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Oral history interview with Alice Kagawa
Parrott, 2005 July 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Alice Kagawa Parrott on July 10, 2005. The interview took place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and was conducted by Paul J. Smith for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Alice Kagawa Parrott and Paul J. Smith have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL SMITH: Alice, it's good to be here with you, to do this interview. We're going to begin by talking about your formative years. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

ALICE KAGAWA PARROTT: I was born on February 12, 1929, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

MR. SMITH: And could you tell me a little bit about your parents and your upbringing?

MS. PARROTT: My parents immigrated to Hawaii from Japan-Hiroshima, Japan-in the early 1920s, and my father worked on a plantation-pineapple. Most of the immigrants came to work in pineapple plantations or sugar plantations. But he was bored with that job, so he found a job at the Oahu Railway [and Land] Company, and as a carpenter. He was a carpenter by trade, so he worked there for the remainder of his work time.

MR. SMITH: And what about your mother, Isono?

MS. PARROTT: My mother was a housewife for a while, but then during the war, she worked at the Libby's Pineapple Factory. She was a packer at the pineapple factory.

MR. SMITH: I understand that you're the youngest of a very large family of 10 children. Is that correct?

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Not all of us survived. We were six, and I was the youngest of the six.

MR. SMITH: So four of them died early?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, early, mostly infant.

MR. SMITH: But even with six children, that is a large family. What was it like being the youngest child?

MS. PARROTT: Well, I liked it. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: You were taken care of?

MS. PARROTT: Uh-huh, yes, uh-huh. And I enjoyed all my brothers and sisters, too.

MR. SMITH: As I recall, your father built your family home?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he did. We lived in Kalihi-kai. It was on the way to Pearl Harbor, actually on the boulevard that went from Honolulu to Pearl Harbor.

MR. SMITH: Was this a big house?

MS. PARROTT: Two-story house, yes.

MR. SMITH: So he built it in sections, or all at one time?

MS. PARROTT: I can't remember. I think he did it all at once, yes.

MR. SMITH: So you then went to school in your area.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, very close. The English school was about two blocks away, and the Japanese school in the afternoon was just across the street from my house.

MR. SMITH: So you went to both schools?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, both English and Japanese school, until the war, and then we stopped the Japanese school.

MR. SMITH: Was the elementary school Kalihi-kai?

MS. PARROTT: Kalihi-kai? Yes.

MR. SMITH: And then, after elementary school, where did you go to high school?

MS. PARROTT: I was supposed to go to the public school very close to my home, but my parents decided that they wanted me to go to a better school, I guess, so they sent me a denominational school, Hawaii Mission Academy it was called.

MR. SMITH: I believe that was a Seventh-Day Adventists school?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, uh-huh.

MR. SMITH: As it was a religious school, did they teach you religion?

MS. PARROTT: A little bit, yes. We had Bible classes, yes. And then after English school in the afternoon, I went to a Buddhist Japanese language school-

MR. SMITH: Well, you covered every territory.

MS. PARROTT: Japanese school, yes-[laughs]-because my parents were Buddhist, and I used to go to Buddhist temple on Sundays. So-

MR. SMITH: And did you learn other things besides Buddhism there, I mean, like language? Where did you learn Japanese language?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, uh-huh, yes.

MR. SMITH: At the Buddhist school?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, but before that in elementary Japanese school right by my home.

MR. SMITH: Was that because there were many other Japanese?

MS. PARROTT: Oh yes, at that time, the Japanese were more predominant in Hawaii.

MR. SMITH: Do you have any memories of being at the Hawaiian Missionary Academy? Was it very strict?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, very strict. [Laughs.] No makeup and no movies or, you know, things like that.

MR. SMITH: Did you abide by that?

MS. PARROTT: No. [Laughs.] My girlfriend and I, we snuck and went to the movie in the afternoon. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: Well, that was a sign of your independence, Alice. So you never got caught?

MS. PARROTT: No, I don't think so, no. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: So you graduated from high school, I think, in 1948? Was that correct?

MS. PARROTT: Forty-seven. I believe it was '47.

MR. SMITH: And then you went on to further education. And so where did you go next?

MS. PARROTT: Well, I was going to go to the university, but I went to the business college for one year and it was very boring, so I decided, you know, to apply to the University of Hawaii, and I enrolled at first in the home economics department. But then, that was boring, too, and luckily there was one class in art that was required from the home economics department, so I took that class and my teacher, J. Haley Cox, encouraged me to switch to an art major instead of home economics. So I did that.

MR. SMITH: He was a big influence.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, a very big influence.

MR. SMITH: Prior to going to the art school program, had you had any experience or interest in art when you were young, like in elementary school or high school?

MS. PARROTT: No, not really.

MR. SMITH: So this just sort of surfaced in the home economics department?

MS. PARROTT: I took one class in art, yes, and then I became interested.

MR. SMITH: Was that painting?

MS. PARROTT: No, just general. I mean, I think it was mixed. You know, a little bit of painting, a little bit of drawing, and things like that.

MR. SMITH: So you must have shown some exceptional talent if he was encouraging you to go to art school.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] And I liked textile and studied with Hester Robinson. I could have gone into fine arts or into applied design, and so I took textile weaving and ceramics from Claude Horan.

MR. SMITH: Well, both of those were very, very important and well-known teachers.

MS. PARROTT: Oh yes, very wonderful teachers.

MR. SMITH: So you studied both ceramics and textiles.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, majored in weaving and minored in ceramics.

MR. SMITH: As you majored in weaving under Hester Robinson, could you tell me a little bit about Ms. Robinson as a teacher and what she taught and what you were doing as a student?

MS. PARROTT: Well, basically, the beginning was the different techniques of weaves and not too much at the time, just more or less flat weaving, you know, like materials, fabrics, drapery, and upholstery type.

MR. SMITH: So it was yardage. It was not wall hangings.

MS. PARROTT: Yardage, yeah. No, no, I did not really know anything about those things. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: Did you do any other textile disciplines, like printing on fabric?

MS. PARROTT: A little bit of, yes, a little bit of textile printing, yes, that's right, yes, a little.

MR. SMITH: And I expect Hester Robinson was a very good teacher?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, very good, both of them. I liked them very much.

MR. SMITH: And then you studied with Claude Horan in ceramics; he was also a great person.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, wonderful. Lots of fun. [Laughs.] There were three of us-the three gals were very close, and he encouraged us to go to advanced school. So we applied to Rhode Island School of Design and to Cranbrook and, I forgot, another school-but anyway, Cranbrook told us to come. You know, they accepted us, so three of us went to Cranbrook.

MR. SMITH: Now, who were the other students?

