ansel see it as a more organized unit than you did?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I've no idea about that. There are certain things you don't discuss with Ansel, especially if you don't agree. Where are we now?

LOUISE KATZMAN: We just discussed a little bit about why the Group f/64 had such influence but came up with no real firm answer about that.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, have you asked anybody else?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, I really haven't. I've been doing some research on my own to try and find out.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, where do you look to find out?

LOUISE KATZMAN: I read George Craven's article on the f/64.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: His is the best around that's been written on it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Everything else is more scattered.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's right. And I think maybe he logically shouldn't have been a teacher, but should have been a researcher. I don't know. He may have been a good teacher, for all I know. Have you seen his new book?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: What do you think of it?

LOUISE KATZMAN: I think it's good.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He used good illustrations.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I think he's better as a researcher, as you say, than as a teacher. Personally.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Did you ever go to him at all?

LOUISE KATZMAN: I've attended a couple of his classes and lectures.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I don't think there's any such thing as teaching people photography, other than influencing them a little. Or maybe inspire them, or perk them up. People have to be their own learners. They have to have a certain talent, and kind of an eye.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I definitely agree with that.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I think a lot of people copied the photograph that you did -- the one I have -- didn't they? You know it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I figure it doesn't really hurt me because they can't do it my way. I did it my way.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I was going to show you the one Judy Dater did of me last summer, at the Yosemite Workshop. Now, I'll tell you. I was up there last August, and I told the students that whatever they did in the class situation was for the waste basket. That you can't tell. You have the same situation, and unless you're the most extraordinary photographer, any situation isn't yours. It's everybody's. I don't think they liked that. Now, I was way behind in the woods, and Judy called me. I didn't know what she had on the side, and I simply put on an act for her.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's a wonderful photo. I think it's funny.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, it has a point.

PAUL KARLSTROM: With the nude model.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Here's one of the students who came. Then I was going to crawl out of this situation. I didn't see the person take it. But I was no good the next minute. It's no good, compared.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, that's right. It's the wrong moment. Although she looks better. I like this picture of her.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't think I do. I like this one. IT's more natural. This one she's posing. Well, she's a big model. I hate big models. Say, I'm so sorry I haven't the stuff I did up at Covelo to show you.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What's that?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I was illustrating a book, a 14th Century poem.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Do you think the environment in which you lived had any effect on your work? Do you think there's a West Coast . . . ?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think it always has an effect upon anybody. Anybody is influenced by where and how he lives. I think that I was fairly lucky in Seattle, you know.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How was that?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I was poor. When you're poor you work, and when you're rich you expect somebody to hand it to you. So I think being reasonably poor, that is, not hungry, is very good for people. I don't resent anything.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think Louise is specifically referring to a geographical region. The fact that you worked on the West Coast, mostly San Francisco.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I so much prefer the West Coast to the East. I spent quite a while, one summer, in Maine. I must say, in the summertime it's nice. But I wouldn't have weathered the winter, myself. When I look back at it now, I've only been back in Seattle when it was nice. I had good luck last summer there. just terrific. I think that San Francisco is the place in the whole world, for an easy life. That is, a reasonable life. Now how people reward you, but just in the associations and everything. And plenty of nice things to see and look at, if you have time to run around.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about the imagery? Was there a sensibility that might be associated with the San Francisco area?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I don't tune in on 24 hours of Herb Caen's words. You know, I just don't. But I admire him very much for keeping up. You know, I don't care about some of these people. People magazine. I don't care about reading all that junk.

LOUISE KATZMAN: In terms of photography, do you think that there's a Bay Area style, or a West Coast style, as there was in the East?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I think West Coast, compared with East Coast, is superior. Not because of every single person, but because of the general value of the whole thing. East Coast is very largely magazine photographers. Some of them are awfully good, you know, When I watch them at work, I am just paralyzed by the skill they have. Like at the services they had out at Mills that Sunday. A fellow I know was going to report to, I don't know who. He had a press sign on and about three or four cameras. Everyone was a different focal length, and he knew which one to grab for each situation. I don't think he develops the film himself. That's rather routine now. But, I really admire that very much.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Their technical abilities?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes, yes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, what about the other end of it?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, there's not much of it. Do you think so?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, but I happen to feel the same way you do. I'm sort of in awe of their technical abilities.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Skillful?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes. Well, how would you characterize West Coast photography?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I really don't know what it is outside of the gilded few. You know what it is about the people that you like and associate with. But I don't know how it goes over. I know that a news man out here has a very tough time. You know, when the New York After Dark made that whole number on San Francisco, I got acquainted with a lot of boys that I'd never heard of and never will again. Went to their party. The boy that photographed me was very good at what he was doing. But, he's being a reporter like in New York.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, I think Arnold Newman is one of the few photographers who seems to occasionally . . .

