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**Oral history interview with Kenneth Jay Lane,
2011 June 9-10**

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Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.**

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Kenneth Jay Lane on June 9 and 10, 2011. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Mija Riedel 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.

Kenneth Jay Lane has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing Kenneth Jay Lane in his New York City office on June 9, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number one.

Let's begin with just some early biographical information.

KENNETH JAY LANE: I was born.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, you certainly were. [Laughs.] At least once. You were born in Detroit in 1932.

MR. LANE: I was born in Detroit [French pronunciation].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I like that pronunciation. Detroit. In April, April 22, correct?

MR. LANE: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Were your parents involved in the arts at all? What did your parents do?

MR. LANE: My mother was considered a woman of certain taste. If I look back on it, is the taste what I call taste today? Maybe by comparison to what other people had in their houses it was more tasteful.

MS. RIEDEL: Was she interested in more avant-garde work, more modern work, more Minimal?

MR. LANE: No, no. Very, very traditional.

MS. RIEDEL: Very traditional.

MR. LANE: Yeah, you know, collecting the things that ladies collected then, which were pretty things like Meissen figurines and English teacups. You know what I mean, that sort of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, china.

MR. LANE: Pretty things. So at least I grew up with pretty things to look at.

MS. RIEDEL: So a sense of aesthetics, absolutely.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And your father?

MR. LANE: My father spent most of his time on the golf course, even in business, if you know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: He was having to do with the automotive industry, with supplying them with what were called mill supplies, whatever that means. And one of the things he had was the Goodrich or Goodyear rubber. His company, they were the representatives in Detroit for that. And I remember all the snow shovels. I just remember, in the warehouse, tons and tons of show shovels, supplying the city of Detroit.

MS. RIEDEL: So a strong sense of fabrication.

MR. LANE: Not Detroit [French pronunciation], Detroit [American pronunciation].

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] There was a border someplace.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, did you have siblings?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were an only child. And what do you remember from your childhood in terms of an art experience? Did you take art classes? Did you visit museums? Did you draw?

MR. LANE: Yes, yes. On Saturday mornings, I drew. I had a nanny — sort of — who encouraged me to draw. And I started drawing. I think the first drawings were — I was taken to see a Mae West film when I was quite young, maybe seven, eight, and all my women looked like Mae West. And not that I was interested in jewelry, but they were all — you know, as Mae West was covered with a hundred bracelets, so were my women.

MS. RIEDEL: In your drawings.

MR. LANE: And you know, her boas and big hats and all that sort of thing. Although I never thought of going into fashion, but that sort of — you know, I was attracted by that. And I would go Saturday mornings, with my cousin Barbara, to the museum in Detroit, the big museum, which I've been to since, which is bigger. The only problem is that Detroit's been decimated, you know; it's in the middle of nowhere now.

Detroit actually had a fairly glamorous little downtown when I was growing up. There was one street called Michigan Boulevard, which had all the good shops — men's, women's. There was Saks Fifth Avenue, and, you know, all that sort of thing. There is no center of Detroit now. It just doesn't exist.

No, I went a couple of years ago with Alfred Taubman, who built a wing to the museum, and it has lots more stuff in it — but very few people. Anyway, I used to do that on Saturday morning. And then we used to usher at the two legitimate theaters owned by the Nederlander family, Cass and the Shubert. And I saw — we, as ushers, saw incredible things, because Broadway shows would tour, including the stars. So I saw Katharine Cornell and the Lunts. And I remember Judith Anderson in *Medea*.

When I met, many, many years later, Mary Martin in New York, I said, "The first thing I saw of yours was *Lute Song*." And she said, "*Lute Song*? How old were you?" I said, "I don't know, 12, 13, 14." [He sings.] "I will follow you where e'r you go, mountain high, valley low." So you know, that was sort of interesting.

And I was taken to Chicago by my mother when I was 13 to go to — I don't remember the name of the restaurant — Charles de la Pomme Soufflé — no, that was New York. What was it called? Café de la Paix or something like that, where supposedly they invented Strawberries Romanoff. I was taken to the Pump Room, where they had a boy with a turban and a feather serving coffee. It was very glam, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: And flying, you know, in an airplane.

MS. RIEDEL: As a child?

MR. LANE: At 13, yeah. And then 15, New York.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? That was in the mid-'40s.

MR. LANE: Yeah. With my mother and aunt and cousin. We stayed at the Waldorf.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh my goodness.

MR. LANE: We went to four meals a day, because we got *Gourmet* magazine at home, so I knew the name of every good restaurant. So we went to breakfast at places like Rumplemeyer's on Central Park South. We had lunch at — I don't know where. Whatever, all the good restaurants. And dinner before the theater.

MS. RIEDEL: You went to the theater? At 15?

MR. LANE: Every day, twice on — Wednesday, I remember, I saw *Streetcar* matinee on Broadway with Marlon Brando, et cetera. And I remember what we saw in the evening. It was a revue — they used to have revues then — and it was called *Lend an Ear*, and it was the first time I saw Carol Channing, who much later I got to know and made lots and lots and lots of diamond rings for her, which she gave away. You know.

MS. RIEDEL: So the first time you went to New York, you were 15?

MR. LANE: Fifteen. And when I saw New York, I knew that I would never go back to the farm after I'd seen Páree [Paris].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: And New York was really glamorous in those days, because restaurants, good restaurants, had canopies and doormen. And they had a lot of really handsome cars running around, you know. My first car — it's in my book; there's a picture of it — was a 1954 — the only car I've ever owned was a 1954 Rolls-Royce [laughs].

MS. RIEDEL: That was your first car?

MR. LANE: The only car I've ever owned. But, you know, that goes back to the fantasy of childhood.

And I didn't — I sold it eventually. I took it to England to have it air-conditioned, et cetera, and never brought it back. It was silly, and it was fun.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. When you live in the city, you don't have much need for a car.

MR. LANE: No, particularly if it's in walking distance from this office.

MS. RIEDEL: So growing up, you said you drew?

MR. LANE: I drew.

MS. RIEDEL: So you drew — did you paint, did you —

MR. LANE: Well, then I started to paint, and when I was at Rhode Island School of Design [Providence, RI], I painted. That's all I did, because we would be given two months for a project, which I'd do the night before. You know, so I painted. I painted the church outside of my window several times [laughs].

MS. RIEDEL: Before we get to Rhode Island, though, I want to go back to early childhood. Was your interest in art — were you interested in fashion from the very beginning, design?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: You were interested in art, though.

MR. LANE: Yeah. I mean, yeah, I was interested in art. I mean, you didn't put labels on things in those days. I didn't play the piano. I took piano lessons — you know, kids then were all given piano lessons. No, didn't work. Tap dancing lessons didn't work.

MS. RIEDEL: You were given tap dancing lessons?

MR. LANE: All the kids were.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. LANE: You know, I mean, it was one of the things — I [inaudible] to dancing school. What did take were — this woman, I even remember her name, Barbara Chase — taught me the rumba. She gave me rumba lessons. You know, that kind of upper middle-class childhood. You were supposed to be able to do everything.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were very interested in film, it sounds like, early on — in Hollywood — and you were more interested in Mae West than the cowboys or the detectives. There was that sense of the glamour around —

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah, I like glamour. I loved ghosts, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Ghosts?

MR. LANE: I loved the *Topper* films.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, those are wonderful.

MR. LANE: And you know, that sort of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and that's pretty glamorous too.

MR. LANE: Yeah. *Sinbad* — and all that sort of — there was glamour. And historical films, I loved historical films.

MS. RIEDEL: Anything in particular?

MR. LANE: Oh, all the Queen Elizabeth films. You know, there were a lot of historical films those days. Mad about Norma Shearer's *Marie Antoinette* [1938]. Very disappointed when I saw a *Life* magazine cover — half Norma Shearer, half the Marie Antoinette, and Norma Shearer was so much more glamorous than Marie Antoinette [laughs]. And her jewelry was better.

MS. RIEDEL: And you remember that.

MR. LANE: Yeah, I remember that one scene with all the diamond stars, when she meets Fersen in the gambling casino.

MS. RIEDEL: When she meets — sorry?

MR. LANE: [Count Axel de] Fersen.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah. So from the very beginning —

MR. LANE: You know, that sort of romance.

MS. RIEDEL: So from the very beginning, it sounds like you were compelled in this direction; you were drawn in this direction.

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah. I mean, there was — in Charlevoix, Michigan, where we'd go in the summer, there was a baron living as a guest on the same street as ours. I remember his name was Baron de Henning. And my mother used to make fun of him, and she called him the "count of no account." But I was very impressed that there was a baron, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds like a rather extraordinary childhood.

MR. LANE: I liked the idea of nobility.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you?

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

MS. RIEDEL: And this interest in glamour and in design and in aesthetics — it sounds like it was very encouraged by your mother. Was your father interested as well?

MR. LANE: I don't know if she was encouraged, but she didn't discourage me. I mean, she didn't mind taking me to Chicago and New York and all the best restaurants and the theater. No, my father was sweet and paid very little attention. You know what I mean. No, it was all my own fantasy too, you know.

You know, when I'd see — I remember I tried to — when did I try to? There was a film called *Four Feathers* [1939], I think. No, it wasn't *Four Feathers*. It was about an English family and a famous sapphire that went missing. It's been replayed on television. I can't remember the name of it. But I remember, when I saw it, I sort of tried to hide a stone that was supposed to be the famous

sapphire. It was just a stone. I can't remember what it was, a piece of glass or something. I don't know. But you know, I used to reenact nonsensical things.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you interested in theater at all?

MR. LANE: I was interested in the theatrical. Remember, I grew up pre-television, more or less.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. Yes, so films were a big event. Theater was a big event.

MR. LANE: And reading. I used to read. Yeah, I loved the *Arabian Nights*, and *Forever Amber* [1944]. What was interesting — and it's a wonderful way of learning history — it was through sexy novels. *Forever Amber* gave one a good sense of the court of Charles II, and it was factual, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know that book. Do you remember the author?

MR. LANE: Kathleen Winsor. And it was banned in Boston. It was a scandal, that book. Kathleen Winsor.

MS. RIEDEL: And why was it a scandal?

MR. LANE: Because it had sex scenes in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. LANE: Not that graphic by today's standards but by then? Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, and that was titillating?

MR. LANE: Well, it was titillating for the general public and I guess for myself too — I can't remember if it was pre- or post-puberty. But it is the historical part, you see, was fascinating.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Okay.

MR. LANE: All the characters had little mistresses — the king, blah, blah, blah, Three Musketeers, you know, all that stuff, the duke and all, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: So you had a very developed sense of history and of history being very alive?

MR. LANE: Yeah. And then there were Classic Comics.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: Prince Valliant and all that. You know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So lots of imagination, very theatrical, very dramatic at this point.

MR. LANE: Yeah. So when I got to know the Hapsburgs, I knew all about them from my childhood. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: You were well prepared. So how did your interest in architecture come about?

MR. LANE: I just liked — it was more having to do with domestic architecture.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Homes, interiors —

MR. LANE: Yeah, pictures of wonderful houses. I mean, it's funny, because I know — a friend of mine now has a house called — I think it's called the Le Novicat that was her father-in-law's house at Versailles that I remember seeing in a magazine when I was very young. And I could — and I have — I've never been to that house, I've been to other houses she's lived — she's Olimpia Weiller — Olimpia Torlonia. But I know that house, you know what I mean, it goes back into my memory. When I met her I said, "Ah, but that's the house with the round library." She said, "How do you know — yes, have you been?" I said, "No, but I remembered."

MS. RIEDEL: So you were just — that was especially interesting to you?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there any —

MR. LANE: I was always designing houses.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there any teachers in high school that were especially significant, any classes?

MR. LANE: Well, the most significant one I can think of was the — a very left-wing — when I was quite young, sort of early on, I must have been 10 or 11, who was quite — very left-wing and, you know, I came home hating the Ford Motor Company. And there was a book called *The Flivver King: A Story of Ford-America by Upton Sinclair, 1937*. I mean, he was almost — you know, he was socialist, you know what I mean. So all of a sudden I became a little socialist until I knew where my bread was buttered and I was — stopped being a socialist, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] So he was the most influential? No —

MR. LANE: Yeah. It was very funny because I remember — not then, later — I had to analyze a poem by Stephen Spender called "The Train." And I got to know Stephen Spender — and I know his daughter very, very well, who's married to Barry Humphries, who plays Dame Edna — and, but I got it completely wrong, you know. I didn't realize it was about communism, you know [laughs], to me — I had no idea, you know. Anyway, I wasn't a political analyst.

MS. RIEDEL: You were more interested in the imagery, I would imagine.

MR. LANE: I was interested in the imagery.

MS. RIEDEL: Or the story.

MR. LANE: Everything was imagery.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you describe yourself now as a visual thinker, even back then?

MR. LANE: As a?

MS. RIEDEL: A visual thinker.

MR. LANE: Yeah. I've become much more fascinated by real history, and I wish more people in government knew something about history. We wouldn't be in the bad situation we are in the Middle East today. I was so against our going into Iraq because I'd read the Gertrude Bell. And Afghanistan, I've read — because I've been to India about twenty times —

MS. RIEDEL: Right, we'll talk about that.

MR. LANE: I mean, I knew about the Afghan wars and the hopelessness of Afghanistan, because it's never been a country.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: It's tribal, and it's going to stay tribal for a long time.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. From high school you went to the University of Michigan, 1950, is that correct?

MR. LANE: Right. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And you went with the intention of studying architecture?

MR. LANE: Well, liberal arts.

MS. RIEDEL: Exploring.

MR. LANE: Exploring. And then architecture I was thinking very seriously about. But something happened there that I met somebody who changed my life, because the fraternity I was about to join was put off campus, which means no parties for two years or something because they were — had a beer party in those days, beer, hello, you know. So I met Frank O'Hara, the poet.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Who was much older than I was.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. LANE: And he went — but he had gone to — finished Harvard, he'd been in the Army, and he went to get a Hopwood Award. And he was the most amusing — still, I don't think I've ever met anybody more clever or witty or amusing than Frank O'Hara. And he opened my eyes to whole new literature, Ronald Firbank, you know what I mean [laughs]. And I even wrote poems under the name of Roderick Mingle that were published in the — in the magazine called *Generation*.

MS. RIEDEL: What year was this, 1951, '52?

MR. LANE: No, before. Fifty-one, '52 — maybe '50?

MS. RIEDEL: Fifty?

MR. LANE: Fifty, '51? Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So —

MR. LANE: And he was only there for a year, you see.

MS. RIEDEL: Was he teaching?

MR. LANE: No, he was getting his — he was writing and going to get a Hopwood Award, which he got. And then he introduced me to the New York art scene, and John Ashbery was a great friend of his, and the Tibor de Nagy Gallery crowd, which was Larry Rivers and, you know, that whole — that whole world.

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry, which gallery?

MR. LANE: Tibor de Nagy. It still exists on Fifth Avenue around 56th Street, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: So the world really opened up for a second time in New York.

MR. LANE: Yeah. And yeah, well, it was a whole different world. And that — then I became, you know, interested in the contemporary world.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you focusing on architecture? Were you beginning to be more interested in poetry or other art forms?