MS. PARROTT: Their names were Ernestine Murai and Anna Kang [now Anna Kang Burgess].

MR. SMITH: So you really enjoyed working in both textiles and ceramics at the university. You liked your teachers very much, and I gather you must have been an exceptional student.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: You told me that you were doing mainly flat weaving, but what were you doing in ceramics? Was it wheel throwing, or hand building?

MS. PARROTT: First, hand building, and then we did wheel throwing, yes. And we did mostly functional pieces at the time.

MR. SMITH: So as you were working in both, did you have a preference at that time? I mean, did you like textiles

more than ceramics?

MS. PARROTT: I think so, yeah.

MR. SMITH: Because I've always known you as a fiber artist. I've never known you as a potter.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] Yeah.

MR. SMITH: Okay, so it sounds to me like your time at the University of Hawaii was a very good experience?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, oh yes, wonderful.

MR. SMITH: And what did your parents think about your studying art?

MS. PARROTT: Oh-[laughs]-they didn't, you know, they didn't know anything about art, and my mother thought I was just going to school and playing with mud and stuff like that. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: So they were a little discouraged? They wanted you to be a banker or a lawyer?

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs]-or something.

MR. SMITH: I think that often happens, but anyhow, they didn't discourage you and so that was good.

MS. PARROTT: No, no. My father was always very, you know, understanding. My mother was the one [laughs]-

MR. SMITH: Did any of your brothers and sisters go on to art school?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, uh-huh. Two of my older sisters, they were more into business-type of education, but my two brothers became architects. And my sister was a fashion designer in New York.

MR. SMITH: That's interesting considering that your parents didn't have any connection to art-although your father was a carpenter.

MS. PARROTT: My mother told me she did some weaving when she was a child in Japan. Yeah, she told me that, yes.

MR. SMITH: So when you were accepted at Cranbrook, did you have a scholarship?

MS. PARROTT: No, no, we just went, and I worked in the dining room to pay for part of my tuition.

MR. SMITH: That was quite expensive tuition at Cranbrook.

MS. PARROTT: Well, yes, I don't remember it now, but my parents helped me with that tuition.

MR. SMITH: That must have been a big responsibility for your large family to all be sent to college.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, but we were able to work in the summertime every summer in the Libby's Pineapple Factory, so we made enough money for tuition that way.

MR. SMITH: Would you go back to Hawaii in the summertime?

MS. PARROTT: During the university years, I was there every summer, and then I went to Cranbrook until I finished.

MR. SMITH: So you went to Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, I think, in 1952?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, right, '52.

MR. SMITH: That was a big step. Had you ever been out of Hawaii, and was this your first trip to mainland?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, first trip to mainland.

MR. SMITH: Were you afraid?

MS. PARROTT: A little on the plane.

MR. SMITH: Had you ever flown before?

MS. PARROTT: No, no. And I remember the first trip; we went up in the air and then something happened,

maybe, the mechanical problem-so we had to come back.

MR. SMITH: And land.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, we had to land.

MR. SMITH: Well, that wasn't a very good first flight.

MS. PARROTT: No. [Laughs.] And my father was working at the Oahu Railway, so any of his children going to college were able to have a pass from the railway company. And so I took the train from California all the way to Michigan.

MR. SMITH: Oh, so you flew to California and then took the train.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, I took the train. That was good. I went through in the Northwest to Detroit.

MR. SMITH: So you arrived at Cranbrook, a very beautiful place, a wonderful school, and a very prestigious school. So that was a very big challenge, I guess, for you as a student, to come into a whole new environment. Who did you study with at Cranbrook?

MS. PARROTT: I started weaving with Marianne Strengell, and minored in ceramics, and studied with Maija Grotell.

MR. SMITH: So you continued your interest in both textiles and ceramics?

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, I knew both of them. They were very, very important, great teachers. Tell me about working with Marianne Strengell in textiles.

MS. PARROT: Well, she was always quite busy. She had her own, sort of, freelance business. She did a lot of designing and things like that. She had a studio out behind the classroom, so she used to go back and forth and work in the studio a lot. And she had an assistant. Azalea Thorpe was the assistant and she helped us, and there was another man. I forgot his name now, but there were two of them who helped us, and many times, the students-the older students-helped us. The younger students would work on the warps and things like that.

MR. SMITH: Do you remember some of the other students at the time?

MS. PARROTT: Well, my two friends from Hawaii.

MR. SMITH: That was Anna Kang?

MS. PARROTT: Anna Kang and Ernestine Murai and, oh, I can't remember.

MR. SMITH: Was Toshiko there?

MS. PARROTT: That's right. She went a year ahead and stayed while the rest of us did two years; she was there at least three years, whereas Ernestine and Anna graduated in one year's time.

MR. SMITH: So it sounds to me like Marianne was more involved with her own design business than she was with the students?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes, uh-huh. Yes, she was. She had lots of orders and commissions. And she designed fabrics for different companies, I think, especially upholstery-type fabrics. I did baby-sitting for her. She had two children, a boy and a girl, so when she went away, I used to go and stay with them.

MR. SMITH: As she was mainly involved in designing fabrics for companies in production, was that all that she taught you, or were you able to do expressive work, like wall hangings?

MS. PARROTT: No, no, I never knew anything about wall hangings at the time. Mostly we did samples, samples of, like, upholstery materials and drapery materials and maybe some screens. I liked the native materials from Hawaii, so I just incorporated those things in the screens that I did.

MR. SMITH: Did she talk about how to design for industry and make prototypes for production? Or did she just encourage you to develop designs?

MS. PARROTT: I think we were left more or less on our own, and we learned a lot from the other students, I think.

MR. SMITH: Was she strict? Did she criticize your work?

MS. PARROTT: Not too much, no. I think actually we really got a lot from the students, but it was good to have them there, Marianne and also Maija Grotell. Maija Grotell was always in the studio. She was always willing to talk to us and things like that, yes.

MR. SMITH: So you were there for two years. In the textile class, did you eventually begin to do some of your own individual work? Did you ever do any wall hangings?

MS. PARROTT: Not at Cranbrook, no. I didn't know anything about those things.

MR. SMITH: Was it all flat weaving?

MS. PARROTT: As I remember, yes. Yeah, I began to weave hangings after I came to Santa Fe, also learning about natural dye and things like that.

MR. SMITH: So it sounds like you had some very good training under Marianne Strengell. She was very, very experienced and obviously was there as a professional to help you.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, and we learned about different yarns-types of yarns and textures of yarns and colors and stuff like that, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, and the fact that she was a practicing designer for industry was important. So I'm sure you benefited from that-

MS. PARROTT: And she made rugs too, you know, and so we did learn to weave some rugs.

MR. SMITH: Flat weave?