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He does everything.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes, he does everything. He's a magazine photographer, a book photographer, a portrait photographer -- but a different kind of portrait photographer.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I started out as a magazine photographer. That is, my first break with the Vanity Fair in the 1930's was taking any order I could get. And now, when People magazine called me, I did the job on Ansel. You knew that. I said to the editor, when he asked me if I would go down there (he didn't expect me to, I think), "Why sure I will. And if I photograph Ansel, he'll have to photograph me." He said, "Could you arrange that?" And I said, "Well, I'm older than Ansel and he has to mind me." He made it the most easy occasion I've ever had. If you ever knew what it's like to have two boys waiting on you, and not interfering and not being in the way, and the gal that wrote it up never appearing when we were photographing. Always at the right time and not taking any notes, and never misquoting you. It was an extraordinary occasion. But let me tell you, they have not returned the negatives. Ansel wrote me about that. And I telephoned her. She was in New York. The gal that took my message telephoned her in New York and I haven't heard yet. They have to dig them up. They have no right. They used to have that custom of hoarding them so that nobody else could then take advantage of them. You couldn't take advantage of the use of them until they'd done their trip. That's logical.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, how were you able to build up your reputation as a portrait photographer in the Bay Area?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't know that I had one. People just came to me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, how did they find out about you?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, that was their business, not mine.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You never did any kind of promotion, or tried to cultivate that? You always had just enough to get by?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I've always lived, I must say. I think other people promoted me. I was, of course, in a lot of magazines. And you know how friends phone one person or another. I guess you decided that I didn't keep my record very straight in the letters or in the file.

LOUISE KATZMAN: In terms of magazines and publications, yes. But not in the earlier years, before you started to get frequently published. You had many, many letters in the 40's and 50's to magazines. You certainly did keep that up. But in the 20's and 30's?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, in the 20's I was pretty busy just photographing Mills girls. They came to me. You should see the number of boxes I have downstairs. They're not going to be saved, I think. This archivist is anxious to get finished with the job. And, I don't see why I should save them. In all these years, from 1934 on, only rarely have anyone asked for a reorder. I don't know how I did it now, with the money. It was so little and the orders so small.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What did you get for a portrait?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I can't remember exactly. But, the other day I came upon an old bill of mine to some very wealthy people in Seattle, 1917, just before I left. I think that I was then doing a job for \$25, and that was the family. It didn't include only one person. It could be anybody they wanted. Showed them proofs and platinum for two and a half a print.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, \$25 was the base price then.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And the prints were two and a half?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes. That's ridiculous.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What year did you say?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM and PAUL KARLSTROM: 1917.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It was dated; that's how I know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That should go into the Archives.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's valuable information.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Now, I noticed that you built up many friendships with photographers, that they actually became your friends as well as having business relations with them.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: How were you able to keep the business and personal aspects of your life separate with these people? And what kind of conflicts arose?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Never any problem. I never had any contest with anybody in the way of a job. I think my son is like that, too. You know, he likes his real colleagues. I remember sometimes people who were photographers just came to see me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, what about, for instance, Minor White, who did the "Light 7 Impressions" show?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You had submitted work, and he did not accept any. How did you feel at that time? Did that affect your personal relationship with him?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Is it true that I did submit work then?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes, you did. And he did not accept any for the show. Then there was a book that came out, as well, with it.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: You know what I thought? Well, that's Minor. I thought it was good enough, but if he didn't, okay. I never felt anything against him for it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: So there was never any . . . ?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, he and I've had many kinds of what I call little fights. For instance, in the last big show that he gave, that he had a hideous title for -- you know, something occult -- he wrote that he wanted my lotus. I said to Margery Mann, "Minor wants my lotus. When did I ever do a lotus?" She said, "Oh, I thought he was a botanist." He didn't know, and he wanted my magnolia. I didn't send it. I said, "If you want that, I'm sending you the bud. The other one has been shown too much." I sent him the bud, and he went to the Metropolitan and took the other one. Now I call that unfair. I think I would just as soon he left me out, because I don't think it's fair for him to use that photograph which has almost been destroyed by its popularity. But it has not. The boy who has worked for me before said to me one day, "You know, I think you should leave that magnolia out of your material." And I said, "I know. You're tired of spotting it." He said, "What are you going to do with the money?" I said, "I'm going to save it for my old age." So you know, now it's even more popular. Much more popular. It's just ridiculous. Another thing I think should go on the record: Without asking me, Witkin made a postcard of it. He says he sent me a package of 50. I didn't count them. But, when he came into my house shortly after that, I was horrified. I didn't want it, of all things, on a postcard. I said, "Oh Lee, are you going into the postcard business now?" And he said, "I must explain myself. I should have asked you." I said, "What else did you make postcards of?" He said, "I made one of the pepper." I said, "Who gave you the permission?" He said, "Well, the Westons did." And one other he had made. He had asked them and he didn't ask me. I think it's definitely wrong.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It is. Now we're getting into recent history.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, it's present day, actually. The whole thing is present day. I don't know how much you're going to use of this talking tape, but it is just one of the things that shocked me beyond, you know. Then I thought to myself, well Witkin has to live, and he's really been keeping me alive for years. The next person might be a problem, too.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Harold Jones is going to Tucson.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He'll be there.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. In September.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Did you go to Tucson? Were you invited?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No. But Harold said that he might have an archivist job there.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you're qualified for that. I can see that by your not being bored by this dumb research.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, it's just that I'm basically interested in photography.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: But if you go into archives you'll not be a photographer.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But one has to eat, Imogen, as you say.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's right.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I'm more interested in exhibition work than archival.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. That's what you can always do, putting things together.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Which I've done a little of.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Margery Mann does it excellently. though she makes plenty of enemies.