MR. LANE: No, I wasn't going to be a poet. But I — no, I wanted to — then — you see, this is pre-computers, and mathematics was not my best subject. So then I go up — well, first of all, I had to get out of Michigan, so I had to go to art school. And the best art school was the Rhode Island School of Design [RISD].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: I was still taking courses at Brown [University, Providence, RI] then, but —

MS. RIEDEL: You were taking classes at Brown?

MR. LANE: I took classes at Brown and to RISD — I mean, they were next to each other.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And you — so you left Michigan after two years — University of Michigan.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. And so I was in Providence, Rhode Island, and then spent practically every weekend in Boston. And then, of course, the museums in Boston — the Gardner [Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum] and you know, it was a whole nother thing. And I — which is I met a lot of interesting people in Boston and even started collecting a little bit.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? What were you collecting?

MR. LANE: Well, one of the first things I bought was a Nadelman — a small Nadelman plaster pupae sculpture — Elie Nadelman — wonderful American sculpture of the '20s. And I think it was \$180 as I remember it. When I sold it — because I had a big sale and I got rid of all kinds of junk — I think it brought 5,000 [dollars] or something — whatever, you know. And I bought — bought Old Master drawings.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: For nothing.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. LANE: In those days — nothing. I used to — my mother got me a charge account at S.S. Pierce in Boston.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know what that is.

MR. LANE: It was a gourmet store.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And I used to live on their pâté.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Rather extraordinary taste.

MR. LANE: Because it saved money.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, to save money? [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: To save money, yeah. To buy a whole batch of drawings and anything else I can — anyway. And I became a terrific dandy. I even had a — in my book, there's a graduation picture from RISD.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there?

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

MS. RIEDEL: I remember the one of you in sled —

MR. LANE: There's the book right there — in the pink.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's see — I remember you in your apartment.

MR. LANE: Which his quite funny, because I was young.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, that's your graduation from college — from RISD, yes.

MR. LANE: No other pictures of students looked like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I would think not.

MR. LANE: I had them — I had that suit made in Providence by a tailor. I had — when I was being photographed I had them backlight me — you know, Beaton-wise.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, where did you get these sorts of ideas? Where — this was not common — this was not a common experience with these —

MR. LANE: Oh, I had had these ideas for a long time.

MS. RIEDEL: Were these things that you had begun to cultivate from the film?

MR. LANE: I think when I was about seven.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. And all those —

MR. LANE: Or God knows.

MS. RIEDEL: All those years of watching films, you had an image of how things should look.

MR. LANE: You know, and when I — and I didn't know what I was going to do or how I was going to do it. But I sort of visualized where I was going to live. You know, not where exactly, but I don't — I've never had a crystal chandelier, but I did visualize a crystal chandelier.

MS. RIEDEL: And that was the first thing?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: The house will go around it.

MR. LANE: Well, I mean — you know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So you had a sense of exactly where you wanted to go, metaphorically.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. Interesting. Interesting. How did the — well, you left — you graduated from RISD in '54, correct?

MR. LANE: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, how —

MR. LANE: Came to New York.

MS. RIEDEL: And you — your major — you had majored in advertising design, is that correct?

MR. LANE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did that come about? How did that transition from architecture — how did you decide on —

MR. LANE: Well, I never really studied architecture — not really.

MS. RIEDEL: Who was teaching at RISD then? Who was influential?

MR. LANE: I was very friendly with John Maxin — Maxim, I think [Maxon], who was the head of the museum. And I tried to get him to authenticate a little [Francesco] Guardi that I bought, but it wasn't a real Guardi. But I paid so little for it, so you know what I mean. It had a nice frame.

MS. RIEDEL: There you go. So how did you settle on design — advertising design?

MR. LANE: I wanted — well, it was — I had to settle on something, didn't I? I had to tell Mummy and Daddy —

MS. RIEDEL: But you didn't — did they have a metal arts program at the time? Metal arts and jewelry, because —

MR. LANE: Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. They didn't.

MS. RIEDEL: Way before that.

MR. LANE: And when students come — they don't come here very often anymore, they don't — the art schools don't bring their students here, because they bring jewelry design students — and I say, "Number one, pay no attention to your teachers." I say, "Unless you want to be a model maker all your life, it — whatever you're taught is totally unimportant. What you have to work with — what you have to work on is your imagination and look, see. Go into Tiffany and Cartier, don't just look in

the window. Go to the auction — you know, the exhibitions."

Do you know that in Providence, Rhode Island, the manufacturers — the few that are left there now — I think they — they — I don't think they ever knew what a really good emerald looked like, or a ruby or a sapphire, because they'd never seen them. See, I was also very fortunate because growing up, when I came to New York, I immediately started meeting attractive people — women. And a lot of them had some rather good stuff. So I saw good stuff. Some of the stuff was very good. For instance, I talk in the book about Marella Agnelli and an armload of turquoise snake bracelets.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Well, I do — one of the first things I did in jewelry was turquoise snake bracelet.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: You know, but if you haven't ever seen those things —

MS. RIEDEL: And this was different than seeing it in a museum collection. You were seeing it on someone's arm, right there.

MR. LANE: Yeah, but even in a museum collection. The people in the jewelry industry didn't go to museums particularly. I mean, I've been many times to Dresden to the Grüne Gewölbe, which is the most extraordinary display of jeweled objects and jewels, and in Munich to the — you know, to the Schatzkammer, and to St. Petersburg, and blah, blah. You know.

And I have gotten ideas from all of those things. Not that I try to reproduce them exactly, although I did Maltese crosses straight out of the Grüne Gewölbe in Dresden. And one of those crosses was even copied by a friend of mine — by David Webb. She had him copy my cross. My stones were better. I mean — you know what I mean. They were more vibrant and bigger because she was using real stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: So you graduated in '54 and you moved immediately to New York.

MR. LANE: Yep.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And there was — you were briefly at *Vogue*, you were working at Delman Shoes —

MR. LANE: I was sneaked in — I was sneaked into *Vogue* by Alexander Liberman. He had never hired anybody from school, but I'd met Liberman when I was still at the University of Michigan. I was — and I still wasn't interested in fashion particularly. But I met a girl called Carrie Donovan who then worked for the *New York Times*, Diana Vreeland for *Vogue* — adorable girl who had been to Parsons School in Paris for a year.

And she knew Liberman and she'd actually — she did two things — at the first cocktail party that Hubert Givenchy ever had in New York when he — when I — when, you know, he started his business. And it was very funny, I still know Hubert very well, and Bettina Graziani was his model. And I see Bettina, who's marvelous, and another person who was here with him — is a friend of mine in Paris — called Dreda Mele. You know, life goes on. And that was when I — that must have been 1950 or '51 — 1951.

MS. RIEDEL: Fifty-four and — oh, when you first met them.

MR. LANE: That was '51, but I was still in Michigan.

MS. RIEDEL: So it seems like quite a coup to have landed a job at *Vogue* right out of school.

MR. LANE: Well, Alex Liberman got me in, let me — as a temporary in the summer. And I talked the girl who I was being temporary for — when she came back, she was talking to me — that she always wanted to be a nurse. And I talked her into becoming a nurse and got her job.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: It was very boring.

MS. RIEDEL: What were you doing?

MR. LANE: Paste-ups. And in those days, you know, it was pre-technology they have today — no computers. It's all done by computers today. But paste-ups and rubber cement and marking pens — I was always spilling ink. You know, argh.

MS. RIEDEL: Not what you were interested in.

MR. LANE: No. And then I left with an editor who — you know, all the ladies were adorable. We used to take long lunch hours in a place called Michael's Pub where Jessica Daves, the editor in chief, also used to lunch. And she used to see me there and sort of wonder what the hell I was doing there.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were you doing there?

MR. LANE: Having lunch.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: Not on my — not on my tab, I'll tell you that, because I had no money. And I — but of course, I thought a gentlemen had to have debts. Boy, did I have debts — whoo. First thing I had here was a tailor and maid —

MS. RIEDEL: Didn't occur to you to go to a store to purchase a suit?

MR. LANE: Of course not.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Interesting.

MR. LANE: And I'd already been to Europe —

MS. RIEDEL: Is that true? Really?

MR. LANE: And I'd also been — already been to Europe once.

MS. RIEDEL: How did the — that work out?

MR. LANE: My parents sent me.

MS. RIEDEL: Your parents sent you — between high school and college, in the middle of college, right after college?

MR. LANE: Middle of college.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Where did you go?

MR. LANE: I went all over the place.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. By yourself?

MR. LANE: Well, small group of kids — I think we were eight, children of friends of my parents more or less. And it was a fairly deluxe —

MS. RIEDEL: Sort of a wandering arc —

MR. LANE: We went on the *Queen Mary* —

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Yeah. It came and —

MS. RIEDEL: Eight kids? And you were 20? How old were you?

MR. LANE: Twenty — 19, 20 — no, 19. And of course I went to Turnbull & Asser and had shirts made, which were \$6 each. And they sent the bill to my — you know, I didn't pay and, you know, I became very English. I didn't pay — an English gentleman. I bought a jacket which I didn't pay for at Simpsons, I think. You know, very English — and a hat at Lock's. I went to Lobb for shoes, and the shirts used to arrive at my parents' house in wooden crates — little wooden crates for six shirts, yeah. They were \$6 each the shirts, I think — or six pounds — I can't remember.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was your parents' response?

MR. LANE: They were rather amused.

MS. RIEDEL: They were amused.

MR. LANE: Little brat.

MS. RIEDEL: But not discouraging.

MR. LANE: No. No.

MS. RIEDEL: So tell — let's talk about that very first trip, because travel is —

MR. LANE: And waistcoats, waistcoats, ooh. In Providence — there was a woman called Amy Pleadwell in Boston dealt in old fabrics, and then I found a little tailor who made these wonderful waistcoats for me out of wonderful old fabrics.

MS. RIEDEL: What did he make for you?

MR. LANE: Waistcoats. Vests.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, vests. What do you call it?

MR. LANE: Waistcoat. Waistcoat.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, waistcoats — I don't have that full fashion a vocabulary. I'm sorry, you're going to improve it for me in the next day or two, I can tell. So the first trip to Europe, where did you go, what did you see?

MR. LANE: London. It was '53 because the queen was — the queen was — the coronation. Scotland, where I went into a shop with a lot of tartans in the window. I wanted them to — a pair of trews, which are trousers, you know. They said, "Which tartan, sir?" And I said, "Show me some." And they looked at me — I left the shop. They looked down upon me. Well, you use your own tartan, you just don't say "show me some."

MS. RIEDEL: Show me some. [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: And there was a ball for the queen at the Royal Caledonian Hotel. There was a whole bunch of stuff going on. Saw lots of tiaras arriving.

MS. RIEDEL: Aha. And were you aware at this point that you were very interested in the jewelry in particular, or was it a sense of the fashion design in general, maybe aesthetics?

MR. LANE: No, I wasn't interested in jewelry particularly. I thought I was interested in glamorous women and royalty. And I just got an email from Princess Alexandra's office: where should they send the information about the thing we're going to together in London on the twenty-eighth of May — the opening of the "Masterpiece" show.

MS. RIEDEL: So you're back traveling off again in another few weeks?

MR. LANE: A week from Saturday at two o'clock. But anyway, and then from Scotland to Norway — took the boat from Newcastle to Norway. And then we did the fjords. Oh, very headache-making, all those — all those —

MS. RIEDEL: Extreme [inaudible].

MR. LANE: Well, all those waterfalls.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Gives one a great headache.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: [Laughs.] No.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: Sounds good. It's very — [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: So Norway, Scotland, London —

MR. LANE: No, then Sweden, Denmark, down the Rhine, Cologne, down the Rhine, buh, buh, buh, you know the whole —

MS. RIEDEL: France? Italy?

MR. LANE: Paris was the last. Italy, of course, Venice, which I adored, and Rome, which I adored, you

know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Yes. And how long was the —

MR. LANE: Sorrento, which I thought was touristy. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: How long was the trip?

MR. LANE: Six weeks, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: You covered a lot of ground.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: Yup.

MS. RIEDEL: So you returned — you went back to school.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah, it was summer.

MS. RIEDEL: But clearly that was a life-changing experience. Sure.

MR. LANE: With my English — with my — my Turnbull shirts —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — and matching ties. I had matching ties made, because Brooks Brothers then had pink and blue ties to match — and yellow — to match their famous shirts, button-down shirts.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there — did you have a sense of causing a sensation? Was there any —

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

Did you have a sense —

MR. LANE: And it wasn't my fault. It was — I caused a sensation when I was 15, my first trip to New York, because I was quite good-looking, and I had a gray herringbone Chesterfield coat with a gray velvet collar, and my mother allowed me to smoke only with a Dunhill cigarette holder, so I wouldn't get the nicotine. And the first thing I bought in New York, at Sulka on Fifth Avenue, were a pair of yellow chamois gloves. So imagine me looking at — watching the skaters at Rockefeller Center, smoking a cigarette in my yellow chamois gloves, my Chesterfield coat, my Dunhill cigarette holder, at 15.

MS. RIEDEL: That's hard to fathom. [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: Little Lord Fauntleroy gone mad.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes. Yes. And your mother seems to have been —

MR. LANE: Amused.

MS. RIEDEL: Amused.

MR. LANE: Then when she realized I was going to stay in New York and never come back, she was less than amused. Anyway — [pause] — "See ya, kid."

MS. RIEDEL: Did she — she must have come to visit, I would imagine it would have been —

MR. LANE: My mother was an interesting woman. She was a deputy — the marshal of Detroit, Michigan, or the chief deputy marshal, when she was 20.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the — what was the job —

MR. LANE: Well, the marshal is the federal government. The sheriff is elected; the marshal is appointed. Haven't you ever seen a Western? The marshal —

MS. RIEDEL: She — your mother was the marshal.

MR. LANE: Yeah, of Detroit.

MS. RIEDEL: Wasn't it highly unusual for a woman to be in that position?

MR. LANE: Very. She was the first.

MS. RIEDEL: And at the same time, she was a glamorous woman, and she was a marshal?

MR. LANE: And she was very glamorous. She was glamorous. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: What was her name?

MR. LANE: Beatrice Holinstat.

MS. RIEDEL: Beatrice Holinstat. I've never heard of such a thing.

MR. LANE: And she was —

MS. RIEDEL: And this was acceptable while your father had this position —

MR. LANE: No, my father, — he wasn't married yet.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, okay.

MR. LANE: She was — she got married when she was 26, which was, you know, elderly in those days.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And how on earth did she come to be the marshal?

MR. LANE: Don't ask me. She — and she had a friend who was called Frank Murphy, a judge, who became a Supreme Court justice. She says that she never did, but I don't believe her.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, she resigned being marshal when she —

MR. LANE: I'm getting hungry. Would you have a sandwich here?

MS. RIEDEL: Sure, we can take a break if you'd like.

MR. LANE: Well, I mean, we could have — just to get something to eat, and we could go on until the sandwiches arrive —

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. Okay.