MS. PARROTT: Flat weave, and flossa.

MR. SMITH: Rya knot?

MS. PARROTT: Rya, yes.

MR. SMITH: As you also studied with Maija Grotell in ceramics. Tell me about the ceramics program.

MS. PARROTT: It was my minor, so we had individual wheels, and mainly we threw different types of bowls and bottle shapes and different things like that.

MR. SMITH: Wheel-thrown or hand-built?

MS. PARROTT: Mostly wheel-thrown.

MR. SMITH: Maija was a very good teacher. So you learned a lot from her?

MS. PARROTT: I think so, yes.

MR. SMITH: But she had a very different personality from Marianne?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, yes, yes, very, very different. I was a little afraid of her. [Laughs.] But actually, she was very, very nice. You know, always there to help you if you needed any help. She was right there to help.

MR. SMITH: So, unlike Marianne, she was in the classroom all the time?

MS. PARROTT: Most of the time in the room, yes; whereas Marianne was more a businesswoman type of teacher, yes, rushing back and forth, you know, in the classroom.

MR. SMITH: During your two years there, Cranbrook being a very small school and a beautiful campus, did you have connections with some of the other departments, for example, the painting department?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes, right, well, we knew everybody, yes. And we used to go to the different departments, and I didn't do any painting there, but like some of the sculptors, I did sit in; they used me for models for some of their work and stuff like that.

MR. SMITH: In the painting and sculpture classes?

MS. PARROTT: Both, I think. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: And did you go to school in the summer, as well?

MS. PARROTT: No, let's see what did I do? After the first year of the school, I went to teach. Toshiko Takaezu and I went to Ludington, Michigan. A woman in Ludington had a school there. And she invited us to come for the summer and live in her home and teach. Toshiko taught ceramics and I taught weaving in Ludington.

MR. SMITH: Well, that was good experience.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, exactly.

MR. SMITH: Did you travel anywhere else in the United States while you were at Cranbrook?

MS. PARROTT: While we were there, some of the students, for Christmas vacation, drove part of the time into Canada and then onto New York City.

MR. SMITH: That was your first visit to New York?

MS. PARROTT: Yeah. First visit to see a little bit of Canada, too, yes. And I had a brother living in New York, so it was nice. And while I was there, I met Jack Lenor Larsen, who had a studio there. I guess they were busy, because they asked me to come help him, so I went and helped him wind the warps with Win Anderson.

MR. SMITH: That was a wonderful experience.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, very good, yes. I was happy to do that.

MR. SMITH: As Jack's design studio is internationally famous, that was a wonderful opportunity. How long were you there?

MS. PARROTT: Well, it was in a short-just for the Christmas holidays. I don't know whether it was a week or just a short while I helped with the warp.

MR. SMITH: But at least you saw a design studio in operation and a very top one. And I assume you've kept in touch with Jack over the years?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he's come to Santa Fe.

MR. SMITH: You had two years at Cranbrook, and you graduated with an M.A., I believe, in 1954. So you had good training in Hawaii, and obviously, Cranbrook, being among the very best schools in the United States, was a wonderful education for you.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, it was. Yes, and also, you know, the instructor from the University of New Mexico [Albuquerque] came to interview some of us in Cranbrook to ask if we would come to teach there, and interviewed Toshiko and myself. Toshiko decided to go to teach in Milwaukee, I think it was, her first year. And so they told me, if I would like to go to New Mexico-I didn't know anything about New Mexico, but I said sure-[laughs]-I'll go to New Mexico to teach.

MR. SMITH: So out of all the candidates, you were selected?

MS. PARROTT: I guess he just asked if I would like to come, so I said all right.

MR. SMITH: Well, that was very easy-

MS. PARROTT: At that time, yeah. It was a really wonderful opportunity to come to New Mexico. I'm glad I did, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, I expect that Cranbrook had such a good reputation that if someone was seeking faculty, they would come to Cranbrook to find a very good teacher.

MS. PARROTT: And also there were not that many colleges or universities that had crafts as a graduate program.

MR. SMITH: Especially in fiber.

MS. PARROTT: Fiber, yes.

MR. SMITH: So you accepted?

MS. PARROTT: Yes. [Laughs.] I said okay. [Laughs.] I didn't know what I was going to do, so I just said, yes, I will.

MR. SMITH: And so you graduated in June, and did you go directly to Albuquerque, or go to Hawaii?

MS. PARROTT: Maybe I went to visit home, I think, and then came back.

MR. SMITH: And then in the fall you started at the university.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes.

MR. SMITH: This was in the art department?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, the art department.

MR. SMITH: And what were you teaching?

MS. PARROTT: Weaving and ceramics.

MR. SMITH: So you taught both?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, both.

MR. SMITH: Except for your summer teaching experience in Michigan, you had not had any teaching experience; so what was that like?

MS. PARROTT: I enjoyed the students and we did a lot. At that time, we didn't have the budget for the semester. It was like \$50 for materials, so we all went out together and found native materials to dye with, and then we looked around for clay in the hills around La Bahada, among other places, for the clay and things like that.

MR. SMITH: How many students did you have in your class?

MS. PARROTT: Roughly about 30, I think, not big.

MR. SMITH: That's a lot of students, I think.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, maybe it was less than 20 or 30, I don't know. But there were some graduate students. Some were like grandmothers, you know, but they were all very nice. I enjoyed it.

MR. SMITH: So you liked teaching?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I did, yeah. I made good friends with my students.

MR. SMITH: And, of course, New Mexico is very different from Detroit, so did you enjoy the new Southwest environment?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I didn't know anything about New Mexico, so when I first came, everything was strange to me and everything looked kind of brownish-[laughs]-and dusty, you know, the dust storms and all; it was terrible. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: You were not used to that. But you liked it?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I liked it, yes.

MR. SMITH: And while you were at the university, did you travel to some of the reservations?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, let's see. We went to the Navajo reservations, yes. And also, in the summer, I traveled to Mexico and studied at the University of Mexico.

MR. SMITH: And what was of special interest to you?

MS. PARROTT: I just wanted to visit Mexico, so I did. And then, at the same time, I thought I will just study at the university, so I was there for about four weeks.

MR. SMITH: And what did you study?

MS. PARROTT: The history of Mexico, just the basic class. And I did traveling around the different cities in Mexico on the weekends. I studied a little weaving with a Mexican instructor who spoke only Spanish. I did tiny, fine yarns, like thread, weaving samples. We wove long, thin strips on treadle looms.

MR. SMITH: Did you meet any interesting people there, other artists?

MS. PARROTT: Well, while I was there, [Rufino] Tamayo, the artist, was doing a mural in the university, so I went and stopped to see him, then working on his mural. It was a wonderful experience.