LOUISE KATZMAN: She did an excellent job on you.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Stacks of girls are crying their hearts out.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I told you, I think, about Louise's show at Richmond recently. The show of photographs of the community where she grew up in New York.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Did you grow up in New York?

LOUISE KATZMAN: I grew up in New York.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: What part of New York? The City?

LOUISE KATZMAN: IN Bayside, Queens, which is not the inner city and it's not suburbia. It's in between. It's on the way to Long Island.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I have a vague idea of it. I've never been there.

LOUISE KATZMAN: It's in one of the boroughs of New York City. I did a multimedia exhibit, actually. I photographed residents and I tape-recorded interviews with them about their lives.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Why did you put it over in Richmond? A far place for me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I'm sorry.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I couldn't go there.

LOUISE KATZMAN: My brother's a social historian, and he wrote the prose to go with the photographs. We hope to publish it in book form. So then you can see it eventually.

[SIDE TWO]

LOUISE KATZMAN: I think one reason that we should have the letters, or xeroxes of them, is that it's very important in terms of the people, and making them human beings. And in relation to yourself, I think we should have those letters in the collection, too.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I turn people into human beings by not making them into gods. I mean, I won't talk that way. When people ask me silly questions about my private life, I just say, "I don't discuss that." And now someone's writing something on Edward, on all of his mistresses. They made too much out of it. That's not Edward. If it is, it's his own business, nobody else's. I don't enjoy reading it. Of course, I did say that Margarethe Mather was my favorite mistress of his collection.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You know, a book has just come out on Tina Modotti.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, she was a lovely woman. But I didn't know her well enough.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, there's a whole book. It just came out.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Who did it?

LOUISE KATZMAN: A woman, Mildred Constantine. The reproductions are very poorly done.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I'd buy it anyway. I own one print of Tina Modotti's. It's on loan to the museum in Oakland. It's a platinum print and it's a negative of a church tower. Interior of a church tower in Tepetzotlan, Mexico.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What's the special characteristic of the Weston letter that is misunderstood?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, the special thing is, when he came from Mexico he went to a show at the Los Angeles County Museum. It was a general exhibition of everybody who sent, I imagine. I don't remember seeing it. He said until he came to my photograph of the false hellebore, he hadn't seen a thing that he liked. That it was marvelous. And if I kept on like that I would become a good photographer. I had already worked 20 years more than he, but I hadn't hit it. That shows, really, how Edward always . . . I think his day books are a revelation of his character and disposition. He was a quiet, sweet kind of a person. But in the business of photography, he was always aiming at something.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What do you think he was aiming at? In terms of the business end of it.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No, no, no. He wasn't aiming at that. He was aiming at immortality, and I think you can't do too much about that. Let that take care of itself.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about somebody like Ansel?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, he's aiming at the pocketbook, too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Both immortality and the pocketbook.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Absolutely.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did you ever have any conflicts with Ansel?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I have. They are well-publicized. But he and I are very good friends on account of it. My sense of humor isn't the same as his. I really give him a jab. But, why not? He takes it beautifully.

LOUISE KATZMAN: He does?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, yes. You see, he circulated the fact that I had acid in my blood. Margery Mann, I think, must have been the one who publicized it. When he heard that he wrote me a nice postcard saying, "Remember, it's only acetic acid." He didn't specify whether it was only 28%.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Or 99? What happened when he was giving you advice on how to use the Polaroid, when you did the back cover for the Aperture publication? Were there some conflicts at that point? You had gone down there, and you had shot many packets of the Polaroid and he was going to offer you criticisms.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Was that in my letters or yours? I don't remember what happened.