MR. LANE: I mean, since we're — I mentioned the Duchess of Windsor —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — you know, when she died, they found 28 pieces of my junk in her closet still. Ten years later, they were sold at Sotheby's. But —

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Pieces that she just loved and couldn't —

MR. LANE: Of mine, yeah. And she had more than that. In my book, there are pictures of her. I think there's a Christmas card, 1967, or something —

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. LANE: — wearing my necklace. She had so much stuff of her own — you know — good stuff. And then of course Jackie had the — Jackie Onassis sale, there were 35 pieces of mine or something.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. It's — one's hard-pressed to think of anyone in politics or society that doesn't have some of your work. Moving —

MR. LANE: Andy Warhol, by the way —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — sent a rocket to the moon or something — I can't remember what it was — something to another planet, and included in it was a pair of earrings of mine.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk about that a little bit. It was the late, mid-, late '50s here. Did you have a sense of that Pop Art movement really beginning to explode onto —

MR. LANE: Well, I met Andy Warhol in the '50s, because he was doing — I was — I was working for Genesco, which was I. Miller, Delman, Christian Dior shoes —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — Bonwit Teller, Henri Bendel, Tiffany for a bit. And Andy was doing the — these drawings, shoe drawings, for I. Miller, for the ads, and Gerry [Geraldine] Stutz, who then became president of Bendel, was — it was commissioning, and then he started doing things for the magazine, like what — you know, particularly Diana Vreeland at *Harper's Bazaar* and then *Vogue*.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: So that's how I knew Andy.

MS. RIEDEL: And when you began designing, did you have a sense of that — almost as the appropriation and chic of color and Pop Art — I mean, were you consciously thinking about Pop Art when you began to design shoes?

MR. LANE: No, no. Oh, with shoes, no. I never thought about Pop Art. I didn't want women to pop out of my shoes. No, I was very fortunate, because Roger Vivier, who was the great, great shoe designer, who worked for Dior in Paris, but only custom-made —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: — in those days, and beautiful shoes, women's feet bleeding for days after going to a ball in these ravishing shoes that he made — also had a contract with Delman in America. And they — he'd send models, and then they'd interpret, but they did it very badly. I must say that when I took it over, I think I interpreted it much better. You know, I made them very wearable, but I really kept his ideas. And he was a wonderful man. And he offered me a job in Paris, to apprentice with him. And Maxey Jarman, the chairman of Genesco, said, "Oh, Ken, why don't you stay working for us and go there part-time?" And so I — first it was six months in Paris, and less and less. But I mean, I was still working for an American company, and I had an American Express card, so I could entertain people.

MS. RIEDEL: What an extraordinary experience. You were 22?

MR. LANE: No, then I was a little older. I was —

MS. RIEDEL: This was —

MR. LANE: This was '59.

MS. RIEDEL: — Fifty-nine, right. So late 20s.

MR. LANE: Late —

MS. RIEDEL: And would you describe that apprenticeship?

MR. LANE: Well, I lived around the corner from Dior, at the top of the Hotel St. Regis, which was very fashionable. And I had a balcony. It's in my book, a picture of me on the balcony. And the bathroom was down the hall, but I was the only person on the floor and the maid made my bath every morning, and they brought up — I had croissants in my room. It was very cheap in those days. Of course it was — you know, but still. And then I spent a lot of time in the South of France, and I used to write letters to — back home to Genesco describing what Daisy Fellowes was wearing. About the Agnellis [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: And what sort of things were you learning during the day as an apprentice?

MR. LANE: I was learning who was giving a ball that night, who was going, and who I was taking, or who was inviting me or — .

MS. RIEDEL: You were an assistant in designing the most — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: I was an apprentice, but I wasn't working for Dior. I was just there. So I did whatever I damn pleased. And I was there, I wasn't there.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you learning anything about materials, anything about design, or you were just absorbing design from everywhere in the world?

MR. LANE: I was absorbing the world, and luxury, and Paris then, which was wow.

MS. RIEDEL: I imagine, I imagine.

MR. LANE: Wow. It was wow. Because it was still — the '50s were still a leftover from the '30s, in a way. There were still a lot of grand houses and balls and marvelous clothes and jewels and chateaux. And then I went to — [inaudible]. And I had an American Express card, so I could — I went — you know, I went to Rome, I stayed at the Excelsior. I mean, I didn't have to — you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And Dior was fine with that being on their expense account?

MR. LANE: Well, it wasn't Dior, it was Genesco.

MS. RIEDEL: And they were fine with that?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Really? Extremely lenient.

MR. LANE: Very. Very. They were very nice people.

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds like [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: Then eventually, back in New York, if Mrs. Jarman wanted a good table at — then the great, fashionable restaurant was the Caravelle, 55th Street. You know, they'd call me to try to get Mrs. Jarman a good table, because I always had a good table. She never got one as good as mine, but still. [Laughs.] I was a number. It amuses me to think of all that, in a way.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds as if your education was really beginning or really developing during this time.

MR. LANE: I'm self-educated, in a way. You see, the thing is that — with Frank O'Hara I started to read and read and read and read. I mean, I told you I read about the court of Charles II, and *Forever Amber* pre-that. But, you know, I just started to assimilate.

And in — you know, if kids today in school — people talk about education — a lot of it, education, has to do with the students themselves, what they — how curious they are and what they — what they give to themselves, you know. No school teaches everything in detail. You have to find what you're interested in and read about it.

MS. RIEDEL: So you would say you were hungry for experience and absorbing whatever you could, wherever you could.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And so it was back and forth for three years between Paris and New York. Were you beginning to evolve any thoughts about what you might want to do? You were still working in shoes.

MR. LANE: Yeah, and —

MS. RIEDEL: There were jeweled shoes, though, at the time — [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: Jeweled shoes. And that's when — but that's when — yeah, I designed a few little things for the shoes. But then I did — to go with some shoes I was doing for designers and my book, faking it — the history's all there. Then I said, "Well, why don't we make some earrings to match the tips of the rhinestone shoes? And blah, blah, blah." And they looked good and flashy.

And the *New York Times* wanted to do a story on it, a wonderful girl called Pat Patterson — Pat Patterson — and they had to be sold to a store, which meant somebody had to carry it, so I showed my first little bag of tricks to Bonwit Teller, to the buyer there, and she bought six pairs of earrings, they sold in six minutes, and boom. Then I took my little bag of tricks myself around to the buyers. I didn't go to any store presidents. I mean, I knew Andrew Goodman, but I didn't go to him. I went to the jewelry buyer.

MS. RIEDEL: And that first — those first six pair of earrings, were they the pavé earrings and sort of round, and the teardrop, right?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And were they all done? What were they — what were they —

MR. LANE: Flat back rhinestones.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, so — and clear rhinestones. Okay.

MR. LANE: Yeah, and flat back and colored, as you know, glued on so they didn't come off — made by — they were done by the company that was doing it on shoes.

Then I had this idea of covering bracelets with cobra skin and so forth, and I used the people who covered heels for shoes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. And those — taking us into the '60s, then — when I look at your work over time, so many of the great designs were present here in the '60s. You've really — I think of the jewel-covered bracelets, I think of the skin-covered bracelets —

MR. LANE: Which were done recently again by — what's it called? — Bottega Veneta. But I mean, fine, you know, good for them.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Well, there does seem to be a history of back and forth in your career, from precious to semiprecious to not precious to —

MR. LANE: And then — and then — you know, I knew Bill Blass, who showed — I showed the — I remember he even sold the bracelets covered in skin from — with his clothes, and he showed lots of them with his clothes, and, you know — and then I met Oscar [de la Renta] when he first came here. And, you know, I did jewelry for all the collections then, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. How was the jewelry that you designed for the collections? How was that different than the work you've worked on on your own? Is that — does that sense of collaboration have a big influence?

MR. LANE: Yeah, but basically they take what I had and, you know, make it longer or shorter or more of it. Or, you know, I mean, remember the Chanel cuff that I do —

MS. RIEDEL: Which one?

MR. LANE: — that I did the —

MS. RIEDEL: With the —

MR. LANE: — the cuff with Maltese cross on it, you know?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: And I didn't do that for years because a great friend of mine, D. D. Ryan, ex to John Barry Ryan III, had a pair of the original ones made by Fulco di Verdura that — as Chanel had, which, eventually, I got her to sell two back to Verdura; they have them now. And — but she needed the lolly.

And then Oscar asked me to make that motif, the cross, as buttons and a belt buckle. And he had a whole collection — you know, lots of those going down — a few too many, I thought, but anyway — and the cuffs, and — I still sell the cuffs like crazy. And people —

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] With the Maltese crosses.

MR. LANE: Yeah. And the wife of Ward Landrigan, who has Verdura now — and bought one of my bracelets at Saks. And I asked her son what color it was and what color center stone, and then I sent her another one with a note saying, "Fulco always said, if a girl had two arms, she needs two cuffs."

And I'll show you something very funny.

MS. RIEDEL: Shall I follow you?

MR. LANE: No. Look at this. This is from — they put this picture together, Fulco and myself, you know, through a machine. And look at that, it's quite funny.

I'm going to see somebody for a second.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: Ain't that funny?

MS. RIEDEL: [On ?] line 3, it's — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: This is funny, then?

MS. RIEDEL: It's very funny.

MR. LANE: And, you know, the invitation is very funny, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Yes. And this was very recent.

MR. LANE: And they did it in England, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Did they?

MR. LANE: A year ago. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: There is an incredible sense of humor and wit, it seems, to run not only through the work, but through the entire process.

MR. LANE: Well, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm lucky that it works.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Is it — has it felt that way to you consistently throughout that there has been a sense of humor, a sense of tongue-in-cheek from the beginning to the end?

MR. LANE: I think the whole thing was very funny.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. LANE: And then my life is very funny.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

Quick question about the actual production and manufacturing of the work. It seems that, while you were working — you worked briefly with the Hattie Carnegie —

MR. LANE: Well, I sold my business to Hattie Carnegie.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, you did?

MR. LANE: Yeah, because they —

MS. RIEDEL: That was '63? '69? '69, I think, yeah?

MR. LANE: No, no, no, that was later. Before. No, no, it was much earlier. It was '50. It was '60. Oh, no, I'm sorry, it started — it was about '64. Sixty-four.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. But this — the —

MR. LANE: The Hattie Carnegie, it only lasted for less than a year.

MS. RIEDEL: But it seems like that was a very important time, a very formative time — and that you weren't —

MR. LANE: Well, I had just started.

And before I had Carnegie, I made a — the biggest jewelry company in America was called Monet.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Not Monet. Wait a minute. No. Not Monet, I'm sorry. Coro. Coro.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Okay.

MR. LANE: Coro. And they — their offices were across from Macy's. And it was big offices, huge, and vice presidents and bluh, bluh, bluh, bluh, bluh. And they — as a consultant, but I didn't want anybody to know that I was doing this since they paid me — I don't know what they paid me a month or something.

And I'd go there and — for meetings. And they were in meetings, so I'd chat with somebody for an hour, and then I'd leave, period. And once they came to me — and I had a very small office, then. And a buyer — important store buyer arrived when they were there, the president and the chairman. I hid them behind a screen because I — nobody was supposed to know.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you're —

MR. LANE: That lasted for a year because it was a joke because they never had time to see me, you know. [Laughs.] Again, [inaudible] —

MS. RIEDEL: Just so I'm clear, you started your own business, but you were also designing jewelry for someone else. Is that correct?

MR. LANE: Not designing, exactly; consulting.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: For Coro.

MS. RIEDEL: For Coro.

MR. LANE: When nothing happened, you know, because they never had time to see me. I'd turn up for the meeting. And I'd wait an hour and they were still in meetings, and I'd chat with whoever I was chatting with there. Then I'd leave.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Now, when —

MR. LANE: And then they call, then they apologize. I say, "It's fine. Next month."

MS. RIEDEL: But you were spending a lot of time, then, designing jewelry.

MR. LANE: Oh, I was already starting my own business. That was after I had already — I started getting a lot of publicity right away.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Diana Vreeland, very early on, right? 'Sixty-four, or even before that?

MR. LANE: And not only Diana Vreeland; all the magazines and —

MS. RIEDEL: From the start it seems like there was —

MR. LANE: You know, and then —

[Audio Break.]

MR. LANE: [In progress] — there were so many newspapers then too, and they used wonderful columnists like Eugenia Sheppard, who wrote in a column about the Duchess of Windsor buying my stuff.

MS. REIDEL: The Duchess of Windsor was buying your work in the early '60s, or that was later?

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah. No, yeah.

MS. REIDEL: Is there —

MR. LANE: Sixty-five, '67.

MS. REIDEL: So really from the beginning.

MR. LANE: And then Adam Gimbel called me from Saks — his wife used to come up and get jewelry from me here. And it — what was her name, she was — they used her name in design too — nice woman — and so he took me to lunch. And he was so impressed by the Duchess of Windsor wearing my stuff, I thought it was very funny.

And — because I was already selling Saks and Bonwit's, and everybody Fifth Avenue. I'm selling everybody and there were more stores. There was Tate —

MS. REIDEL: Were you — how was it being fabricated at this point? Did you already have somebody in Providence working on it?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. REIDEL: Okay. So you had somehow — now, had that come through? Hattie Carnegie [inaudible]?

MR. LANE: Yes, because somebody at Hattie Carnegie from — who was in the jewelry business — took me to Providence and introduced me to some manufacturers and blah, blah, blah. But I also had New York manufacturers.

MS. REIDEL: Okay. And did that then give you a sense of what was possible? What was being done? What you might do?

MR. LANE: I did what was impossible.

MS. REIDEL: Well, clearly. [Laughs.] But it gave you a sense of some of the materials, what was being done with plastic, what was being done with —

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah, but then I could reinterpret it, and I did things because, since I knew that women wore turquoise necklaces and diamonds in the winter. And I did turquoise, and diamonds, and buyers said, "But that's summer." I said, "No, it isn't. You know, it's all year round — color is all year round." So I really had to turn things around a bit.

MS. REIDEL: Okay. And color was — has been extremely important along the line.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, always. And, you know, and the — and the big jewelry companies did their small collections as I kept doing stuff, doing stuff, doing stuff.

MS. REIDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: More, more and more — having fun. It was always fun, you see.

MS. REIDEL: There's a wonderful image of a very large pair of earrings, I think flamenco-inspired, from about this era that were soldered — it was a soldered rhinestone chain in some very —

MR. LANE: That go way down, yeah, yeah.

MS. REIDEL: Right. But this is something that you yourself were experimenting with in soldering, is that correct?

MR. LANE: Oh yeah. And also there's a pair of earrings there, hand me the book please, that a friend of mine Chessy Rayner — [inaudible], she was very usually the first [inaudible] kind of things. Here I am with David Evans, huge — [inaudible] world. This was funny. In Rockefeller Center Saks put this thing on.

MS. REIDEL: Yes. That's the one where you're riding around the — in the — on the ice pond in the sleigh.

MR. LANE: These —

MS. REIDEL: Similar to that, yeah.

MR. LANE: — which were copied in Paris by some — one of the designers last year.

MS. REIDEL: Really? But what I found fascinating is that you would actually take these lengths of a rhinestone chain and form them into different sorts of shapes and then solder it to see what would work —

MR. LANE: Yeah. I'd do it in clay.