MR. SMITH: So you met him?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he was very kind. And somewhere I found a book, and so he signed it for me, yes.

MR. SMITH: That was nice.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, very nice. He was a very wonderful, pleasant person.

MR. SMITH: So being at the university and being in another country must have been a new experience for you, as you had never been outside of the United States

MS. PARROTT: And luckily I took Spanish in high school, so I knew a little bit of Spanish, and I took my dictionary and got around, you know. And when you try, people are helpful. [Laughs.] So I was able to travel by myself. Oh, and you know, I went four weeks to the university, and then I went to Pond Farm in Guerneville, California, and did ceramics with Marguerite Wildenhain that same summer.

MR. SMITH: That was a busy summer.

MS. PARROTT: Yes. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: But that was another great experience.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, yes, yes, yes. With Marguerite, yes.

MR. SMITH: Tell me about Pond Farm and working with Marguerite.

MS. PARROTT: Well, it was a beautiful place, out all by itself in the hills in Guerneville. It was sort of isolated from the community in a redwood forest and all that, yes.

MR. SMITH: Yes, I visited her, so I know it was very beautiful.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, yes, beautiful, yeah.

MR. SMITH: And she had a very beautiful studio.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, a very strong person.

MR. SMITH: Yes, so what did you learn with Marguerite?

MS. PARROTT: Mostly throwing and her technique more or less, you know, the way she did things.

MR. SMITH: And were there many other students?

MS. PARROTT: Quite a few, yes. And we learned how to make a good spout, you know, that would pour and very functional techniques.

MR. SMITH: Well, she was very disciplined in her teaching.

MS. PARROTT: Very disciplined, yeah, but very good. She came to visit me in Santa Fe; stayed with me here.

MR. SMITH: How nice.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, she liked it very much. One day we went to visit the Laboratory of Anthropology at the Museum of New Mexico. A major collection of American Indian pottery was stored in the basement at the time. We were able to look at the collection, stacks and stacks of tremendous pottery from all different pueblos. It was overpowering for Marguerite, seeing all this tremendous pottery. She had to come home and rest. The same thing happened to Toshiko Takaezu when she came to visit. What an experience they had!

MR. SMITH: So you kept in touch with her [Marguerite] after being at Pond Farm?

MS. PARROTT: For a while, yes.

MR. SMITH: At Pond Farm would she just let you work, or would she give you a real class every day?

MS. PARROTT: I think she did, yes. But we also learned from the other students, each other. The students are

always very helpful, and we stayed in cottages there.

MR. SMITH: And what about meals?

MS. PARROTT: I don't remember too much, but I am sure we ate there, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, you had some very good experiences early in your career. So you taught two years at the university?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I did, yes. I went back a second year and taught two years.

MR. SMITH: As you left the university after two years, what happened?

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] I got married. Yes, one Saturday, I took my students to visit the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe [Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, NM, and met Allen. So my students were the matchmakers. [Laughs.] They invited him to dinner, you know, and so we got to know each other there that way.

MR. SMITH: And what did Allen do at the museum?

MS. PARROTT: He was a curator. Assistant curator at the time, yes. And so, he was there to show us their collection of Japanese art, ceramics mainly.

MR. SMITH: So soon after, you saw him again?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, you see my students invited him to dinner very soon after that. So-[laughs]-and then we started to see each other-he used to come to visit me, and I used to come to Santa Fe. And we had a friend here in town, so I could stay with her over the weekend and stuff like that, yes.

MR. SMITH: Wow, your students, I think, were very responsible. They were taking care of you.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, they did. It was a couple, you see, and they're the ones mainly, and they came to the wedding. And I kept in touch with the fellow, Roger Armstrong; he was one of the students. But I lost track of his wife, but, you know, he and I were still friends for a long time afterwards, too.

MR. SMITH: So after two years at the university and having met Allen, then you decided to get married.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, we got married the day after school ended and lived-

MR. SMITH: You moved to Santa Fe.

MS. PARROTT: Moved to Santa Fe.

MR. SMITH: And that was in 1957, I think, or '56.

MS. PARROTT: I think it was '56. Yeah, '56. I guess it was, yes.

MR. SMITH: Yeah, so 1956. So that was yet another big step-well, at least you were in the same state.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes, and better Santa Fe than Albuquerque.

MR. SMITH: When you moved to Santa Fe, where did you live?

MS. PARROTT: Well, Allen had found this house, so about three months before we were married, we found this house on Canyon Road, and so we decided to buy the house.

MR. SMITH: And that's the home and studio you now occupy here on Canyon Road. I recall that it was a traditional adobe house?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, it was a four-room adobe house at that time. It was one house, but the land went way back about 300 feet. It was only, like, 75 feet wide, but we had a right to the water for the irrigation.

MR. SMITH: So that was a very good arrangement to have on a good piece of property on Canyon Road, for a home and studio.

MS. PARROTT: And water and everything, yes. And right on Canyon Road. At that time, there was maybe one or two shops on Canyon Road; the rest were all homes. But every time a home sold, it became a gallery or a studio or something like that. And now, it's just about all galleries.

MR. SMITH: So upon moving here to Santa Fe, having left teaching, what did you do?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, I had a shop in our living room. [Laughs.] And worked in the dining room and kitchen and things like that, yes.

MR. SMITH: So the house became a store and a workshop and a place to live.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] All that in a four-room house.

MR. SMITH: And what were you making at that time? Were you making products to sell?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, we started making things, yes. Wearable things.

MR. SMITH: Clothing?

MS. PARROTT: Clothing, yes. And soon afterwards, the Santa Fe Opera opened, and they asked me if I would make them ponchos, a garment for the ushers, because it is cold in Santa Fe, cool at night, so they needed some garments. So we called them the Santa Fe Opera ponchos.

MR. SMITH: That was a very nice commission, and very good publicity for you; to have all of your beautiful garments at every opera would be great advertising.

MS. PARROTT: Something warm, yeah-that's right, yeah. We made them of wool at the time.

MR. SMITH: In the shop, did you sell only your work, or did you sell other things?

MS. PARROTT: At first, mostly our weaving. We were able to buy two old fly-shuttle looms, so we were able to do production work. So we wove yardages for upholsteries and draperies and also gift items for the shop. So we did both types of work.

MR. SMITH: Did you sell the work of any other craftspeople?

MS. PARROTT: Not at that time; only our things. And then we used to go to Mexico and Guatemala and bought fabrics and things from them, cotton mainly.

MR. SMITH: New Mexico has such a rich Native American culture. Was that an influence for you?