LOUISE KATZMAN: That was around the time that they were doing Aperture.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It wasn't down there. It was at his house, I think, on 24th Street.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, it was in Carmel.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I was very inexpert about Polaroid then, and I still am. It's the best place to make mistakes. I think I mention mine. Even in my book, you know.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: And that's why Mr. Land has never written to me. But I still persist in using it. I like it. With a back and a 4 x 5 camera . . . I'm handicapped about getting around with that. I don't get around with it. I do people here with it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Which photographers, say among your colleagues, had the greatest influence on your work? Or even on your philosophy?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I haven't found that I've paid much attention to any of them, from the standpoint of influence. Have I? Would you notice it?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, in terms of perhaps respecting what they did. Not necessarily directing you, in the way that you worked, but in the ideas they had. For instance, Ansel Adams and Minor White have very different ideas about photography.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I look at Ansel's as his and I'm influenced. I could be influenced technically. I think he's perfection. But, I always say that's for Ansel and I'm not so particular. I can't be so particular. I can't use a big format camera. I don't mind. You know, I would like to be as much of a perfectionist as Ansel is. But it would inhibit my interest in what I'm going to achieve, if I think I'll achieve anything. That's why the little camera. It's more flexible.

LOUISE KATZMAN: That just reminded me of something. I had met John Szarkowski when I was in New York. He was criticizing my photographs for not having as much detail or quality in the blacks. And that reminded me of Ansel's approach. You know, that there is only one way to do it and that's to have the best technique.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, who's going to judge it? Now, I suppose I shouldn't say my real truthful feeling about Szarkowski. But he is a reporter type. He was crazy about Dorthea's stuff. But she was not a printer. You see, first of all she worked under such difficult conditions of dust and storm and everything. She never printed. Somebody else printed. she had something to say that was outside of technique. I think Szarkowski knew that. But he was crazy about her stuff.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Hmm. In most cases, I think he is really more for the technique people.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, he's not, I'll tell you. I'd say he was a wooden man, you know. I feel that when I tell

you this it's public property. But after all, I'll be dead by the time he reads it. So, what does it matter?

PAUL KARLSTROM: At the rate that we get these transcribed, we'll all be dead.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. That's going to be a tough one. But, I had a friend who was on the jury that Szarkowski was on. She was surprised at his one type of interest. Very fixed. Well, everybody who does anything for the public can be criticized. There's always someone who doesn't like it. Now there's just dozens of people who think Margery is real harsh. Well, they didn't get in the Woman show, you know. But when I think that they looked over the work of 1,000 persons and came down to 50!

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you see the little article she did in "California Living" in the Sunday paper?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes, I have a copy of it. I sent a copy to Willard Van Dyke and quite a lot of New Yorkers.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Get Margery Mann out to the East.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, she'll never move from here.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, I meant in terms of her work.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Being know.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, she writes for Camera 35, the photography magazine.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I know, but it just doesn't seem to have expanded her . . .

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I was never able to listen to it at the museum. Maybe I'll get there some day when I can leave everybody and go and sit down. But, usually I get clogged up by a lot of people talking to me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You once said that, I quote you, "I don't know what really counts for a photographer. What is the reward? Getting by the barbs and slings of this world without too much agony and bitterness." What kept you going in your moments of anger and bitterness?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't know yet. Oh, you ask me, what is the greatest torture of a person who does portraits for a living? I could fill several volumes with nice nasty stories. I don't know. I don't love the world. I think Jupiter should have hit us. I like a lot of people in it, just a few. I know a lot of people are going to resent my not answering their letters. I can show you my two boxes of unanswered letters. I can't get down to it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What importance did your friends play in terms of either keeping your spirit up or helping you out?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I'll tell you. Somebody telephoned me today. She's a dancer, 71 years old. She talked to me about when she had deep depressions. She said, "Do you ever have them?" I said, "No, of course not!" I never have gone into a tizzie over something. I might be unhappy, but I don't go into tizzies.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, what about momentary anger, or disappointment?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, the one that is the worst that I have had in 10 or 15 years I'd love to tell for history. It was the Santa Barbara Museum. They invited me for a show. Is this off the record?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's on the record. But, all of this is restricted. It's not going to be published.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No, I don't mean that. But it's history.

PAUL KARLSTROM and LOUISE KATZMAN: Oh, yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. You have to use your discretion about it. They invited me two years before. Just near the date that they had set up, the fifth of December, I had a fall and broke a vertebrae. I couldn't go on with it, and wrote them. They moved it to the following year, fifth of December. And I sent the stuff down. That was last December.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I remember.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I made the contract that it was to be my second book that was represented. They wrote

me that they couldn't do that much. And I left it up to the Oakland Museum, who was going to send it. They said do it complete or don't do it. Then the Santa Barbara Museum agreed to have it like that. When I got there I was invited to come to the exhibit on Sunday afternoon. The invitation was five feet long. It was a Christmas party. They had hurdy-gurdy running in the room next to me, and people running around in costumes (even a Santa Claus who tried to kiss me, and I gave him a slug), and two or three bands, and all of them in different places. Food places were everywhere. They put me and a bookseller at a three-foot-square desk. A woman on the left with a money box and me signing books. I didn't see a single bit of the exhibit. I had no time to go around the wall. And just before five o'clock when they closed the museum, the head of the museum came to me and said, "I think we sold a lot of books." I said, "I could have done better under different circumstances." Because if he had asked me to come the day before, on the Saturday afternoon, or the day after, I would have been perfectly willing to do it. But to have it in combination with that kind of a boisterous party was very, very crude, I think. I haven't answered him yet, or written to him. I think when my adrenaline goes down, I'll have to speak to him.