MS. REIDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: Upside down and then it's not work. Now, these were some things I made for Chessy Rayner, okay, because she wanted some earrings that would go on to her shoulders with this strapless dress rather than wear a necklace. And she was photographed in them. And it was in Eugenia Sheppard's column. They were in Saks' window the next day. [Inaudible] you can't do that today. There was an immediacy —

MS. REIDEL: And how were you able to do that? Had you already produced that, or how are were you able to —

MR. LANE: Well, yeah, well, I produced a couple, you know. I mean, that — you know. I mean, the photograph was maybe a couple of weeks after I had done the original one. So I'd done more than one. But what I mean is that the stores could work quickly then. They can't today. Now everything is so computerized that Saks cannot get something in a day. It has to go to warehouses — you know what I mean — through all the processes.

MS. REIDEL: But so you would make a prototype of these earrings, figure out what was going to work, and then have somebody in Providence or locally produce them?

MR. LANE: Those were made locally. And there was a wonderful — a block from where we are now — a wonderful shop that would solder — I'd stand over the solderers and I could make tiaras for the Diana Vreeland's shows at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City]. You know, it was a lot of — lot of laborers then.

MS. REIDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: They don't exist anymore.

MS. REIDEL: And very fine hand labor, it sounds like.

MR. LANE: I mean, there is a bit, but much less.

MS. REIDEL: I — what — you said that you had designed — [background noise] — you mentioned that you did this pair of earrings for Chessy Rayner. Did you do many special commissions like that?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. REIDEL: How did that one come about?

MR. LANE: Well, she just wanted them — she wanted some earrings she could wear that went onto her shoulders, so I did those.

MS. REIDEL: So she just mentioned it in passing conversation, and you went home and decided to see what you could come up with.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MS. REIDEL: So it was very impromptu. It sounds as if it was a very impromptu way of working back then.

MR. LANE: Yes.

MS. REIDEL: Both with you and your clients and then with the stores themselves.

MR. LANE: Yeah, well, basically my friends were my clients, you know what I mean.

MS. REIDEL: I want to talk a little bit about materials, because it seems that innovation of materials has been a very significant part of your work from the beginning.

MR. LANE: Yeah. And some things have disappeared. For instance, the first plastics I used, which were done in another way — they were extruded, they weren't molded. That company — that went completely out, that material, because they started making — using it for — that company started making billiard balls. And another marvelous plastic company called Standard Plastic, who could do — had — they could do — you know, 50 different colors, incredible colors. They'd even develop colors for me — and marvelous shapes. They stopped — they just went out of business.

MS. REIDEL: So they were around in the '60s, and then suddenly they were just no more.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. REIDEL: So there was an era in which all of this was more possible.

MR. LANE: Yeah, but then — but then molded plastics became possible. And that's very, very important and more and more, you know.

MS. REIDEL: And so you could order certain shapes, certain sizes, certain colors?

MR. LANE: Oh, I could make a model in metal and then have it translated into cold resin and develop colors.

MS. REIDEL: Did that happen from the very beginning, or did that come later on?

MR. LANE: It came a little bit in the — early '70s, late — in the early '70s.

MS. REIDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: And then there was a company that was doing that for me, and *they* went out of business. You see, a lot of companies just disappeared. In fact, Providence, Rhode Island, now, has very, very few good jewelry manufacturers. I mean, I don't own a factory there now. I had a little factory at the very beginning. I bought this guy out for \$5,000, and there were six ladies soldering, you know.

MS. REIDEL: In the '60s, early, mid-'60s you had a factory, right?

MR. LANE: Yeah, early '60s — yeah. And that was fun. And yeah — no, that was late — that was, yeah, early '60s. And so this — I really — actually am keeping the manufacturer in Providence more or less alive myself.

MS. REIDEL: Because it's still your work — it's still manufactured there today?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. REIDEL: That's extraordinary.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. REIDEL: That *is* extraordinary, actually.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Well, for QVC, for television, in huge quantities we have things made in China.

MS. REIDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And they do models for it. But then you have to order, you know, thousands of one thing in one color — you know what I mean.

MS. REIDEL: Right, right.

MR. LANE: Where I will start with — we'll have it out there now, on the table. Where, you know, I will do something, and I'll do it eight different color combinations and order a dozen of each to begin with or something — or six, you know.

MS. REIDEL: Right. And that's — do you — you don't own a factory in Providence anymore but you still —

MR. LANE: No, but I more or less control it — or try to.

MS. REIDEL: Right, right. Just —

MR. LANE: You know, it's too much to own a factory. I don't want to — you know.

MS. REIDEL: I imagine not. I think — I'm thinking about that — the era of the '60s. It was — color was important, there was — popular culture was exploding, there was — there was a big separation between high art and low art, and Pop Art was in full swing —

MR. LANE: Yeah, well, when Pop Art came in, I did some Pop Art stuff; it's in my book, because, you know, I was asked to, so I did. But that wasn't my most favorite thing to do necessarily; maybe it was at the moment, I don't remember. But, I mean, for instance, Hubert Givenchy was up here a couple of years ago, and he saw a bracelet that I revived after I did this book, because there's a page of a bunch of bracelets. And people wanted them, so I brought them back. I still had the model.

MS. REIDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: He said, "My God, you're still making that?" Because he used to sell that in his shop in Paris in the early days — the '60s. Let's go and eat — have a sandwich and your coffee.

MS. REIDEL: I did have that thought as I was looking at your work, is that there are pieces that have been reproduced and reimagined over decades, and —

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: [In process] — in the '60s you took two significant — well, you'd already been to London, so you — that's perhaps not, but you made your first trip to India, is that correct, late '60s?

MR. LANE: Sixty-eight, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And that has had a lasting —

MR. LANE: Well, I went — I went to — first to Bali.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm, okay.

MR. LANE: Bali, Angkor Wat, which was incredible — before any problems there.

MS. RIEDEL: I imagine.

MR. LANE: And then India was on the way back. But I knew some people, so — and I just thought it was absolutely incredible. I just kept going back and going back and going back.

MS. RIEDEL: And let's talk about the first time you went and what your impressions were, what you saw and what inspired you and drew you to come back and again and again.

MR. LANE: Well, the first time — first night I was given a dinner at the Oberoi Hotel by the Oberois.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, which part of India was it?

MR. LANE: In Delhi.

MS. RIEDEL: In Delhi.

MR. LANE: And dinner was called from 9:30; in fact we ate about one [o'clock] in the morning — lovely partridges, we ate partridges — lots of booze. And somebody gave me — I was never a pot smoker, I mean, you know, I never liked pot particularly. It always put me to sleep. But somebody gave me, and to be polite I took one toke of a cigarette and I was down and out. I mean, God knows what it was — Afghani something or other.

So the next day was hard — impossible. I had to change my plans and arrive a day later in Jaipur, which was actually marvelous then because — you know, before Mrs. Gandhi ended the rule of the maharajas. And I knew Ayesha Jaipur from London. And — pretty special.

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry?

MR. LANE: It was pretty special.

MS. RIEDEL: I would imagine. Would you describe it? What in particular struck you?

MR. LANE: Well, now Jaipur has about three [million] or four million people. It was still a town surrounded by green. And Ayesha lived — well, she had lived — there was also this little, miniature Fort Belvedere on a rock, where she sometimes lived. And down under were all trees, and that was lovely. Not jungle exactly, but, you know, a few houses. Now it's suburban sprawl all the way. But, I mean, it was extraordinary.

MS. RIEDEL: The architecture, the — I would imagine also the color that everyone says —

MR. LANE: Oh yeah, and the turbans, and now there are very few turbans. The men don't wear — very few turbans. The woman — the women who are repairing the roads are still looking like parrots in all these wonderful colors of their saris and bracelets up to their elbows, chattering away like little parrots. But the women are wearing Western clothes; there's Chanel shop — you know, it's in the world.

MS. RIEDEL: But that first trip, how did it affect your jewelry? Which pieces came out of that trip?

MR. LANE: Not the first trip. I wasn't bothering then much about jewels there, then I was just looking.

MS. RIEDEL: The architecture, the clothing, the colors?

MR. LANE: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were in Jaipur and Delhi?

MR. LANE: Agra, Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is the most perfect building in the world. I mean, you have to see it to believe it. It's like the bust of Nefertiti, you know, which you have to see to really — no matter how many photographs you've seen. You know, there's — and the pyramids in Egypt. You can have seen a million pictures, you know what I mean?

No, but then I kept going back and then I got to see the local jewelers. And then of course Marella Agnelli had these wonderful ropes of rubies, and she even asked me to do a version for her. So I did various versions and then I used Indian beads that I — now, that I get from India — the emeralds and the rubies — do them in the emeralds and rubies, and they look pretty good.

MS. RIEDEL: So these are glass or plastic beads?

MR. LANE: Glass.

MS. RIEDEL: That come from India that you use today?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Has there been — I'll ask this in general terms —

MR. LANE: Only for that particular —

MS. RIEDEL: Piece.

MR. LANE: Piece, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there particular materials that you have found that have inspired you to make

particular pieces, or have particular pieces driven you to search for particular materials that would enable you to make — reproduce those pieces? It seems as there has been a back and forth between innovative materials and design, is what I'm getting at.

MR. LANE: Well, when I — when I — when casting plastic became a possibility, I started doing things that couldn't have been done before.

MS. RIEDEL: That was the '60s, yes?

MR. LANE: Yeah. But it got better and better and more and more, and then it died out, I told you, and then it came back. And things like semiprecious stones or one brooch I'll show you that it's — Duchess of Windsor had from Suzanne Belperron — another person who's on my payroll.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] You said — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: She even gets a bonus every Christmas.

MS. RIEDEL: How very nice.

MR. LANE: You know, I was able to reproduce that so well that the jeweler that has the rights to Belperron, Ward Landrigan, told me — congratulated me how good my resin — what's the stone now — that gal said to me — it'll come back in a minute —

MS. RIEDEL: Aquamarine, peridot?

MR. LANE: No, it was a grayish-blue —

MS. RIEDEL: Labradorite?

MR. LANE: No, Labradorite is you can't fake because it's iridescent inside — chalcedony.

MS. RIEDEL: It is chalcedony.

MR. LANE: Chalcedony, yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

MR. LANE: Not — [inaudible] — chalcedony.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: And I couldn't have done that otherwise, you see.

MS. RIEDEL: If it weren't for this particular way of working the resin?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah, a lot of things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: So with this —

MR. LANE: And I had stones made with resin too now. I have emeralds made which are incredible color.

MS. RIEDEL: And where is that?

MR. LANE: Made in Providence.

MS. RIEDEL: Providence? Okay. Have most of the materials come from Providence or India or Germany — I think of crystalline glass in terms of Germany. Crystal stones?

MR. LANE: Well, I have a lot of stones made in Germany. Swarovski is very good for their small crystals, but they — I've done some of their — when you get bigger, a lot of the colors don't please me well enough. So I have emeralds, rubies, and sapphires made in Germany. I'll show you —

MS. RIEDEL: Glass?

MR. LANE: In glass. And I brought them there and had them make tons of samples out of — you know, they have charges — hundred and hundreds and hundreds of colors of glass so — until I got a certain color that I had them, well, make this, this, this and you know, until I decided. And that that was fun — and sapphire from Munich., and Germany, and resin I have done here.

MS. RIEDEL: In Providence?

MR. LANE: Yeah. A lot of the German stones are made the same way glass was cast in the days of ancient pharaonic Egypt, in small molds — I mean, it's not a big — but the only problem with that is that sometimes there's a tiny variation in the size that can drive my people mad, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet — especially if it's for a specific — [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: Oh sure, yeah. Yeah. But one figures out how to do — deal with that.

MS. RIEDEL: I think we have been looking around your space here as we've had a couple of little breaks. And one of the things that I think so striking about your collection is that certain of the pieces that were originally produced in the '60s were produced for decades afterwards or are still produced today.

MR. LANE: The demand — by popular demand.

MS. RIEDEL: Or they go away and they come back again, they're reimaged, they're reinterpreted.

MR. LANE: Nancy Reagan wanted me to reproduce some things for the Reagan Library from her things that she had from mine — from — you know, that I had made for years.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm thinking also of the lion's mask door knocker series.

MR. LANE: Yeah, well, that's in that — so we're talking about that necklace, those earrings, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. Would you consider that one of your signature pieces?

MR. LANE: Yeah. You know, brilliant. Took a model from a hardware store — you know, a London hardware store.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, literally.

MR. LANE: So it's a door pull.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: Georgian English door pull — you know, drawer pull.

MS. RIEDEL: That's — it brings —

MR. LANE: It's called having the eye.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: It's not that I reinvented the wheel. But once the wheel was there, I sort of knew how to play with it. It's — no, it's editing, it's — you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And I think that makes a special sense in context of where you do — where your eye pulls from, because it could be the crown jewels in England, it could also be a souvenir shop in Venice, as you've mentioned, it could be at a hardware store in London.

MR. LANE: Absolutely. Then there's my little octopus ring, it came from a little glass octopus that cost a dollar or two from a junk shop in Venice. I had a pig brooch with a pearl in its belly, it's not — I don't know if we're doing it right now, but — and that came from a window — a whole family of pigs in Venice. A big octopus brooch came from a marvelous glassmaker in Venice. And then I figured out how to make it — well, it had to be made in several pieces and it took a while to get right, because it had to be cut in way where you couldn't see the — how it was attached.

Coral — I had a piece made by this wonderful glassmaker in Venice and then had it cast in metal and then had it cast in resin, and then took all the little pieces so I have different bits of coral, and it's better than real coral because it looks the same and it doesn't break. Coral is very fragile, you know, when you get small.

MS. RIEDEL: So when you're looking at all these varying objects, you're looking for the right scale, you're looking for the right animation, you're looking for the right —

MR. LANE: I don't know what I'm looking for until I find it. You know, it's like if you're an antique — go out to buy antiques. You go into a shop full of junk, and some people can't find anything and, I mean, some people can zero in and find something right away. Some people — I'm that same way, you know. I did buy once in Bucks County [PA] — I seen it the year — had seen it the year before, the next year it was still there. And it was a half of a coconut with a little tiny face that was carved on it, it was 30 bucks.

So I took it and had it mounted to a very good dealer here, and it turns out — turned out to be a very rare Philippine something or other. There is one — another one in the Rockefeller collection. You know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Yes. We'll pause this here because I think this card's about to end.

MR. LANE: Okay.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Kenneth Jay Lane in his New York City office on June ninth, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number two.

We were going to start this disc with a discussion of Diana Vreeland and what —

MR. LANE: When I first — Okay, I met Diana Vreeland — I'd heard about her, but I'd never seen her. When I first came to New York, and I went —

MS. RIEDEL: She was editor of *Harper's Bazaar* at this point? Yes.

MR. LANE: Yeah. I went up to a woman in the street I thought was Diana Vreeland; it wasn't Diana Vreeland at all. It's a very nice woman called — what was she called? She was very chic and very small and very together. I can't remember; it's not important. And I was a bit embarrassed, I said — and she was very pleased that I thought she was Diana Vreeland.