MS. PARROTT: Yes. I didn't know anything about those things when I came. But I had met this wonderful woman. She taught me how to card and spin. We never did that at Cranbrook, you see. And I didn't know anything about that, so I was very fascinated at the hand-spun yarn and dyed yarn. It was, you know, so much more beautiful, the Navajo spinning and dyeing.

MR. SMITH: How did you learn about it?

MS. PARRIOT: Through Mable Morrow, who worked with the Indians, different tribes of Indians in America.

MR. SMITH: And so she shared techniques?

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: So then you began to spin your own yarns?

MS. PARRROTT: And dye.

MR. SMITH: And did you use local materials and dyes?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, we used to get the wool from Las Vegas, New Mexico. They had a lot of sheep there. There was a sheep wool warehouse there, so we bought a roll of wool and washed them and spun them. I found some spinning wheels in, I think it was, Missouri or some place in Iowa when we went to visit Allen's mother.

MR. SMITH: So Allen was from Iowa?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, Burlington, Iowa.

MR. SMITH: What about the dyeing? What kind of natural colors did you achieve?

MS. PARROTT: Well, this root called cañ aigra and at the University of New Mexico, my student who was my friend, Mrs. Runyan, who also was a grandmother, she taught me about cañ aigra, so we went and dug the roots

in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains, and dyed with that.

MR. SMITH: What color did that give?

MS. PARROTT: Sort of a soft reddish, like an earthy red, almost like madder type of red, not a bright red. Cañ aigra, and what else did we use? Not too many native things-some clay we used, because there were interesting clays.

MR. SMITH: That would produce, obviously, a brown.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, sort of a beige-ish and brown.

MR. SMITH: Now, were these dyes that Native Americans were using?

MS. PARROTT: I don't know how much they were using native dyes. I'm not sure about what they were using. I wasn't too familiar with Native American things at the time. They have this festival in Gallup I went to, and then I found out more about the Navajo weaving and things like the ceremony there.

MR. SMITH: But you saw some of the finished products in the museum, of course, and around the stores?

[Audio break.]

MS. PARROTT: Saddle blankets and things like that, yes.

MR. SMITH: You liked the look, the feel of the hand-spun yarn. Was that the most important aspect?

MS. PARROTT: More than the commercial-you know, at Cranbrook we just did the commercial yarns and things like that, so it was nice to see that Native American hand-spun things were so much more beautiful, I thought.

MR. SMITH: But also time-consuming. It took a lot more work to create the yarns before you did the weaving, but the end product, of course, was also very beautiful. I remember in your shop some of the wonderful bright colors, pinks and turquoises and blues, and rich, wonderful color combinations.

MS. PARROTT: I think those are influenced from Hawaii, you know, the colors and flowers and the sky and the ocean, I think, in Hawaii, and also in Mexico, the beautiful flowers and those things inspired me.

MR. SMITH: So your work is a combination of your roots in Hawaii, your Japanese heritage, your Cranbrook experience, your moving to New Mexico, and being inspired by Native Americans, and then going to Mexico. So you have a lot of resources.

MS. PARROTT: And Guatemala, yes.

MR. SMITH: So all of this you were applying to the production of your work for your shop.

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Eventually Allen left the museum?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, soon after, and that I had so much work, too, so he was helping me. He didn't know how to weave at the time, but he wanted to learn, so I taught him how to weave, and he helped in that too. And he took care of the production, you know, of the weavings for the shop and things like that. He helped me with everything. He was a great support, a great influence. He encouraged me. He was a great father to the boys and a wonderful husband.

MR. SMITH: So did you have other helpers as well?

MS. PARROTT: Well, there was Chimayo, the weaving that Mexican weavers taught the Spanish people, and they had a weaving industry in New Mexico.

MR. SMITH: In Chimayo.

MS. PARROTT: Chimayo, yes, right, right. And so this weaver worked for us in Santa Fe doing the Chimayo type of weaving. That's what he was used to weaving and he knew about it. And there was a woman in town. She did production weaving on fly-shuttle looms, and when she quit-closed her business, she sold two looms to me, fly-shuttle looms. And this weaver was weaving for her; two of them, in fact, came to weave for me, and they did the production weaving. That way we were able to weave for the shop, make yardages for garments and upholsteries and things like that.

MR. SMITH: So some customers would buy the yardage and then make something out of it, and there were products like the wearables; I remember eyeglass cases and many different products-

MS. PARROTT: Different things, yeah.

MR. SMITH: You had your store at Canyon Road for a while first, but then as I recall, you opened a place down on Palace Avenue next to the Shed [The Shed Restaurant, Santa Fe, NM]. That was a great opportunity to have a whole new audience, because in the early days, Canyon Road was not as popular as it is today, so did that expand your business a lot?

MS. PARROTT: A little bit, yes, a little bit more, yeah. We actually had part of a room of a lady who had a business on Palace Avenue; Eleanor Bedell was her name.

MR. SMITH: That was her store?

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, the store in the rear of this space where the Shed restaurant is now-it was one room, and we had about three-quarters of the room and the patio in the front. And it was nice. We put up awnings like the outdoor markets in Mexico and had pottery and things outside, and then weavings inside the room.

MR. SMITH: So, Eleanor Bedell had a craft shop-

MS. PARROTT: Well, she called it "Trash and Treasures," with some antiques and some new things, but also Spanish colonial furniture and things like that.

MR. SMITH: So to begin, you had a small space in her shop.

MS. PARROTT: We had a space and then out in the patio outdoor, we had like a Mexican market.

MR. SMITH: But eventually, you took over the whole store.

MS. PARROTT: We moved to the front, right on the street on Palace Avenue, with a shop there, and then we moved back to Canyon Road afterward.

MR. SMITH: This is Paul Smith interviewing Alice Parrot. We're beginning now on disc two.

Alice, I want to recap a few other subjects about your early years and experiences that you had that we have not covered so far. I want to go back to when you were quite young during World War II. You were in Honolulu during the war, and I was wondering if, being of Japanese descent, were you and your family affected in any way by the war?

MS. PARROTT: Not really, because my father was a carpenter at the Oahu Railway and Land Company, one of the big five companies, and so they didn't take him back to the internment camp. The other members of the community who were like principals of schools or business owners and people like that who went to Japan frequently, they were taken to internment camps.

MR. SMITH: At the time of the atomic bomb attack in Hiroshima was any member of your family affected?

MS. PARROTT: My auntie and her family, yes. She died in the atomic bomb and her daughter survived, but she became mentally ill, you know. Anyway, she was sent to a mental home or something.

MR. SMITH: Affected from the bomb attack? Well, that was very tragic, of course. I recall you saying something about your mother working to send money and some care packages-

MS. PARROTT: Yes, she did. Yes, she used to send them care packages to Japan.