LOUISE KATZMAN: What about the help of certain friends, like Curt DuCasse, who nominated you to the Academy of Sciences; and Phyllis Massar, who was at the Met; and Theodore Roethke and Joe Ercey? How did these people help you out?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, of course I'm sure I never would have been invited to the Academy of Arts and Sciences unless Curt DuCasse had done it. I don't know what it does for me, but I've been made an honorary member now. I did nine or so photographs of him and his wife, and she liked them so much that they are in Brown University on the wall. He was a wonderful friend of mine from an early day. I got acquainted with him because he was a chess player and played with Roi. That was at Mills College. He was a University of Washington graduate. But who was the other one?

LOUISE KATZMAN: There was Phyllis Massar, who was at the Metropolitan. She originally worked there voluntarily doing research for them. And she, it seems to me, was instrumental in getting the committee to look over a number of your platinum prints and regular prints for purchase. Dearborn Massar.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I know her very well. I don't think she did anything for me. I think it was all in the bag before that -- that is, having the show.

LOUISE KATZMAN: And what about Joe Ercey?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Joe Ercey. Well, I know him very well. He was a nice guy. But, what did he ever do for me?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, he was the designer on West Coast Airlines.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, I didn't ever know that. He's a terribly nice guy.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I thought he had recommended that your photographs be looked at.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. The fellow that came to me was not Joe Ercey. It was a man who has a three letter name. He's a Turk or somebody from that part of the country. And the name has been shortened. He sold the airline.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Nicolas Bez.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Nicolas Bez.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. But he was president or vice-president.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He owned it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Okay. But Joe Ercey I thought was the

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I didn't know that.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Oh!

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I wonder if his name is on the calendar?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, it's not on the calendar. Joe Ercey, I believe, was the man who recommended to Nicolas Bez that he look at your photographs and then Nicolas Bez bought them.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: You see, I thought Nicolas Bez was a connoisseur of photography because Mrs. Johnston of the Focus Gallery told me that he was a great visitor at her place.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, I'm sure he was. He made the decision. But I think it was Joe Ercey who

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Promoted it. Well, he may have. But, I'll tell you. He didn't make a very good price for it.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No. Fifty dollars a print?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Umhmm. And he owned the prints. They weren't just to use. He owned them.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, the whole show I had at the University of Washington was sold under similar circumstances. Because it was bought by one person.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: For me, at that time, it looked like a wonderful offer.

LOUISE KATZMAN: The Northwest cultural Center?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. The name of Hauberg.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, sure. It's sort of like the Archives of Northwest Art.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, he's the personal owner of it. He was going to build a museum. Sort of an imitation of that one in Copenhagen which is out in the country. A building for each of three different subjects. But, you know, he has done something different with his money.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Well, I know that he's the one who was very actively involved in Mark Tobey and having Tobey be the focal point for this business. Now he's president of the Seattle Art Museum.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I know it. What's happened to the original president? Is he ill or dead?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, the original president? I don't know.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I forget his name.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, your prints are probably included then, because of this original project of Hauberg's, which has been incorporated now, I believe, with the Seattle Art Museum.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you know, I think the thing that bothered the woman at the museum, at the Henry Gallery (La Mar Harrington), is that they couldn't afford to keep it. And they haven't any place to make collections. And this was logical.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Were there any other people who were extremely helpful, who were perhaps able to help your growth as a photographer at all?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you sort of act as if I've been a real climber and looking for this and that to happen. I never paid any attention to how I was getting along. I just took what came to me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: There were people who were impressed with your work. Who just seemed to have liked you so much that

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Some people say to me lately, "Isn't it too bad that people discovered you so late?" I never thought that.

LOUISE KATZMAN: That was my last question, actually.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: If you look over the record, if you look over Margery Mann's record, you'll see that I was published. You know, there is something happening to photography now that hasn't happened before. It's a big rush of something. So, if you get a lot of attention now it doesn't mean you didn't have any before. We didn't expect all this business. This is sort of murder, you know, in a way.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No, I just meant that there were a number of people who were friends of yours who liked your work very, very much and then did things on their own. Not that you searched this out.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I suppose I've forgotten my parties and such.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you give wild parties?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. But I mean the San Francisco Museum had a show of mine a long time ago. And the de Young Museum.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: And that's all recorded. But, no rich man came along and said, "I'll do this, that, and the other for you," that I can remember. I hope I'm not forgetting anybody.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, William Lane did buy a number of prints. But that was only a one-time thing.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh my God! Do I have to thank him publicly?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