And then I met Diana Vreeland, and the first conversation was, I'd gotten a pair of shoes from Lobb in London — before I switched to Lobb in Paris — and I couldn't polish them. And I said, "Mrs. Vreeland, I know you know all about these things. I have these new shoes from Lobb, but they simply won't take polish." She said [He imitates her voice.], "Of course not, they're probably wax calf." I said, "Oh, what's wax calf?" She said, "You don't know wax calf? You shouldn't have wax calf, you know."

And I said, "Well, thank you. What do I do?" She said, "Well, they have to be boned, of course, boned, boned." And meanwhile, she's poking me in like this, "boned." She said, "You know, in the entire city of New York, you cannot find a rhinoceros horn?" — to bone the shoes.

That was our first conversation. Hardly our last. We became family, really. I mean, I knew her — I know her children. In fact, tonight, I'm dining with her grandson Alexander and his wife, and they're doing a film on her.

[Coughs.] I don't know how you translate that sound into writing — you can try —

MS. RIEDEL: "Cough." [Laughs.]

So she was extraordinarily significant for your career.

MR. LANE: Extraordinary, extraordinary, extraordinary, extraordinary.

MS. RIEDEL: And she was an enormously supportive — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: And she also gave me a philosophy, which is: the only thing that's important is, if it isn't positive, it doesn't exist.

MS. RIEDEL: If it isn't positive it —

MR. LANE: Anything that's negative does not exist. Why bother to dislike anyone? If you don't like them, you don't think about them. They don't exist. Only positive. It was her philosophy and word for it.

Only time I ever saw her broke down: She asked me to meet her in Spain after she was fired from *Vogue*, and she had gone up to stay with a friend of hers — I believe it was a friend called Kitty Miller. And they all go to — she wanted to go to Madrid, to which she had never been. We had some mutual friends. And I met her there. And she was absolutely marvelous. Except one night, she just started crying. They were playing *Fascination*, and it was at the dining room at the Ritz, where she finally wore a skirt because otherwise she'd try to sneak into the lobby in pants every day, and they wouldn't let her.

And, you know — and she was funny, you know. [Laughs.] I don't know how you use this one, but she kept wanting to see the Goyas at the — at the — at the Prado, of course. And we were at the Ritz right across from the Prado. And it was the last day. And every day I'd say, "What about — what about the Goya art?" She'd say, "[Mumbles.]" and so we'd simply — [inaudible] — else, you know, a bootmaker or the place where the — where the [ambassadors?] [bring ?] out their street clothes out of — whatever. Funny things.

She loved flamenco. I could never get her to go to a flamenco place.

MS. RIEDEL: She loved it but she didn't care to go?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But she was in state then, you know, in a way.

And so I said — and we were going to a lunch outside of Madrid at two o'clock. And the — and the Prado closed at two o'clock. This was at about one o'clock. And I said — I called her and I said, "You know, if we're going to see Goya, you don't have much time. The Prado closes at two and we have a lunch at two at so and so's."

So we get to the Prado — 1:30. And I said — on the way to the Goyas, who was — go right, straight back — I said, "Don't you just want to take a quick look at the Velázquez room?" "Goya, Goya." So we get to the first room, which is a round room in portraits on the wall, small — of royals — and all rather funny-looking. And she stands in the middle of the room; she says, "Oh my God. When Reed [Vreeland] and I were out in Toulon on our way to stay with darling Edwina and Leo [d'Erlanger] in Sidi Bou Said [Tunisia], the train arrived" — this is serious — "train arrived from the Escorial" — this is — was after the king abdicated, Alfonso 13th — "and they all arrived, all the Infante, and Infanta, in wheelchairs, on stretchers, and they were just like this one and that one."

We never left that room. That was all she saw. By that time, we had a crowd around us. You can't imagine — [inaudible]. It was quite funny.

That was Diane. I have a million Diane stories.

And of course she encouraged me, but she — and she'd drive me mad — turquoise. I think they must have sent twenty messengers to — we kept sending them different colored turquoise, beads and wah, wah, wah.

Finally, at — she called me at home, and she said, "It's amazing that nobody in this city knows what turquoise looks like." So I said, "Well, Diana, what about when you look down from the Amalfi drive into the Mediterranean into that wonderful color of the sea?" "No, no, no, no, no, no." "Ah, how about — in Turkey, they have — the donkeys have these beads, these blue beads — I think" — all she said to me, I said "dunkey"; she said, "donkey" and hung up.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: But — and then eventually, when she was no longer going out at all — she was not well at all, she was bedridden — we'd have our little meetings by appointment so that I wasn't bothering her, she wasn't bothering me, and I'd be — I'd be home at, say, 5:30, six o'clock, and I have a drink and we'd talk for 20 minutes.

And, if I had to invent a little bit, make it a little more exciting, when we got back from one trip to India when she was no longer going out, I tried to excite her — I said, "You know, I saw a man with the longest mustaches in the world." "Oh, how marvelous," she said, "tell me, tell me." She said,

"Where was this?" And I told her about Jaisalmer and I told her about Jaisalmer — do do do do do do. "And tell me about the mustache." And I said, "Well, they were rolled in his cheeks like two little dung patties," and she said, "What are dung patties?" And I told her about dung patties.

Then she said, "But if they were rolled up on his cheeks, how did you know they were the longest mustaches in the world?" I said, "Good question. I hate to tell you this, but I read about it in his obituary." "Oh my God. What happened?" "He was murdered. He was a dacoit." And then I went into the whole history of dacoits and blah, blah, blah. She said — anyway, the end of this 20-minute conversation — I was dragging it on, and so was she — she said, "Oh, Ken, you must be so sad." "Huh?" "To lose a new friend, someone you'd never really had a chance to converse with."

MS. RIEDEL: Wits —

MR. LANE: I mean, it's beyond "wits." It's a kind of fantasy imagination. She believed in what she believed in — you know. And when she said, typically, about Eleanor of Aquitaine, the woman who brought the French language to England — and then I gave her a look and she said, "Hmm, what are you trying to tell me? What's wrong? You and your history." I said, "Well, Diane, I was just thinking." "What are you thinking about now?" "Ten sixty-six." She said, "1066 Fifth? 1066 Park?" "No" — [laughs] — "I'm thinking of Hastings." "Yale? You didn't go to Yale." "Well, William the Conqueror." She said, "What? You mean to tell me that my beloved England was ever conquered?" You know, hello?

MS. RIEDEL: She must be pulling your leg.

MR. LANE: No. I don't — we never knew, but I don't think so.

MS. RIEDEL: Now —

MR. LANE: She was pulling her own leg.

MS. RIEDEL: — the cuffs of yours that she wore constantly, did you design those for her? Or did she —

MR. LANE: I did — no, I designed them for the Met. Well, first ones were Chanel things. Those, I did for the Chanel show at the Metropolitan Museum. That's when I broke down and did them even though I promised D. D. Ryan I wouldn't. But I couldn't say no to Diana.

MS. RIEDEL: And those were with the scattered gems, or — multi [inaudible]?

MR. LANE: No, that — no, those — those I didn't design for her, but she used to wear them *with* the others.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: — Which was a little over the top if — Diana. And, I mean, Diana — I miss her. She was something.

MS. RIEDEL: Those were enameled, were they not?

MR. LANE: Yeah. I still make them. I'll show you.

MS. RIEDEL: And when did you begin — the enameling work began in the '60s as well, yes?

MR. LANE: Oh, sure. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: So it seems as if the '60s was a real period of vast experimentation.

MR. LANE: Well, that's when I started.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: And I didn't — the marvelous thing is, I didn't know what not to do. You see, the thing is, if you study, you're told what not to do. Since I didn't know what to do and what not to do, I just did whatever I damn pleased.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm — [Affirmative]. I have heard that.

MR. LANE: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. LANE: So I was inventing all the way with no historical basis except all the jewelry in history, you know.

I've just given a cross to His Holiness.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Last — in Rome the other day.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Yeah. A friend of mine, who's very high up in the Vatican, Prince Hugo Windisch-Graetz, took me on a tour, a private tour, of the royal — of the papal jewels, which are not that great because Napoleon took the best stuff, and — but marvelous robes and things.

And, before I went — because I know him very well, I know his wife, his mother-in-law — and, I mean, his mother — wah, wah, wah, wah, wah [ph] — I said, sort of jokingly, perhaps, "I should give His Holiness a ring." He said, "He'd rather have a cross." He said, "He'd keep it here." He was in New York with his wife and family. He came up here, and I showed him various crosses. And I'll show you which one. And he said, "I think he'd like that one."

And then, he told me, when I was there, when he gave it to a bishop to give it to him — he'd just come back to Venice that day, that morning — I mean, the Hol — His Holiness had just come back, the Holy Father, as they call him, we call him — hello? Maybe he'll baptize me, who knows? [Inaudible] — John the Baptist — [inaudible] — we won't go there.

I was told, that first day he was in office, when he was elected, he had a very nice cross on. And when he went to his private apartments afterwards, they took it off of him and put into the vaults. So he can't — he can't wear those at home. So now, he has something he can wear in bed.

MS. RIEDEL: There you go.

You know, it may — just listening to you talk about Diana Vreeland — [inaudible] — it seems as if one of the things that —

MR. LANE: Some has worn off.

MS. RIEDEL: — both of you really shared was —

MR. LANE: Fantasy.

MS. RIEDEL: — a real engagement, yes, with fantasy and imagination. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
[Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: Where would we be without fantasy? Living in the tropics here. No, of course.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems also as if there was — there's a fusion between the theatrical and the daily in your way of thinking and — do you think that seems accurate?

MR. LANE: Well, unfortunately —

MS. RIEDEL: Bringing uncommon to the common.

MR. LANE: — unfortunately, the theatrical has become so incredibly bourgeois. You know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: If I see another play — and I'm not trying to be mean or funny about this, I'm serious — about people dying of AIDS — you know, yes, it's terrible, we've gone through this, da, da, da, et da, da, da, et da, da, da [ph], but it seems it's endless. And I'm also sick and tired of the question of homosexuality — [inaudible] — the sadness of it, the this, the that, the — [sighs] — you know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: Of — you know, these same subjects — so a little fantasy doesn't hurt.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Fantasy and variety. I was just walking around your space while we were having lunch, and I was just so struck by the variety — the variety of styles, materials.

MR. LANE: The — [inaudible] — a little too — a little too far with Lady Gaga —

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: — and the sub-culture.

MS. RIEDEL: You're not a fan of that imagination?

MR. LANE: I don't think it's attractive. Were it Madonna, yes. The Rolling Stones, yes. Lady Gaga is like a combination of the two of them gone bad.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's an interesting description.

MR. LANE: I mean, I'm — you know, I've never seen her in person. I saw — [inaudible] — and I saw the thing on HBO the other day.

MS. RIEDEL: I didn't see that.

MR. LANE: And the costumes. I mean, you know — and a lot of great, crazy costumes, but these were ugly.

MS. RIEDEL: And throughout your career, beauty has been something that has been important to you whether it was popular or not at the time. Beauty — as you've said, luxury, elegance — it never goes out of fashion. That's been of real importance to you.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. You know, beauty's changed through the ages. I mean, you know, faces have changed, but even a face that isn't a pretty face can be beautiful, you know? I love Italian noses. I love Dutch profiles. You know — you've seen — you've seen women. And, I mean, I look at a girl and I say, "My God, she looks exactly like a Netherlandish portrait, you know?"

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

When I think of your work from the '60s, I think of the diversity and variety of influences that you pulled from, the diversity and variety of materials that you worked with.

One thing we haven't touched on yet is the actual seashells that you worked with. It was one of the few materials that were not plastic or fabricated, right?

MR. LANE: Well, that came out of Fulco, too —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — out of Verdura.

MS. RIEDEL: We should talk about that, because that's been an extraordinary influence on you. When were you first exposed to that work?

MR. LANE: [Sighs.] I think somebody, either Babe or Betsey Whitney, had a seashell brooch of Fulco's. And then I saw pictures of them — in photography books, you know, *Vogue* — old *Vogues* or whatever, of *Bazaars*.

And there was this shell — a lady with a shell shop on Third Avenue not far from here. And I used to go there.

I also made earrings out of Cuban tree snails —

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: — it stopped existing — [inaudible] —

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right. Yes.

MR. LANE: — and, you know, of that sort of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: I love shells. I mean, you know, I always loved shells, since I was a kid.

MS. RIEDEL: We've talked about fantasy. Did you ever think about Surrealism and Surrealists in particular in relation to your work?

MR. LANE: Well, no, I left that to Dali.

MS. RIEDEL: No. So, nothing in particular. You weren't — [inaudible] — consciously?

MR. LANE: No — [inaudible] — the lips and all that sort of thing. You know, Dali wrote about those before they were ever produced, in a book called *Hidden Faces — Salvador Dali* [Dial Press, 1944].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: He wrote about his fantasy ideas of jewels —

MS. RIEDEL: And which —

MR. LANE: — before he even drew them or whatever — and then they were produced, you know, in small quantity, in precious —

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

Do you think about your work in terms of any particular art movements? Do you think about it as Postmodern? Do you think —

MR. LANE: I don't think about it very much and [inaudible] — [laughs]. I just do it.

Well, I love Art Deco.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And we will get to that [inaudible] the '70s.

MR. LANE: And I love Art Deco jewelry. It was sexy. It was the first new — I mean — Art Nouveau, okay, Art Nouveau came first. But Art Nouveau was never fashionable in jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: It was worn by intellectuals, by bluestocking ladies in Vienna and actresses like Sarah Bernhardt. But it was never really fashionable. It wasn't sexy.

And Art Nouveau actually comes — there's the first Art Nouveau, if you want to go back, I think — [inaudible] — in my mind, in my experience — is a Dutch silversmith called van Vianen. And his silvers work that — it's very Art Nouveau. And — [inaudible] — maybe the Metropolitan has something, I don't know. Google it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I will.

MR. LANE: And it's in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Is it called the Rijksmuseum? Yeah.

But Art Deco is exciting, I think, and it was really new, all the — these — *les arts décoratifs*, in furniture, in everything was — everything that was designed: lighting fixtures — you know — and went for the sexy clothes of the '30s —

MS. RIEDEL: Very geometric, beautifully crafted.

MR. LANE: Very geometric.

And I started doing it when — for about six years, I kept doing it before I sold a piece to a store.

MS. RIEDEL: And you really started doing that kind of work in the '70s, mid-'70s, early '70s? When did that —

MR. LANE: Early '70s.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the inspiration for you to start doing that sort of work?

MR. LANE: I liked it.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you see a particular collection? Did you see —

MR. LANE: I'd seen pictures of it, you know, and I'd seen bits.

MS. RIEDEL: And you have Cartier pieces in particular that — [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: Oh, the Cartier piece, and, well, the — well — [inaudible] — some pictures, photographs — books on jewelry, you know — a few things. I know, if you — I know a friend of mine has a marvelous Cartier long brooch. It's on the cover of the [Hans] Nadelhoffer *Cartier* book [Chronicle Books, 2007].

And actually, about 19 — late '60s or 1970 — maybe even the late '60s — I bought the most amazing Cartier box, which is lapis lazuli set in coral with mother of pearl the size of two Egyptian turquoise — [inaudible] — and —

I sold it to a collector who absolutely adored it, because I always had it locked up, because it was — and it was — it was too big to — it was slightly bigger than a package of cigarettes and much heavier to keep it in a pocket, much heavier.