MR. SMITH: Another important event in your life that we have not talked about was in 1959, when you applied for a grant from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. And as I understand, you received one?

MS. PARROTT: Yes. It was Allen's idea, actually. He encouraged me to apply and he helped me write the letter, and so I was accepted and so I went to-I actually wanted to go to Mexico and Guatemala and learn about their weaving and dyeing techniques.

MR. SMITH: And so, when you got the grant, you then decided to make a trip?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, we drove down. Allen and I went together and we went to all the different villages and observed their weaving and, unfortunately, I couldn't speak Spanish, so it was difficult to ask them technical questions, so we just had to see and look.

MR. SMITH: But being a weaver, you could certainly observe and see what was happening. So you learned a lot from that trip?

MS. PARROTT: I think so, yeah. It was a very good experience, yes. Especially the dyeing.

MR. SMITH: So you went to several weaving villages in Mexico, like around Oaxaca, for example?

MS. PARROTT: Oaxaca [Mexico], but also, Quetzaltenango [in Guatemala]. They have the Momostenango weaving area [also] in Guatemala. And also Guatemala City, Antigua, and those places.

MR. SMITH: As that continued your interest in Central American textiles, did that have an effect upon some of your own work when you returned from your trip?

MS. PARROTT: I guess so, yes. And while I was mostly interested in the indigo dyeing and things like that in the madder and cochineal dyeing.

MR. SMITH: Was it the dyeing that you were especially interested in observing?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes.

MR. SMITH: In 1971 and '72. I understand you were invited to be an artist-in-residence in Maui. Could you talk about that a little bit?

MS. PARROTT: Well, I had a studio in one of the elementary schools in Puunene, Maui, and conducted workshops, mainly for the teachers, the elementary high school teachers of the County of Maui, which was the islands of Maui, Moloka'i, and Lana'i. And so, I went to the different schools and gave workshops to the teachers so they could teach their students how to weave, just simple weaving, but they didn't have looms or anything like that.

MR. SMITH: How long were you there?

MS. PARROTT: Nine months.

MR. SMITH: That was a long time.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, well, I got to come home for Christmas vacation, and went back until end of May.

MR. SMITH: So Allen stayed here and carried on the business

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he stayed at home and carried on the business. The boys went with me to Maui for four months, and when we came back to New Mexico, Ben stayed at home. I guess he said that Allen would be lonesome, so he stayed back. And Tim and I went back to Maui until the end of May.

MR. SMITH: And Tim and Benji are your two adopted children.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, they're both adopted.

MR. SMITH: And Benji was a Navajo?

MS. PARROTT: Half Navajo and half Spanish.

MR. SMITH: And Timmy?

MS. PARROTT: All Navajo.

MR. SMITH: So that nine months in Maui was quite a long time.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, long time.

MR. SMITH: So during that period of time, you were able to set up studios and equipment and teach teachers, and did you also teach some students or give workshops?

MS. PARROTT: That's what I did. Teach them how to weave, yes.

MR. SMITH: It's great that you have continued to keep contact with your native roots and return to Hawaii so many times for different occasions. It's my understanding that at the time you were there with the State Foundation of Culture, that you also got involved with some important commissions. I believe it was 1972 that you did a very large work for the Maui Community College [now part of the University of Hawaii, Kahului, HI] library?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, yes. Yes.

MR. SMITH: What was the subject of that, or was there any special theme?

MS. PARROTT: The inspiration was from the old Hawaiian capes. They were made of feathers mainly, but I made them with yarns.

MR. SMITH: And did I understand that your brother was the architect-

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I have two brothers and they're both architects.

MR. SMITH: And he designed the building?

MS. PARROTT: One of them, yes. My brother Shoso designed the building of the Maui Community College.

MR. SMITH: And at the same time, you did another big commission for the Maui County Building Council Chamber.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, what was the theme of that?

MR. SMITH: I believe you did the county seal?

MS. PARROTT: Oh yes, that's right, the Maui County Seal. Right, right, yeah. It was for the senate chamber or something like that.

MR. SMITH: Was it a very big tapestry?

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] I had to do it in two pieces.

MR. SMITH: And did you weave that here in Santa Fe?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, and took it back and installed it there, yes.

MR. SMITH: And in 1973, you had an exhibit at the Contemporary Art Center. Was that in Honolulu?

MS. PARROTT: Honolulu, yes, a one-woman show.

MR. SMITH: That was a nice honor. Was that all wall hangings?

MS. PARROTT: Mainly, yes. I don't know if I had any rugs in that, no. Mainly wall pieces, I think.

MR. SMITH: For your stores, both here in your Canyon Road store and the Palace one, you were creating products like clothing and small items, as well as yardage. But then, you were also very interested in doing more personal works. Did you make wall hangings for individuals? For example, if someone came and requested you or commissioned you to make something for their home?

MS. PARROTT: Some, yes.

MR. SMITH: In looking at your resume, you have an extremely impressive record of exhibiting, going back as early as the late '50s and up until, I would say, 10 years ago. I notice that you were in one of the early Young Americans show, conducted by the American Craftsmen's Council [now the American Craft Council]. That was for artisans under 30 years of age. Was that important for you at that time to get national recognition?

MS. PARROTT: I guess this was the beginning, yes; that was very important, yes.

MR. SMITH: Suddenly everybody in the United States knew Alice Parrott.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: And you were a new talent. You have also shown in some really important exhibitions abroad. On your resume in '62-63, there was an exhibition called Modern American Wall Hangings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and I think they acquired a work for their collection?

MS. PARROTT: I think so, yeah.

MR. SMITH: And also there was the Kunstindustrimuseum in Norway, I think; it was Trondheim, Norway.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, yes, the director of the museum came to Santa Fe and came to our shop and purchased the

piece.

MR. SMITH: This was a wall hanging?

MS. PARROTT: I'm sure it was a wall hanging, yes. I don't remember what it was.

MR. SMITH: And then you also had an exhibition with your schoolmate Anna Kang, now Anna Kang Burgess, at the Governor's Gallery here in Santa Fe.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, that was also invitational exhibition-with Anna, yes.

MR. SMITH: But it was a nice honor for you to have this locally.

MS. PARROTT: I think it was the only local show, I think.

MR. SMITH: Well, there should be more. In the '80s, you also had several other shows in various places, and there was the "Centennial Exhibition" at the Contemporary Art Center in Honolulu. Did you go to the opening of that?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I did, yes. I think it was a one-person exhibit. Yes, uh-huh.