LOUISE KATZMAN: No. I just said that

PAUL KARLSTROM: No. Set the record straight. Because obviously the correspondence would make

LOUISE KATZMAN: It was just this one time that you got a large number of sales.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I was just thinking to myself, "Is that a great honor to me, that William Lane happened to buy a few things at once?" I've got the record down. I even went to see him.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. In Massachusetts.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes. But do you know that since that time -- that was '69 maybe -- I have never sold a thing to Lane. He's called once and he gave me some presents. They were traveling by car, or something, and then they were going to fly. They wanted to get rid of their extra food. A jar of coffee, or something like that. I'm sure He left that here. I should have written that down.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You should have sent it back.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: But I don't consider him an angelic patron. Lane bargained tremendously with the Weston boys. They made the biggest mistake of their life with Lane.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, you see, this again does not come out in the correspondence.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He's that kind of purchaser.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Ah ha.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: And he has something of mine that I want to get back. I don't dare ask him, because I know if he found it was one print of one time he would never release it. It's a thing that I did that I call "A Fence in Mendocino." He happened to see the first print I made of that, a proof, and just demanded it. I was a ninny. I should have not let him have it. But I did. And since I made a good print and decided how I wanted it, I felt that I should write to him. And what does he do with his stuff? He has a fireproof room built on his house, air conditioned, everything proper, and all of it sealed in there, and nice drawers.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Does he ever look at them, do you think?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He may show them to people. When I was there, he asked Minor to come down and bring a folio. And he showed them. I should write it up, should have written it up at the time, how he and Minor got along. It was very bad. He didn't accept anything of Minor's. The reason he didn't was that Minor had a folio he wanted to sell. He let him off in a way, without buying it. He could have bought it. I don't know what he's done since about that. But, you know, a lot of people know what he's done since about that. But, you know, a lot of people that I know, who are museum workers, have had the same experience. He won't lend to a show like Margery's. What does that mean? Now, Logan in Chicago must be generous about it and lends. You know Logan?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Rita and David Logan.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Collectors of photography, right?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: They have a foundation. That is what they call it. He's an attorney. He knows that for a foundation he can take it off his income tax.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, tell me a good collector.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I don't know. I can't think of any good collectors.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Obviously you haven't run into any in your career.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Good collectors?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, not what I'd call a good, generous one.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: You know, maybe we expect too much from a man who has millions and wants to build up a collection. Well, right now it's extremely difficult. But even Witkin, who knows, wants everything for his own gallery. He said to me, "Don't sell any more platinums." Now he has been saying "Help, help" in the letters his secretary writes.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Why does he say that?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He didn't. His assistant did. Because someone wrote to her and wanted it. I'll tell you, if anybody ever got even with a guy for being covetous or preferring self-done things. I had the pleasure of saying to Logan, "That print that you bought is not mine." Parasall (?) Press sold it to Logan. Logan telephoned saying he had a self-portrait of mine that he would like to bring to have me sign. I said, "Well, describe it." He did, and I said, "Well, I didn't do that. It was done by a missionary from China in 1910."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is that true?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's true. I made the set-up for him, but I posed and he photographed because he wanted a photograph of me. I did the prints. Then I said to Logan when he phoned, "Well, what did you pay?" He said, "I'd hate to tell you."

PAUL KARLSTROM: High or low? Very high.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: High, of course. More than \$300 for a print this big. Oh, I hope that'll come true someday. But it won't.

LOUISE KATZMAN: That's not the one that was used in the "Women of Photography?"

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. Nobody has that. That is a self-portrait. That's in a mirror.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, since we're talking about Witkin a little bit, I wanted to know how important was Witkin to perhaps even your economic growth?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Witkin has kept me alive without doing portraiture, if I didn't want to, for four years. He's like any dealer, any gallery. He takes forty percent. But believe me, he pays on the dot. He's very generous. And I think he's very honest.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is just the last four years, you said?

LOUISE KATZMAN: He didn't start the gallery until 1969 or 1970.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It was 1970, I think, that he began.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right, that's when he really got started.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, what you're saying then, Imogen, is that it wasn't until just the last four years that you were independent of portraits.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh sure, that's true. Definitely.

LOUISE KATZMAN: There are two questions I'd like to ask you. One is: How did you cope with the problem of supporting yourself prior to that time? And, when you finally began to have an income from your sale of prints and teaching, how did that influence the direction of your career? Less desire to do portraits, for instance?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. When you do portraits professionally it's not a desire, it's for money. But, I have done a lot of portraits without money. And whenever I see anything that I want to do, I do it. But I'm

not forced to do it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like Morris Graves, for instance?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, that's completely voluntary. I've never had a penny from him. Well, you know, the first portrait I did of Morris was also . . . Someone up in Seattle took me to his place and that was so good and so much like him that, when he had this house down in California, I made up my mind that I would like to do it, you know. And a good friend of mine took me there.