And at a table I was afraid if it fell, it would break, and — you know, because it was so fragile.

And anyway, it's in the Nadelhoffer book.

So, I mean, that was early — [inaudible] — that was something I owned and it certainly gave me an inspiration.

MS. RIEDEL: So your Deco work really changed your palette. Did it affect your materials as well?

MR. LANE: Not so much, no. I'll show you a whole bunch of Deco we have now.

MS. RIEDEL: I've seen a few pieces, but I'd love to see — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: Yeah. I mean, some stores love it; some don't get it. Women get it.

MS. RIEDEL: But you said that you designed it for quite some time before it became popular.

MR. LANE: Yeah, before it was even sold by — [inaudible] — Horchow collection. Had three pieces and it was — and he said, "from the — from the estate of the great" — not the late, but great — "Kenneth Jay Lane" — very sweet — and there were three pieces of Art Deco. And they sold well.

MS. RIEDEL: What is it in particular about that Deco aesthetic that really resonates with you?

MR. LANE: [Exasperated sound.] It's like asking about a flavor of a — of, what do you like about certain cheese? I mean, how do you describe it? Or how do you — you know what I mean, or —

MS. RIEDEL: It would nice to hear it in your words.

MR. LANE: — or a piece of music — how do you help describe why? You just like it. You love it.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it the proportion, the color, the materials, the forms —

MR. LANE: I love it. I like it. I don't have to —

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: I don't have to — I don't have to describe why.

MS. RIEDEL: It just resonates with you.

MR. LANE: I know it to myself. I just like it.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Does that remain one of your favorite —

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: — styles of work?

MR. LANE: [Inaudible], yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Nothing since has been any more inspiring?

MR. LANE: Well, it's not a matter of inspiring. I just like it. I always do it. Plus lots of other stuff — [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

In the '70s, the work, it seems, took a turn towards gold. And I think this was your first trip to Egypt, wasn't it, in '75? There was also that big Tut exhibit?

MR. LANE: No, '70, '70.

MS. RIEDEL: Seventy was your first trip to Egypt?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I was photographed in women's wear on a camel wearing a fur cape and a big black hat. And Egypt was marvelous then. It was under Nasser, but Cairo, you could get from central Cairo to the pyramids in 20 minutes. Now it's two hours. Traffic.

MS. RIEDEL: And you began to design work that was really different than what you'd done before, no?

MR. LANE: Well, I did some Egyptian things too. Why not? It was fun. And I bought a lot of little souvenir things — [inaudible] — models. You know — [inaudible] — you know, I bought — I bought bits and pieces in museum shops, in the Smithsonian [Institution] in Washington, at the [National] Museum of African Art, the [National] Museum of Natural History, things — you know, then I'd take them apart — you know, do certain things with it. I have — I'll show you — an earring that I know was bought the other day — [inaudible] — mad about it, as if they've never seen it; I've had it in my collection for 30 years — that came from — [inaudible] — a bunch of seals and metal Muslim seals that I bought in the fort of Jodhpur [India] for nothing. You know what I mean? I bought things and

then, you know, use — have them cast and take them apart and use bits and pieces to go in other things.

It's a matter of cutting corners. Just a matter of, you never get a model maker to really be able to translate a Muslim poem — you know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

When I think about your work over a period of time, it doesn't seem that there are long periods when there's a focus on a single thing, but it does seem that you're constantly pulling from historical collections, from museum collections, from your own travels, from the cultural Zeitgeist —

MR. LANE: From everything, from the air, from everything.

MS. RIEDEL: — from society trends, from museum exhibitions.

MR. LANE: I do more — I do more gold than silver because sterling silver — well, silver is becoming more expensive, but silver really isn't that much more expensive — silver jewelry — but gold is. And I think really, women more — well, women like silver as well, but — some women only wear silver jewelry — but gold has its appeal — that's why gold is where it is. You can't wear oil, but you can wear gold.

MS. RIEDEL: You also did some work inspired by pre-Columbian gold.

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Had you been to Peru or Colombia?

MR. LANE: Yes. Yes. Yes. I bought some — [inaudible]. There's a street in Bogota right next to a wonderful gold museum —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that is extraordinary.

MR. LANE: — where they have reproductions of everything in the museum. And I bought stuff there and used bits and pieces and interpret it in different ways. I mean, there's a ring that was for — I think, for two fingers or something, or maybe it was for something else — maybe it was very congressional.

Then I put it in the middle of beads and then I put stones on it and I put snake ends out, wah, wah, wah. You know, you got to — I'm not embarrassed by talking about, I mean, having bought reproductions of museum pieces and fiddled with them, you know. I don't do them per se.

MS. RIEDEL: Never? Rarely.

MR. LANE: Hardly ever.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: Hardly ever.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: Babe Paley, once, when I was away, left in my office a box with three gold big pre-

Columbian pendants that she wanted me to do something with. I called her, I said, "Babe, never do that again." I mean, you know, these were worth a hell of a lot of money. So it's better that I buy reproductions and fiddle with them and put droopy eyes.

I'll show you around a bit.

MS. RIEDEL: Shall we do that?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, let's do that, take a break.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing Kenneth Jay Lane in his office, slash, light factory in New York City on June tenth, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number three.

Let's start this morning with —

MR. LANE: What is a what — what is a light factory.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. LANE: We don't make lights here. [They laugh.] We try to light up the world.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Now there's — here we do — we do receiving; inspection, very important — quality inspection; shipping; invoicing and all that; and we do gluing. A lot of things I have made without, say, the center stone, if there's a — you know, if there's a center stone that changes, when the rest doesn't; so we put that in here, and we do stringing here.

MS. RIEDEL: Does every piece pass through here before it heads out?

MR. LANE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So this is quality control?

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And any idea —

MR. LANE: It's *very* important.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it? Have you had a wide range of quality passing through, some — many things you've had to reject over time or —

MR. LANE: Well, we're very, very — we're very, very particular, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: How long has this been the case, that this was the factory for lighter work and the quality control center?

MR. LANE: Here in this building — I was on the sixth floor and moved up here 20 years ago or something.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: But I've been here since 1969.

MS. RIEDEL: How many pieces pass through here?

MR. LANE: [Sighs.] God knows, thousands and thousands and thousands, probably a million maybe.

MS. RIEDEL: [Inaudible.]

MR. LANE: You know, I have — I have no idea.

MS. RIEDEL: We were just talking yesterday over the lunch about the reproduction you made of Catherine Middleton's engagement ring.

MR. LANE: Ah, that doesn't come through here. That's a whole separate thing.

MS. RIEDEL: It doesn't come through here. Oh, it is?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: How many pieces — how many of those sold? You told yesterday I couldn't — [inaudible]—

MR. LANE: The ring, 85,000 —

MS. RIEDEL: That's what I thought.

MR. LANE: — and the earring[s], 32,000.

MS. RIEDEL: Now why would that not pass through here? QVC handled differently?

MR. LANE: But — well, that — no, it's another company; I work through — with another company who has it made and is responsible.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. LANE: Yeah, which prevent — which keeps me — frees me from going out to QVC to meetings, from dealing with the truck that broke down or —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — the — once the pearls had an odor. You know what I mean? [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: God knows, you know. No, that's a whole separate — that's a totally separate shop.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: They — and others — I mean, other things have sold incredibly. I mean, once TSV

[Today's Special Value] printed a special value, which goes out at midnight; it was three strands of pearls. And they were linked to the inauguration of Bill Clinton, and I was photographed by QVC in Washington at this — where was it? An enormous military hall for a ceremony, beautifully done, not the inauguration, but having to do with — and it was very — a very — and they were entertain — there was — there were entertainers. And it was during — you know, big crowd.

And I remember — I think they photographed me kissing Pamela Harriman who, of course, was so responsible for getting Clinton in. She worked so hard because she was determined; she was the keeper of the flame. And she was determined to get a Democrat into the White House because her husband, Averell Harriman, was this, you know — was the head of the Democratic Party, if you like, you know, the éminence grise, and she did. And then in my book, you — there's this thing about the saxophone brooch that I sent her.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. LANE: And so — and then she gave it to all the right people. So it was quite funny.

MS. RIEDEL: And the pearls connect to that story too?

MR. LANE: Well, the pearls were three strands of pearls — I think, maybe in two colors; I can't remember. I mean, a white and gray or something, and it had to do with that party, I don't — can't remember why. But then I was driven back to QVC and stopped on the way at a Chinese restaurant off the road and had two Mai Tais to drink, and I guess I was in very good humor, and we sold out of the whole million pieces —

MS. RIEDEL: Of the pearls?

MR. LANE: — yeah, in one hour, which is very unusual to sell out in one hour, because usually that goes on all day until the midnight the next day.

And then another coup was — [laughs] — I hate to admit some of these things, [President Barack] Obama's inaugural — inauguration, I went on QVC myself at eight o'clock for eight minutes to introduce the VIP Gift Bag Inaugural Ball Pearls, which were nine colors of pearls, because it was '09, and they had been sent to Mrs. Obama [First Lady Michelle Obama] — had one, and it was all approved and so forth.

And we sold — and then — but then this guy who goes on for me, Barry Ort, on QVC — a very nice fellow, and he's a great salesman — was photographed at the inaugural ball. Now, when you say "inaugural ball," there — I don't how many there are — 50? You know, this might have been 40 — number 49, I don't know. He was in black tie, and he smiled, and waved at the — on the screen. And then, I don't know how many I've — were sold in my eight minutes. But then he rushed back — was rushed back to QVC; I think he went on at eleven [o'clock], and then he went on at one in the morning, and he went on the next morning at nine and — you know, there were all little bits. It wasn't a whole show, and we sold \$8 million worth of them.

MS. RIEDEL: And these were pearls that were sent to Michelle Obama or to Hillary Clinton? Sorry, I — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: No, this is Michelle Obama. This was Obama's inauguration.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, okay. And did she wear them at the — at the —

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, she didn't wear them, but they were sent to her.

MR. LANE: She had them. I mean, you know, they were sent to her. The package was signed for and so forth. [Laughs.] And there was this — it was huge.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Huge, huge, huge, huge.

MS. RIEDEL: I was thinking last night how it does seem like a — your career could really be understood in context of the theater and the drama of the daily — the daily life that —

MR. LANE: [Laughs.] It's a funny —

MS. RIEDEL: It's not just theater; it's not just the common daily experience. But it is a bringing of the theatrical and Hollywood and larger than life into people's daily lives. Is it —

MR. LANE: Yeah, and of course it's very two — it's very two-sided in a way, because I do what I hope is very beautiful and very well made. What you call "couture jewelry" —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — on one hand, which is sold at the best stores all over the world, and then I do less expensive things for QVC that sell in huge quantities, which I enjoy because more women all over the country can own a piece of my stuff, and I — and it makes — and it makes them some happy out of —

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, yeah.

MR. LANE: — because jewelry does make you happy. You mentioned this thing I said on QVC about, "My jewelry makes you — one live longer." And of course, their legal office went mad —

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: — but it's true. I — but I said, you know, "If you wear jewelry, it makes you happier." I mean, it certainly doesn't make you *not* happier.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: And if you're happier, you're healthier. So obviously if you're healthier, you live longer, right?

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: I mean, it just makes sense. It's not a guarantee of longevity —

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right, but moving you in that direction.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: What inspires you? What has influenced you? What would you cite as your major

influences?

MR. LANE: Well, beautiful women, beautiful fashionable women.

MS. RIEDEL: Starting when you were very small, from what we said yesterday. You — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: Yeah, and my grandmother had a friend — can't remember her name, but I had kind of a crush on her — and she was very dressy. She wore silver foxes, which were very big in those days; you know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. LANE: And then Mae West — [laughs] — and all the — all the ladies in films. Constance Bennett was marvelous in — and so very, very chic in — *Topper* films, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: And Marie Antoinettes and, you know, Norma Shearer as Marie Antoinette, and so forth and so on. That's when I was very young, and then when I got to know fashionable women in New York, and I was fortunate [inaudible] I did. And a lot of them were still — if they're still alive, are good — still friends of mine, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: But, you know, some of these women were extraordinary, like Babe Paley. I mean, they really such style —

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: — and an aura about them. C.Z. Guest, Babe Paley, Gloria Guinness, and Diana Vreeland. I mean, that's in a — that, of course, was an influence, and then beauty — I mean, museums, I love going to museums anyway. I can get an idea from a painting as well. I mean, chains — all those wonderful chains on Cranach ladies.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm sorry; which ladies?

MR. LANE: Cranach — Lucas Cranach. Elizabethan — you know, the wonderful pendants in the Elizabethan portraits. It goes on and on and on, you know. The Greek and Roman jewelry —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — Egyptian jewelry and then into the later Renaissance in the 18th century and, as I mentioned, the Green Vaults, the Grune Gewölbe, in Dresden, and St. Petersburg and Munich, and the Indian jewelry at the V&A [Victoria and Albert Museum, London]. And in the Metropolitan Museum too, there's wonderful —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — Greek, Roman, Egyptian —

MS. RIEDEL: I'd like to talk about your inspiration from Chanel and from Cartier, from Tiffany, Jean Schlumberger, Fulco di Verdura. When you first became aware of these artists, designers, or particular pieces that were inspiring to you?

MR. LANE: Yes, of course. I mean, sometimes pieces that I saw being worn, others that are — were in books of jewels or in auction catalogs or at auction, at the exhibitions, those of the — at the auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's — it all had an influence. The diamonds of Mary of Modena in the Tower of London, which were flat-cut triangular stones that would make up a kind of Maltese-type cross. You know, that — I mean, stuck in my head.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes me think immediately of one of your Harlequin necklaces with the diamond-cut stones that were sort of flat — would that have been an inspiration for a piece like that?

MR. LANE: Well, well, I did things for all the Neiman Marcus — for — their fortnights. They would have different fortnights — the French fortnight and the British fortnight, a Chinese fortnight, and a Japanese fortnight — and, you know, where the whole store would be sort of turned into — the downtown Neiman Marcus stores. I'm going way back now; they don't do this any longer.

MS. RIEDEL: Seventies?

MR. LANE: Oh, '60s —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: — even.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And for the English fortnight to do something that was English-English was a bit of a problem because what's so English, you know, in jewels, except something like, say — St. — the Order of St. George, it's not very practical.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: And I went with the Neiman Marcus buyer to the British Museum and, at the gift shop, we thought maybe there'd be something interesting — no, except for some wax seals, you know, which we had — we had limitations. And then I thought, "Ah, the Tower of London."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: So what I did for that — for this — for this particular event, was I had — in Germany, I had famous diamonds of the Koh-i-Noor, the Pigot, the Hope — the shapes, not the color necessarily, all made about the same size. Then I had them made for me, and then I had settings made for them, and that was a necklace that, in New York at big parties, you saw two or three women wearing it always.

MS. RIEDEL: Really.

MR. LANE: Yeah, it's in my book. Diana Vreeland had a — I made a two for her, so she could wear two together.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, this is the Headlights necklace you're talking about.

MR. LANE: Headlight, yeah, yeah. You know what it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, exactly. And some of them were very simple, just a simple strand of enormous

clear stones and then others had dangling elements.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: Right, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: We saw one yesterday.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: That strikes me as one of your signature pieces. Would you think so too?