MR. SMITH: And then in 1986, you were represented in "Legends in Fiber" at the Octagon Center for the Arts in Ames, Iowa. According to the catalogue, it featured 14 distinguished people, like Anni Albers and Sheila Hicks, Glen Kaufman, Ed Rossbach, Lenore Tawney, and Alice Parrott. That was a very nice tribute.

MS. PARROTT: And I got to go to Iowa. It was wonderful, because Allen is from Burlington, Iowa.

MR. SMITH: So you went back there.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, visited his relatives, his family, yes.

[Phone rings, audio break.]

This is a new disc with Paul Smith interviewing Alice Kagawa Parrott in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Sunday morning, July 10, 2005.

Alice, I want to continue our conversation about exhibiting. It is wonderful that you continue to get recognition in Hawaii honoring your heritage and your importance as a internationally known weaver. And even in the '90s, you had some important exhibitions.

There was one in 1994 at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center, "To Soar to New Heights, Three Generations." And in 1996, you were featured in a Japanese Master Artists of Hawaii exhibition at the Japanese Cultural Center. Did you go to these openings?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, to both of them.

MR. SMITH: Do you recall anything about them? Was it nice to be back in Hawaii and have recognition?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, it's always good to be back in Hawaii. Yes, wonderful, and I saw my old friends and stayed with my friend. She was my apprentice on Maui, yes.

MR. SMITH: And they all came to the opening, I would expect? So it was the celebration of sorts.

MS. PARROTT: Yes. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: Alice, outside of Hawaii and traveling in the United States, were there any important and exciting trips that you made?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, I went to India. Before I went there, Kinnari Lakhia, she is a weaver who lives in Ahmedabad, India. And she came to visit me through the recommendation from Paul Smith of the Museum-

MR. SMITH: You mean me.

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] Yes, and so she asked if she could come to study in the U.S. I said, gosh, I don't know if I could teach you anything. You know so much in India. But you are welcome to come if you like. And she wanted to know about dyeing, so I say, I could teach you a little bit about dyeing, but I don't know if I can teach you anything new about weaving. But anyway, she came and stayed with us and learned about dyeing. But unfortunately at that time, I was supposed to go to Hawaii as an artist-in-residence. She was there and she

stayed at my home, and my husband, Allen, was there, too.

MR. SMITH: So it was a short internship?

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Getting to know Kinnari was important, because then she invited you to India?

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, she said, if I'd like to come-so I did, because she invited me. So I did go to India.

MR. SMITH: And where in India did you go?

MS. PARROTT: Ahmedabad. That was her home. And from there she took me to a wonderful place called Kutch, in India, where we went to visit the textile weavers in the village. The weavers were of the untouchable caste.

MR. SMITH: I have made the same trip. It's very exciting. So you went to see the dyers and the printers.

MS. PARROTT: Dyers in one village and then the weavers and the printers, yes, all three different villages.

MR. SMITH: Well, I expect that was very exciting for you.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I loved it. [Laughs.]

MR. SMITH: Did you learn a lot from observing all of that? Very different from Mexico.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah. I am very interested in that.

MR. SMITH: India has such a rich textile tradition, with so many varieties and techniques, that it's certainly very impressive to see.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, oh, wonderful.

MR. SMITH: So did it affect your work when you came back?

MS. PARROTT: It must have. Yes, I'm sure it has.

MR. SMITH: You've had many distinguished honors, I mean in terms of being in exhibitions, both one-person shows, as well as group shows here and abroad. Have you received any important awards? As I recall, in '77, you became an American Craft Council Fellow?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, yes, a fellow, yes, right. That was a very prestigious award, yes.

MR. SMITH: And did you go to the ceremony?

MS. PARROTT: I'm not sure. Yes, I did go. Aileen Webb [Aileen Osborne Webb, founder of the American Craftsmen's Educational Council, now the American Craft Council] made the award to several of us.

MR. SMITH: Over the years, you have had a great association with many colleagues in the field, with artists like Bob and Sue Turner, Sam Maloof, and Kay Sekimachi and Bob Stocksdale.

MS. PARROTT: Noguchi.

MR. SMITH: And did Isamu Noguchi visit here often?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he did, several times, because he had a sister living in Santa Fe, so he came to visit her on his way from New York to Japan. He stopped in Santa Fe. He liked to stop here to relax, because his trips are always very hectic, many people wanting to see him and everything. So he came and just relaxed at Santa Fe.

MR. SMITH: So he'd come to visit his sister, and then just enjoy the private time with you?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, because his sister didn't like to cook. She didn't cook, so they came and had dinner or lunch with me, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, you've always been a great host and a great cook.

MS. PARROTT: And George Nakashima also came, too, and once he came with his daughter.

MR. SMITH: Bob and Sue Turner, I believe, have a house near here?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, they do. They're neighbors of mine. They're here this summer also.

MR. SMITH: And you told me once that Joan Mondale, when her husband was vice president, came to visit you?

MS. PARROTT: Right, she came one year with her assistant.

MR. SMITH: And what about Mrs. Webb? Did she ever come here?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, she did, too, yes; Mrs. Webb came, yes. And I think she came when Allen was at the museum. She came and did the New Mexico state jury-

MR. SMITH: Craft competition?

MS. PARROTT: Craft competition, yes.

MR. SMITH: I also know that you have made clothing for a lot of your artist friends, because I have seen Alice Parrott garments on Sam Maloof and others-

MS. PARROTT: Yes, and George Nakashima, and maybe even Noguchi. I think I did something for him, a woolen Japanese jacket called a *hanten*. And Bob Turner, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, it's nice that you made wearables for men, not just for the women.

MS. PARROTT: Oh yes, I enjoyed that. Yes, uh-huh.

MR. SMITH: Sam and Alfreda Maloof, I know, have been here many times, and Sam was often wearing one of your shirts.

MS. PARROTT: We made it with wool-[inaudible]-and also in cotton silk.

MR. SMITH: Alice, to sum up some of the topics we've covered, when you look back at your rich career and wonderful life, what have been some of your most important influences?

MS. PARROTT: Well, I think that the Navajo weaving, especially, and the spinning of the yarns, and also the Spanish, the native Spanish, weaving, these two especially, the Native American and the Spanish colonial pieces were very influential to me.

MR. SMITH: Do you think your upbringing in Hawaii was important?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I think so. It was wonderful-[laughs]-the best place to be when you're a child, I think, yeah, growing up.

MR. SMITH: It's a beautiful place.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, and I like the landscape there and the colors and the foliage, you know, and the native plants that I was able to use for weaving, the barks and the pods and things that they grow in Hawaii, bamboo and banyan roots. They all are very wonderful to weave with.

MR. SMITH: So you've often incorporated some of those materials into your work?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, for the weavings, yes. Not the dyeing so much-I came to New Mexico and came upon natural dyes.