LOUISE KATZMAN: In Arcata?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No, it isn't in Arcata. He's in Lolita.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Lolita?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: It's a post box on a road and a gate. Lolita. I couldn't find it on the landscape. He's out in the woods. It's a marvelous place.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you did another portrait just last year, didn't you?

LOUISE KATZMAN: '73?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: '73 was Morris Graves. Two portraits of him that I showed.

LOUISE KATZMAN: But when you finally began to get the income, and you said that Witkin really helped considerably in that you no longer had to do portraits?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I never thought of it. I did what I wanted to do, usually. But I didn't turn anybody down. Mostly my regular lot was pretty steady until I hurt myself or took a little time out.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Are you still doing portrait work on a commission basis?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No. I'm doing what I want to. I'm not going to take any babies for anybody. And I'm not going to take "Mr. and Mrs." I was down at Palo Alto the other night for that New Roses (?) gallery show. Oh, the people asked me if I would. I remember one man asked me. He'd written to me before, and he said, "You wouldn't. Have you changed your mind?" I said, "You mean you and your wife together?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Never."

PAUL KARLSTROM: No way!

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I just looked at him. And he said, "Well, that's all right." You know, people are vain. Now I can remember doing a portrait of a man who came in here. It wasn't a money job -- it was a free-for-nothing job that someone asked me to do. He said, "How long will it take?" Well, I did his portrait at that time. But if anyone came in and said that to me now, I would say, "I'm finished." I wouldn't do anybody who had that attitude. And that was this preacher who ran a church around the corner. The other day, on the sidewalk, I met his granddaughter. Her father is Victor. You know, the Chinese man on Newsweek? Newsroom?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yes, yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I asked her what she was doing and all. She said she was studying at the Art Institute. And she said she was going to spend the whole week photographing her grandfather. I said, "Oh, where does he live now?" She told me, and I said, "I'll tell you my experience with him." I hoped she'd tell him. I just hoped she would, because it's no way to treat a photographer. Like a woman who said to me when she first sat down, "You're photographing the wrong side of my face." I said, "oh, is there one?" And I went on doing it. Then I didn't show her any prints. And when I finished with it and looked at it, I phoned her and said, "You know, I'd like to photograph you out at your house there." So I went out to her house, and I photographed the other side of her face. I arranged the light to be more on the other side. And really, as far as I could see, they were both all right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, it must be difficult. Painters, of course, have had .the same problems throughout history.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, they have it more excessively.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I photographed a man, it must have been thirty years ago, who was a chemist and a darling young man. I came upon a letter from his mother the other day. It's probably in this bunch you're going to get; a lot of unclassified trash. He had one very, very cross-eye. All the time I did him, I figured on how I

could conceal the effect of that cross-eye. So I asked him to come back. He came very willingly, not asking me why. And I did him with the light, not paying any attention to the cross-eye. He ordered from both. He knew he had a cross-eye and he didn't care.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: So, I wouldn't have used an ugly man. But I would refuse a pretty woman immediately. I've no interest in what people call beauty.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I'm sorry I didn't have you do before and after photographs of me, Imogen.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I'm sorry for that. Because you were a very different person. But then, maybe that's just the beautiful charm of youth. Has it been three years?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Two years. Well, no. Two and a half years.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, you've changed even since you've known the Archives. Since September. We're talking about portrait photography, and I wanted to know, how did you get involved in your Hollywood period?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, you'd think I was never known. Somebody wrote and asked me to. And I've forgotten the name of the man who was the editor. You see, Steichen was the editor of the pictures then. I was invited to photograph Hollywood. They asked me what I would like to photograph. I said, 'Ugly men.' Simply. And do you know who was doing the pretty women at that time?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Cecil Beaton, now Sir Cecil. I didn't actually meet him there, but I talked to him once on the phone.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now it comes back. I think you told me one time that they needed somebody to photograph Hollywood types, stars and so forth, and since you were in California -- although it's 400 miles away -- they figured it's all the same. Is this the case?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That was their attitude toward it. I mean, they thought that Hollywood was next door to where I was living.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I hope they paid travel expenses.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't think they did. I went on the train and carried an 8 x 10 camera and a 4 x 5 Graphlex.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What year was that?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: 1931 and '34. I went more than once.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it was a very interesting period.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: The second time I went by car, my eldest son driving me. But the first time I went on a train. The one person I photographed with the 4 x 5 Graphlex (I never got those negatives back) was -- oh, he's a fellow who's short and stubby.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Did you ever make a print of his photograph?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I didn't have the negative.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You didn't?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: But he said to me, when I left his house, "You're the only photographer who hasn't blown a fuse in my house." I thought that was pretty neat. He was given a great honor this year, and came out to Hollywood. He will not fly, so they must have sent him by train. He doesn't like flying.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean at the Academy Awards they gave him a special award?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: When I photographed him he was being a prize fighter in a play. I said, "I think you'd look more like yourself if you'd take off your shirt." And he did. Then I thought of him as just like one of my sons. He was red-headed and had freckles all over him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I wonder who that is?