MR. LANE: Yes, it certainly was at that moment. Then with sales — it's still vaguely popular.

MS. RIEDEL: I think that piece is interesting too because that's strictly your design, correct?

MR. LANE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: Now this shape came — this shape, now I put it with — now I put this on top and made it a part of — came from something that Millicent Rogers made for herself and which is in the Metropolitan Museum. This bracelet is actually a bracelet one finds in bazaars in the Middle East.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, gold-plated cuff, right?

MR. LANE: It's a particular kind of cuff, except they're always very small. So what I did is that I put two hinges there.

MS. RIEDEL: What — right.

MR. LANE: So it makes it fit.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, I noticed that on the cuffs yesterday.

MR. LANE: It's very important to be practical; you see what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: So the inspiration for the Headlights necklace came from the crown jewels in London?

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah. This has been copied now, which is very funny. This — the original of this, I think it's in Munich in this — in the Schatzkammer, I think, and a marvelous jeweler in Venice just made one called the conyenato.

MS. RIEDEL: Just so people know what we're talking about — it's a fabulous gold and pearl and ruby and emerald pendant on a black silk cord.

MR. LANE: And ruby and emerald — yeah, very big. Yeah, yep, very big.

MS. RIEDEL: Star-shaped.

MR. LANE: Yeah, well. Many-pointed stars. This is the — you see, this came from this.

MS. RIEDEL: The pigs and the frogs with the pearls and the enamels.

MR. LANE: Yeah, I mean, I bought — this was found — this for a dollar somewhere. And this came from a pig made of porcelain in a junk shop in Venice — I mean, in a tourist shop. This came from this.

MS. RIEDEL: The elephant. So now would you take this to the factory in Providence and have them cut it and cast it?

MR. LANE: Yeah, I'd have them cast — cast it, sure. Absolutely.

MS. RIEDEL: And then there was a period where a lot of black enamel began to happen on the work. I wanted to check about that because it's more than a factory —

MR. LANE: Well — black enamel, I — is the most popular. And we also do colored enamel, particularly blue.

For — this — and the story is there. This came from a box, Fabergé box, that — the story is fascinating because Mrs. Keppel — Alice Keppel, gave it to her great "friend," Edward the Seventh.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: And when he died, Queen Alexandra gave it back to her. A cigarette box — I've seen the box actually.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? Where is it?

MR. LANE: Exhibition in England. And then Mrs. Keppel, when she got old, gave it to Queen Mary, who collected Fabergé.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah. Now was this done — was that piece done in the '70s? That neck collar? Because I wanted to talk about some of the —

MR. LANE: Yes, yes, the '70s, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: — work you did with the Royal Worcestershire collection?

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah, Royal Worcester, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: That was really interesting.

MR. LANE: That was in the '70s.

MS. RIEDEL: That was a collaboration where you were actually on-site in a factory.

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah, and I had a wonderful time. I drove — I mean, here, this bracelet I make now, but I've improved it.

MS. RIEDEL: That —

MR. LANE: First of all, I have a different kind of hinge and a spring so it fits everyone, and I did a better pavé of the cabochons.

MS. RIEDEL: What do you call this bracelet?

MR. LANE: It's a Lion Head bracelet. It's based on something of Bulgari, actually.

MS. RIEDEL: And it has many, many ruby cabochons.

MR. LANE: Yeah, well, we do it in every flavor.

MS. RIEDEL: From Bulgari.

MR. LANE: [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: But I would love to talk about your experience in the factory. Would you describe what that was like? How you got involved and all that?

MR. LANE: Well, I got involved. They came to me, and I went to England and to — would stay in the — I'd stay in the hotel in Worcester. And when I — when I went to the factory, I believe in going around and talking to workers and, you know, getting my hands wet, if you like. And management there never went into the factory.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. LANE: And they — and they had tea served many times a day —

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: — you know, and they were very nice men. And they couldn't believe that I was — had rolled up my sleeves. And I got people, first of all, I got a hold of the books they have of the copper molds — copper plates that were buried during the war — the Second World War, so they wouldn't be melted down.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: They go back to the late — to the early, early 19th century or late 18th, and those are used — they put ink on the plate, and then they put it on a piece of porcelain —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — and then they fire it, and that's the basis of the whole design.

But they stopped using those, and this — you know, everything was being done by transfer, which eventually kind of practically put them out of business because the Japanese were doing it much more cheaply. And they — and they had ladies then — and they — and they got rid of all of those ladies too who, for generations — local ladies — would come in and paint and chatter and just —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — and they — and, you know, they didn't have to have great talent.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: But, you know, it was a matter of painting the tail on the donkey purple or whatever, you know, like Andy Warhol's books.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: We always used — well, we used to go to the factory and they gave us a big round table at the first factory on Lexington Avenue. And there was always — this is the table, and you would take a brush and paint the tail on the donkey purple or whatever you felt like doing. It was very funny. So, anyway — and then I had them — there was one design of butterflies.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: And I had them do it on a black background. They said they couldn't — they couldn't — wouldn't work, that they couldn't fire it — well, it did work perfectly well. And I merchandised it originally, and Neiman Marcus did an ad on it, Saks did an ad on it; it was in the Horchow catalog. It did very, very well.

And then the Royal Worcester was sold to Carborundum, and all the people who I've worked with are gone, and new people love to change things. So they just stopped doing it instead of then going to the next step and having their salesmen sell it to gift shops. Anyway, so that was that.

MS. RIEDEL: Was that the one time you've worked on china?

MR. LANE: On china, yeah. I also went to Orrefors in —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — and they — when I got there at nine [o'clock], they were having lunch — the workmen.

MS. RIEDEL: At nine in the morning?

MR. LANE: Yeah. They started working at six earlier —

MS. RIEDEL: Early.

MR. LANE: — you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And they made crystal? It was all crystal and glass? All — okay.

MR. LANE: It was all crystal, but it was so expensive, because the wages in Sweden were just outrageous. So it really wasn't salable.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there things that you took away from your experiences in those factories that you were able then to bring back with you and put into play in Providence?

MR. LANE: Not really, no, not really, because it was very special things.

MS. RIEDEL: No?

MR. LANE: But — and I had a good time at Orrefors. I had them even do something in overlay glass, a Maltese Cross, over — in blue — bright blue and white overlay glass. And they loved it; and, you know, it was rather terrific. They had fun doing it. You know, I was always working with the workmen, the actual working —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — work people at the stoves, at the kilns, and so forth.

MS. RIEDEL: I imagine that gave you all sorts of insight into what the material was, how it might be used in ways that it hadn't been used before?

MR. LANE: Well, no, no, because it was very specific. It was for that, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: But, for example, the black enamel: They didn't think you could paint on top of it, and you said yes.

MR. LANE: Oh, no, no, no, no, this wasn't enamel; this was actually fired —

MS. RIEDEL: With clay, right.

MR. LANE: — in clay, you know. And they just thought, "No, black, you can't fire black; it doesn't work." It worked.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like there —

MR. LANE: I insisted, and they worked.

MS. RIEDEL: There was an era in the '70s and '80s when there was much more interaction between artists and factories, when the artists would actually go into factories and all sorts of their designs would be put forth, and there was interesting work that came out of that.

MR. LANE: Yeah, unfortunate — yeah, but so many of those factories are closed. Businesses have gone under. I'm not sure they — there is a Royal Worcester anymore, maybe just the label —

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. LANE: — and everything's made in China. They do — used to be made in Japan and now China —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — or Thailand or wherever, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: You've gotten materials from a variety of countries — gotten glass from Germany; you've had glass made in the Middle East.

MR. LANE: Yeah, they still do. Yeah, the — Germany still has that — you know, in Europe, there are still many crafts that still exist and in production too.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: England less so because — why I can't really tell you: unions or — probably unions; just like unions forced the shoe industry out of America, out of New York anyway, which is a pity. It's why so little is made and manufactured in America. Just became too expensive.

MS. RIEDEL: The glass that you have made in Germany, when did you start having it made there?

MR. LANE: Oh, that was — well, the first one — things were that necklace, which was from the '60s.

MS. RIEDEL: The Headlights piece or long before that?

MR. LANE: Yeah. No, no, the Headlight piece was the first time.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And did you discover that glass during a trip to Germany and thought, "Hmm"?

MR. LANE: No, no, I knew that there was — that each — there was — they had an office in New York, but then I did go there myself, I told you, and I — you know, looked at all these colors to develop my rubies, emeralds, and sapphires.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And they would make it to specification and just send it over?

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah, and I — and they still do make it for me.

MS. RIEDEL: They still do. What's the name of the company?

MR. LANE: Well, it's not important. It's, I mean —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, it's a trade secret?

MR. LANE: Well, it's not a trade secret, but it's not — it's not — it's, you know — it's of no consequence.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. But I imagine that there aren't many that can do it?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: No, trade secret.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So there are certain pieces that are really made possible because of very small factories that make specific material?

MR. LANE: Yeah, exactly. Swarovski was just enormous.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: They — their colors don't suit me, I told you, as far as big stones.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: And then — [laughs] — they're a very funny company. They're very nice people; however, they're — up — many, many, many chefs — [laughs] — and many too — well, maybe too many. Because, you see, every — it's a funny company, because in Grandpa's will, every family member has equal voting rights, not depending on how much stock they have.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. LANE: Therefore the company will probably never be sold, and the member of the — family member whom I knew first, — Swarovski's mother was actually a Swarovski, the daughter of the founder — had the biggest — by far, the biggest number of stocks, and he was thrown out of office by the board because he'd made a big mistake once by buying an American company, anyway,

some — nothing to do with me.

But then they will eliminate a color or eliminate a size. You know, I have a fairly big stock of stones that don't exist anymore, not very rare stones, just because they stopped making a certain size, which means if you don't have a stock of those things, anything that takes that size, your model — you're finished, you know, then you can't use those molds any longer.

MS. RIEDEL: Could you then have those stones made elsewhere, perhaps in Germany?

MR. LANE: Yes, could. Could.

MS. RIEDEL: But it complicates things.

MR. LANE: It's a different kind of stone, though. They don't have the fire. The kind — I mean, Swarovski stones are very, very good. You know, they're very sparkly.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So there is a dialog —

MR. LANE: And their best cuts — all right, but their best cuts, which I love using, the most expensive cut they only do in crystal — in clear now. They don't do it in color at all. Awh.

MS. RIEDEL: And they wouldn't even for a special order you don't normally —

MR. LANE: Well, yes, I've had a stone made because I have a Riviere necklace, which is a graduated diamond necklace, very, very good quality cushioned stones. And they stopped making a certain millimeter — I can't remember which one it was — so I couldn't do the graduation any longer. So I had them make it for me, and I have a lifetime supply.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. LANE: Two lifetimes.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: But I do — since I please — since my goal is to please myself, I don't mind making those investments.

MS. RIEDEL: And there is something about — there are certain pieces, certain series, certain groups of your work that are very much stone-based. I think —

MR. LANE: Oh yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: It makes me think of Schlumberger. There's a wonderful quote of Diana Vreeland about his appreciating "the miracles of jewels. For him, they are the ways and means to the realization of his dreams."

MR. LANE: That's about Schlumberger?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah, so Schlumberger, Fulco, JAR now — Joel Rosenthal of Paris — who really paints with stones. And he — we're very friendly. All the jewelers are friendly with me — David Webb, Fulco very much so, except Johnny Schlumberger. He took exception to me.

MS. RIEDEL: And why was that?

MR. LANE: Mmm? I didn't know him at all.

MS. RIEDEL: There seems to be a lot of sharing back and forth of designs from precious stones to non-precious stones and back again. Was there any issue of — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: [Coughs.] I do this on television to advertise cigarettes.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh dear.

MR. LANE: Or cough drops.

MS. RIEDEL: There you go. Was there — or water. Was there ever any issue of copyright?

MR. LANE: I was sued by Van Cleef in Paris because somehow a little brooch that I had copied from a picture from a catalog — now I'm very aware that if something is in a catalog and there's no name on it — you see, they don't always have the jeweler's name — they do, I know. But this didn't, I don't think. And I should have kept the page, you know. And I did it for QVC with a removable stone in the middle — in the belly of the bird — little bird — the little bird — a very small thing — kind of cute. And with a set of other colors that you could pop in and out they were — had magnets on the back.

And somehow one got in the window of this shop in Paris without a removable stone — I don't know how it got there. You know what I mean, maybe we had one sitting around and duh, duh, duh. And it must have been in the window or something, and Van Cleef people came with the police. And it was a long — [inaudible] — I got a French lawyer, they had a lawyer — that went on and on and on.

And eventually I could have gotten out of the whole thing, because the former president of Cartier New York, Ralph Destino, whom I knew very well, left Cartier New York and went on the board of the company that owns Van Cleef and Cartier — it's — it's a very big holding company. Anyway — owned by major stockholder Mr. Ludwig — anyway, you could find it if you Googled the name of the company — just can't remember.

And he could have solved the whole thing except the French lawyers had agreed — it was like Balzac. It was absolutely Balzac. You know, when two French lawyers agree, nothing can be changed.

MS. RIEDEL: And why did that one particular bird, out of all the back and forth of all the designs over decades, cause such trouble?

MR. LANE: You see, even if something is changed a bit in Paris, they're very, very, very aware of copies of anything, and even if it comes close to it is different. You know, here if you change something, you know, it's not the same.

MS. RIEDEL: But there are things that are extremely close, they've gone —

MR. LANE: It's Paris.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, so it was Paris in particular.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: You have had shops in many places around the world but — so I take it perhaps not in Paris?

MR. LANE: Well, no, we sell a lot in Paris. But there's one shop that buys a lot from us, on the Rue de Castiglione, where my name is in the pavement — it says "Ken Lane" because it was once a Ken Lane shop — long story — when there was a company that opened a lot of Kenneth Lane shops. And they went bye-bye. They went into bankruptcy years ago.

And they won't buy — the camellia, you know — a camellia brooch from me because of Chanel's camellia.

MS. RIEDEL: I see. So they've very specific about copyright.

MR. LANE: They're very specific. They were afraid of Cartier leopards.

MS. RIEDEL: But you've had no problem with that here?

MR. LANE: But other people make leopards too.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: Lot of people.

MS. RIEDEL: And then you think about Verdura and those early pieces for Chanel —

MR. LANE: Oh they're [inaudible] about them.

MS. RIEDEL: Exact. So they're — that's all fine?

MR. LANE: Even — absolutely direct copies of Verdura things that they had in the exhibition — absolutely direct copies.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think about that in terms of appropriation, that whole art sense of appropriation, or is it more just a reinterpretation and a reimagining of pieces that you love?

MR. LANE: Well, if something — take something that's very precious and very expensive, and you make it available to a much greater audience, in a way it's a tribute to the original design, if you look at it that way. But clothes all the time, you know, the things that look like Balenciaga still. But, you know, the French are very, very strict about that — and in Paris.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting because I was reading that some of the first designs that Verdura came up with for Chanel were based on things that they had seen in museums.

MR. LANE: Oh sure.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. So —

MR. LANE: Well, museums, that's fair game.