MR. SMITH: So Hawaii was more important for materials and inspiration?

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: You have lived here in Santa Fe for almost 50 years.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, 50.

MR. SMITH: That's quite a long time. Can you reflect on how the community has changed? As you've been here on Canyon Road for all that time, I'm sure there has been a big change.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, when I first came, there were no craft shops or weaving shops, anything like that. There were only, like, four shops on Canyon Road. And then every time there was a home that was for sale, then it became a gallery or a shop. So right now, it's almost all galleries and shops.

MR. SMITH: What do you like best about being in Santa Fe?

MS. PARROTT: Oh, I just love it. I like the climate. I like the people. They're very friendly here, and it's small and not a very large place, which is very nice, too, and I like being very quiet and being able to work in my backyard.

MR. SMITH: You have a beautiful garden that's always wonderful to see, and you have a studio here in the back. Are you still able to do some work?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, whenever I can, not as much as before, but I still do.

MR. SMITH: And you do wall hangings?

MS. PARROTT: Uh-huh [affirmative], when I have commissions and stuff.

MR. SMITH: So you're still doing commissions?

MS. PARROTT: Orders, mainly orders, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, that's great. Is there anything you don't like about Santa Fe?

MS. PARROTT: Not really. I don't mind the tourists too much. I guess we need them for the economy of the town also. And most of them are very nice.

MR. SMITH: Of course, where you're located is really the main street for tourists.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, but in the back where I live, you don't see any of that, the noise or anything. When you go out on the street, then you can see all the people walking up and down.

MR. SMITH: You have a wonderful compound here, because the original house in the front where you started your studio is now rented as a gallery. And then you live in a new house. Did Allen build that?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, he helped build it. A friend designed it, an architect. But he helped the friend. We had some local young men who did the building with adobe.

MR. SMITH: So it's an adobe structure.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, adobe.

MR. SMITH: Do you know how old the front house is?

MS. PARROTT: Almost 300 years, I guess. When we arrived, it was about 250 years old.

MR. SMITH: So is that one of the oldest houses in this community?

MS. PARROTT: Maybe so, I never thought of that. But maybe so, yes.

MR. SMITH: Behind your new house, you also have another building, your studio. Was it built later?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, there was one little, like a shed in the back, and then we added to that, and we used it as a studio before, a weaving studio. And also, we did sewing in the studio, but now I live in the rear house, and in the front, I've rented it to a gallery.

MR. SMITH: Well, it's a very beautiful setting and a wonderful place to work.

MS. PARROTT: Thank you. It's wonderful.

MR. SMITH: Is there any dream that you've yet unfulfilled? Do you want to go to the North Pole-

MS. PARROTT: [Laughs] Not too much, maybe to visit my family in Hawaii, and I'd like to go, maybe, to New York. I hate to travel too much. It's kind of difficult with the airplanes nowadays; the airports are always so congested and difficult. So I prefer staying at home.

MR. SMITH: Tell me about your family. You still have some family living in Hawaii?

MS. PARROTT: I have two brothers still living; just my two brothers and myself now. The others are now gone.

MR. SMITH: And they're all in Hawaii?

MS. PARROTT: Both of them are Hawaii now. And you know, nieces and nephews-

MR. SMITH: Do you have relatives here in the United States?

MS. PARROTT: In Sacramento, niece and nephews. Two nephews, yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, Alice, you know, I've known you since the late '50s. That's almost 45 years. When I moved to New York in 1957, one of the first exhibitions I organized was an educational traveling exhibit called "Fibers, Tools, and Weaves." That was in 1958, and I remember including your work, so I think that must be when I first met you. And I was looking at your resume and noticed that in 1963, you had a one-person show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. That was the year that I became the director.

MS. PARROTT: I see, yes.

MR. SMITH: So it's been wonderful to have this long association with you.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, thank you, yes. The museum has been a wonderful support and influence on my work, I think, my career. Without them, I don't know where I would be now.

MR. SMITH: Well, as you know, this has to be credited to Mrs. Webb.

MS. PARROTT: Yeah, America House-

MR. SMITH: Did you sell in America House?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, I did. Yes, uh-huh.

MR. SMITH: Because Mrs. Webb was such an important visionary, a beacon. And you know, she founded the America House and then the museum. And I think in those early years, it was very important for artists like yourself to have venues.

MS. PARROTT: Oh yes, you know, to have the opportunity to show the work and also to be recognized. And also the crafts magazines, like *Craft Horizons*-

MR. SMITH: You had a big feature, as I remember, early on in the '50s or '60s.

MS. PARROTT: That's right, yes, yes.

MR. SMITH: Have you kept in contact with other fiber activities in the country?

MS. PARROTT: Not anymore. I have done a little bit of that. But quite a few of the weavers or the artists come to visit Santa Fe, and I'm in contact with them.

MR. SMITH: That's very nice.

MS. PARROTT: My old friends, you know, that I've known for years. [Laughs.] Toshiko Takaezu and, yeah, Bob and Sue Turner, and Kay Sekimachi, and people like that.

MR. SMITH: Well, Toshiko was brought up in Hawaii.

MS. PARROTT: Yes, she was.

MR. SMITH: And Kay Sekimachi was brought up in Hawaii, as well?

MS. PARROTT: I don't think so. I think she was from California. I think so, yes.

MR. SMITH: But Anna Kang was.

MS. PARROTT: Anna Kang, yes. We went to the University of Hawaii together and then to Cranbrook.

MR. SMITH: And she still lives here in this area?

MS. PARROTT: Yes, she went back to California, but they returned, and now they live in Santa Fe.

MR. SMITH: Well, Alice, you've had a marvelous career. And the fact that you're still doing commissions is great. You are to be congratulated on all the wonderful things that you have made, the fact that you pioneered in having a studio early on when it was not easy, when there wasn't the market that exists today, and you really did it really well. I think you set a wonderful example of creating beautiful, functional work that I know is still cherished by the people who have acquired it. Because I still see people wearing some of your wonderful weavings. The fact that they remember meeting you has also been very important. And you were always

available in the store to greet everyone, have coffee with them, or many times, have them for lunch, as I recall.

MS. PARROTT: And some of them stayed with me, too. Yes, it's wonderful to meet all the different people, artists and customers.

MR. SMITH: So you developed customers over a long period of time?

MS. PARROTT: Many friendships, yes.

MR. SMITH: And they kept returning and wanting something more and commissioning you?

MS. PARROTT: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Well, Alice, I have nothing but admiration and respect for all that you have done, and I want to thank you so much for being so patient with me in preparing materials for this interview and for spending the time this morning to do this interview.

MS. PARROTT: Oh, thank you very much. It's a great honor.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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