LOUISE KATZMAN: It wasn't Wallace Beery?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh no. Wallace wasn't like that. I photographed him in the airplane. And, do you know where he met the appointment? I was set up.

LOUISE KATZMAN: As he came off his plane?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: He flew right in front of me. That was at a little bit of a place that doesn't exist now, and it'll never exist again.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, did you have friends, or more than just a professional relationship, with any of the people when you were down south?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I had friends there, but I didn't make any with the Hollywood people.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not with any of your subjects?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Lillian Hellman writes about her life in Hollywood and how she was taken in a very wrong direction by a lot of them. They drank and took pot and everything, I guess. I didn't do that at all because after I finished my work I went to a lab and developed. I still have friends down there. But I never got into the swing of things. I felt I had a hard job and I just better do that and nothing else.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Who would you say is the most important person in terms of your success?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I don't talk about success. I don't know what it is. Wait until I'm dead.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, I just mean in terms of being established.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I think I've always been working around to do something. I don't think of myself as established. Do you know, there are plenty of places where they've never heard of me.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Oh, I know that, Imogen.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: When you're established, why everybody knows about you.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well then, maybe you look at it a little differently. You're an important person in the history of photography.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You're a famous lady.

LOUISE KATZMAN: You know, I think that's fine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But that makes her mad.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I don't know. It's very annoying. It might turn out that way in the end, if I don't do anything too dreadful from now on.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Don't upset the apple cart.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There was one other question that I wanted to ask. Again, I remember talking some time ago with Imogen about Bay Area contemporary photography, especially right after the show at the de Young Museum, which you saw. I remember you had some opinions. I wanted to bring that up again.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I can't remember everything I thought then. But I have a good friend that was in photography. And we went on many, many trips. But she's sort of quit it now.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Alma Lavinson?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Alma Lavinson. Have you that in any letters?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes, yes.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: What did I say about that?

LOUISE KATZMAN: Oh, just excursions that you would take with her.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: We did a lot. Now, I wanted to ask her lately, on account of my lack of memory, if she couldn't tell me what year it was. She has all of her stuff.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Well, I have it written down. So I could certainly check when that was.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Yes. Well, I'll tell you. A lot of my stuff is not marked. It was something that we did in the '30's.

LOUISE KATZMAN: There's only mention to other people about them. I don't think there are any letters to her or from her.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: No, because we met, you see.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. You saw each other. But there is mention of your trips to other people.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: One thing that I think is sort of sad is that she has given up photography now. The other day she was here, and I was talking about making a book for children to have, a book of their family. Start it and keep it going, because it's the best way of keeping the photographs. People don't want everything on the wall all the time.

PK and LOUISE KATZMAN: Right.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: They pick out one thing and it doesn't really represent the whole series. She quit. She gave all of her stuff to the Oakland Museum. I think they just packed it away.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm confused. Does this have something to do with the show at the de Young? Was this person in that show?

LOUISE KATZMAN: No. Alma Lavinson was a photographer, but she was not involved in that.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: She says, "I'm a photographer who only did one photograph that anyone paid any attention to." It's a Navajo couple, and it's very good. I have it. You see, she found herself traveling in that country and she saw this man that she wanted to photograph. She gave him the money (the Indians demanded pay for photographing), but she went back a little further and she did the woman with him, at his side. They didn't know that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Two for the price of one.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well not only that. It made the picture. It's really good, because he was being photographed but the woman was sitting there leaning on the rail.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. I've seen that one.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: That's a very good shot.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, do you feel this is related to the prevalent theme in the de Young?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I don't think I know which show you mean.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was my question. I was asking about the show at the de Young.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, which show at the de Young?

PAUL KARLSTROM and LOUISE KATZMAN: "Bay Area Photography."

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Oh, Bay Area photographers. I don't count them at all. I think they're very indifferent.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's a short answer to what turned out to be a very long question.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I'll tell you. I go to their show every year. There are only one or two people who do anything. They show an awful lot of stuff and it's nothing.

LOUISE KATZMAN: I agree. I guess the only other question I have is, do you have any plans for certain endeavors? You said you had one thing.

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, I have a job. That is, a commitment, not a job. I think I shouldn't announce it,

because it may never get carried on to fruition. But I don't plan on what I'm going to do. I let things happen. I don't think everything's just to go silent because I get rid of my past. But I wanted to ask you people too, since you're interested in archives, what have you heard about the University of Arizona?

LOUISE KATZMAN: The new one at Tucson?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, it isn't new, but the archives business of the University.

LOUISE KATZMAN: The University, or the new photography center that's opening up?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: Well, that's under the auspices of the University.

LOUISE KATZMAN: Right. Is that what you want to know about?

IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM: I want to know to what extent people are handing their stuff over to them.

END OF INTERVIEW

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