MS. RIEDEL: So as long as it's far enough in history not a problem; it's just the contemporary work that's really problematic. Okay.

MR. LANE: Yeah, exactly. I mean, there was a big JAR exhibition in London — a very grand affair

with several openings and a big dance and dinners, and I was invited to everything. And it was a fairly small list of the very top — first evenings, you know, very top-drawer kind of thing. And I was on the list.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there a community of jewelers that inspires each other or works together or —

MR. LANE: No, I don't think so.

MS. RIEDEL: No?

MR. LANE: No, they're quite competitive.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there a community that's been important to your development as an artist? I certainly think of Diana Vreeland, of course, as being extraordinarily —

MR. LANE: Oh that — in that way.

MS. RIEDEL: But other ways too. And perhaps the people you know — your friends who've supported your work and —

MR. LANE: Yeah. I mean, I was very fortunate when I began, you see, and there's some pictures in my book of women like — [inaudible] — and Chessy Rayner, who were my — were friends. And they were my age, and they were — you know, they wore my jewelry. It amused them, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And because they wore it and they were photographed wearing it, it spread the work.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think about your work as in any way political — and I'm thinking about it particularly in terms of democratic and making certain designs available to larger group of people?

MR. LANE: Well, you could say that Henry Ford was democratic because he was the Flivver King — but he made the cars that practically everybody could afford.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: I mean, other — from another point of view, people would say, "Democratic, Henry Ford? He — [inaudible] — democrat," you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: I mean, people who pumped oil — big oil companies made life more pleasant and made people be able to run the cars. [Inaudible] can say whether the Rockefellers democratic? Well, yes, but they were — well, they were very — they were very philanthropic.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. LANE: David Rockefeller got the award it's — what award is it? Every year they give an award to somebody who's done a lot — spent a lot of money or whatever — World Monument Fund. And that would — and David Rockefeller got up to make a speech and he said, well, something like, "When I was nine, I went abroad with my parents for the first time." I can't remember where they went first, I think to France. "And we went to Versailles and the roof was leaking, so my father fixed it. And then we went to Egypt the next year and the Sphinx had lost his ear, so my father fixed it.

And then we went to China and the Great Wall needed repair, and my father fixed it."

And he went — got to about six years on fixing things, and then somebody said "Stop, stop," because he kept going on and on and on.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So we were talking about — so it's not something that you think about in terms of your own work is making it available to a larger group of people?

MR. LANE: Well, the QVC thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: Very much so. I mean, women who live in states where there are no big stores — no good stores — Nebraska, say, Iowa, you know, there's no Saks Fifth Avenue in those places.

MS. RIEDEL: Makes me think of something else that you said earlier — we may have mentioned in passing on the disc this morning — which is that you always wanted to make beautifully crafted jewelry —

MR. LANE: As long as I was doing jewelry, why not? Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And it was beautifully crafted jewelry using alternative materials.

MR. LANE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: You don't think about it as fake jewelry, which I think is a really interesting distinction, it's like —

MR. LANE: Well, it's real jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: It's — they call it fashion jewelry or costume jewelry — the *bijoux fantaisie* in French, which is rather nice.

MS. RIEDEL: It would be nice to hear from you in your own words why over all these years it was important for you to continue on with fantasy jewelry rather than actual gems?

MR. LANE: Well, first of all, with actual gems you need a shop, unless you're carrying it around in your pocket and you're going to show it to people you going to — or go to trade fairs and that sort of — or antique shows and show there. And it's a totally different thing. It's a different kind of investment, then you're responsible for the quality of the stones and you know. I mean, I enjoy making an emerald of the best color out of resin.

MS. RIEDEL: You'd said something in your book about the freedom of being able to design with these materials.

MR. LANE: Oh yeah, of course. I don't have to think of cost, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And I would imagine it brings a great sense of freedom to the designs.

MR. LANE: Oh absolutely.

MS. RIEDEL: You're not constrained in any way other than by what materials you can find.

MR. LANE: No, I mean, I have done, you know, with companies on license a few times precious jewelry. I mean, gold and very small stones. You add one very small, tiny diamond and the price goes up enormously. So you're very constrained. No, there's no — absolutely no boundaries —

MS. RIEDEL: Just —

MR. LANE: — to how many carats I can stick in something.

MS. RIEDEL: Wandering around the shop a few times yesterday — there are hundreds of thousands of carats there.

MR. LANE: Yeah. I mean, in terms — if things were — if they were real diamonds, they would be — you know, \$10,000 or 10 — what am I talking about —

MS. RIEDEL: For a single stone, sure.

MR. LANE: — \$10,000? I mean hundreds of thousands of dollars. I mean, the big Riviere of — the ones I had made by Swarovski that I had to order the stones — that would be \$10 million, I mean, real easily, or more. If it were D-Flawless, it would be a billion. You know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. LANE: So I have fun.

MS. RIEDEL: There's a real liberation to the material itself. You're only limited by what you could find or have made.

MR. LANE: Yes, exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: And cost just never enters into it for the most part.

MR. LANE: No, I don't really think about costs. And fortunately I don't have a lot of price resistance, you know, I mean we're fair in our markup — depends on cost of things.

MS. RIEDEL: How do the things hold up over time?

MR. LANE: Oh very well, if they're well taken care of. I mean, particularly with pearls, a woman absolutely mustn't use fragrance spray or hairspray when she has her pearls on — I think even with real pearls — otherwise okay. I mean, don't go swimming in my stuff because — et cetera. And of course weather can make a difference. I mean, elastic, for instance, in very hot, humid places, it can affect the elastic and it can break more quickly than it would under normal circumstances. But that would be for anything in hot, humid places. Houses have to be painted every year because, you know, paint peels.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. We've talked about the Headlights necklace. We should talk about the piece you made for Jacqueline Kennedy, that Maharani necklace, how that came about, because that's one of the rare times —

MR. LANE: Oh, she asked me if I — if I would do this for her. And I had never seen the necklace, and I knew her quite well. And she had things in mind from the very, very beginning; they were in her sale. But you know my very first [inaudible] —

MS. RIEDEL: Double strand of pearls, right?

MR. LANE: No, no. It was the — I'll show you here — similar thing — that — earrings —

MS. RIEDEL: Was it the brooch with the starfish?

MR. LANE: No. That was later. These.

MS. RIEDEL: So those earrings —

MR. LANE: Earrings —

MS. RIEDEL: Pavé — yes.

MR. LANE: She had a pair of those, and they were in the sale. They were — I don't know how many thousands of dollars. My stuff in the sale went for a million dollars. The necklace that I made for her went for \$90,500, and the Van Cleef it was based on, not exactly, was \$200-and-some-thousand. And mine went for a third of the real one. So anyway, I — she had the necklace at home, and I looked at it. And it wasn't too difficult thing to make it. It had five different motifs.

You had to make the model, and I gave her the choice of either paying for the model or allowing me to put it in the collection. Told her how much the model — my costs. And she said [He imitates her voice.], "Oh, put it in the collection." And I said, "There's only one thing I can't replicate really." "Oh, what's that?" I said, "The quality of those — the big rubies which I think are really rubelites — they don't make — fake stones of such bad quality." And she laughed.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's a piece that you still produce. And you call that the Maharani necklace, is that right?

MR. LANE: I don't know what we call it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: It has a number. We don't really call — I mean, people here make up names. There's a lion bracelet they insist upon calling a fish.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: It's in the book.

MS. RIEDEL: You did not do many commissions like that? That's — [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: No, hardly ever — I mean, never. It was the only one ever. I mean, I'll make something shorter or longer for a friend, you know, I mean, beads, pearls, something.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you design things specifically for certain friends?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: No? Okay.

MR. LANE: No. You know, too, can't be bothered — would go crazy. We were just looking at it. Oh, here.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. LANE: It's a lion. They call it a fish!

MS. RIEDEL: They call it a fish?

MR. LANE: I mean, the people here — Chris, Freddy — they call it the fish bracelet. I said, "You're crazy, it's not a fish; it's a lion."

MS. RIEDEL: This is the piece we were talking about earlier with the big ruby cabochons and the two lion heads face to face. Interesting.

MR. LANE: They want to call it a fish? Call it a fish. This picture was taken by Tony Snowdon. Anthony Snowdon.

MS. RIEDEL: This is you dressed as a Russian czar?

MR. LANE: It is something, God knows.

MS. RIEDEL: Something along those lines. And was that the '60s as well — '70s?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: I'd like to talk about some of the work you —

MR. LANE: Early '70s, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: — with Diana Vreeland for the Met — some of the costume design work that you did, how that came about, what different shows got done.

MR. LANE: Well, it came about because, you know, she asked me to. And I was delighted to do anything, anything for Diana — although she really never asked me to make anything especially for her. It was always enough that I could fall back on her. But first one was Balenciaga, and I kept the jewelry to a minimum, and I said to Diana, "We don't want it to look like Saks Fifth Avenue window, you know." And it — and the — Balenciaga didn't take a lot of jewelry. And when it took a lot of jewelry, we did a lot of jewelry.

The funniest story was in "[American] Women of Style" [1975] there was one Chanel room. And I had no problem with it, you know, with the — well, the pearls and stones and the — and the cuffs and all that stuff, which I did — that's when I started doing the cuffs. But then they —

MS. RIEDEL: That was when you started the cuffs?

MR. LANE: Yeah. But there was one dress that was full-skirted tulle, off the shoulder — almost like a debutante dress from the '30s. And I'd seen one woman wearing that — a dress like that — tiny woman in the south of France called Dumpy Lichtenstein — she was American. Dumpy — Princess Fernand Lichtenstein, adorable woman. And she wore it with — she never went and — she was very *sportif* — and she wore tiny [inaudible] stones, tiny. And men's patent leather dancing pumps with *beige* cashmere socks — she was a very original.

And that was the only time I'd ever seen that dress. I didn't know what the hell to do with it. So I put a strand of pearls around her necks — one strand. You know, not very small pearls but not huge, nothing extraordinary. And Diana came in and looked at it. And she was being interviewed by two

people. One of them was a very young kind of first-time interviews, you know, someone that was right out of school, and the other was a wonderful girl who was at the *Washington Post* who was a friend of mine.

Anyway, and Diana said, when she saw them, she said, "Ken, are you out of your mind?" She said, "This woman — this woman," as if she was alive and not a mannequin, "this woman has rich lovers. She has Russian grand dukes, she has maharajas. I mean, my God, she looks like nothing!" Well, when we were finished with her, she had on a hat — a funny little hat — and she had on diamond stars, and she had on the very famous bracelets and lots of pearls — I mean, she was dripping. And it had totally eclipsed the dress, but it was — that was very Chanel.

So this young girl said to her, "Mrs. Vreeland, don't you think that could be considered bad taste?" And Diana looked at her and she poked her, like she would do to people, "Well, listen, there are a lot worse things in this world than bad taste."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: She was a joy to work with.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: And I did whatever I liked. And occasionally I had to crawl into one of the cases when people were still there to fix something that had fallen off — a diamond star out of the hair of Elizabeth of Austria, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: I did all those diamond stars from the [Franz Xaver] Winterhalter portrait [1865]. But I already had the stars; I had made those years before.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you try to base the jewelry on specific historical pieces, or did you take liberty to just look at something historical and then come up with something that —

MR. LANE: Yeah, whatever I liked. I did whatever I liked, and she never — she never criticized. I mean, you know, I could read her mind.

MS. RIEDEL: That was an interesting collaboration.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Oh, it was, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And that lasted for 10, 20 years?

MR. LANE: Oh longer, until she died.

MS. RIEDEL: And she had that position at the Met for over 10.

MR. LANE: Oh yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, I think '71 to '84, something like that.

MR. LANE: It was first — but she was at *Harper's Bazaar*, the accessories editor had retired. And she suggested to them that I should have the job. And I was offered the job. And I was making very little money then in the shoe business, I was very young. [Laughs.] Still, I mean, you know, I was — I

can't remember what year that was, but it was somewhere in the — like, '56 or something like that. And — but what was offered at *Bazaar* was half of what I was making, or something. And word came back her that I'd said "Thank you very much, *but* I simply couldn't live on what I was — that much money." And her answer was, "Who tells you that?" "Ken Lane." "But he's very rich!"

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: You know, huh? Well, I mean, I could fake it a bit with, you know, my tailor bills and you know. I lived above my means in those days. But it became a joke, if you were going to the movies — "oh, you're going to the movies? You must be very rich. Taking a taxi? You must be very rich." You know, duh, duh, duh, duh, so much for that. But, no, we were great friends. And I was very fortunate.

MS. RIEDEL: If you had to sum up what you thought she brought to the sense of fashion design, how would you sum that up?

MR. LANE: Pragmatic fantasy.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. LANE: Wigs — it's, you know, in those days; see-through; hot pants; you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Pragmatic fantasy, that's nice. We've talked about the Headlights piece; we've talked about Jackie Kennedy's necklace. Which do you regard as pieces you're particularly proud of?

MR. LANE: I think — well, I'm particularly proud of earrings that have sold — I'm not talking about on QVC, from my regular collection over the years — thousands and thousands of because that means that I see them on the street, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Which earring is it?

[Audio Break.]

MR. LANE: [In progress] — several. I mean, the door knocker. And what — things I started like, which existed in precious — semiprecious slightly, hoops made of — which were in — were made of semiprecious stones originally, and then I had them made in plastic. And I did something called Poker Chips, and I had the packaging was a poker chip box that was a stack of about eight colors.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: They sold like crazy and —

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: — you know, that was — I really started that in costume jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And I started — [bell sounds] — and it's been done by many, many, many people on television and [inaudible], you know, in QVC and other channels — changeable centers of earrings with magnets. That was my idea.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And covering bracelets with skins, make it completely original, you know, and things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: So I'm thinking the bracelets covered in skins — that came very early on —

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: — in the '60s among the earliest pieces, whereas the magnet pieces seem much more contemporary.

MR. LANE: Oh, that was later, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: And that — the magnet things were really, I said, for QVC. The other thing, the poker chip kind of things, I did long before, and then did them again on QVC.

MS. RIEDEL: That seems to be a trend that runs throughout your career — pieces that are done early on and then come back 10 years later, and come back again.

MR. LANE: Yeah or some have never been taken out, you know, like the door knocker —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: That's, you know, by popular demands.

MS. RIEDEL: Consistent throughout.

MR. LANE: It's still there, yeah.

Well, you know, the precious — the jewelers — Tiffany, Cartier — they don't get rid of everything to, you know, change every year.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: Yes, they add things, but — and they subtract things, but still they have things that they've sold for years — Elsa Peretti is probably the most successful collection that Tiffany has, and it's the same as it was 40 years ago, more or less exactly, and it's still their bestselling collection, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: We mentioned yesterday, though, that many jewelry houses or fashion jewelry have a certain number of pieces that they run in a season or in a year.

MR. LANE: Oh, in fact — in my business and this — in the costume jewelry business, they'll scrap everything and come out with two dozen styles for spring or for a holiday, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: But that's not the way you work.

MR. LANE: No, no, no, no.

MS. RIEDEL: You have pieces that go on for years or for decades.

MR. LANE: Oh, [inaudible]. To scrap things that I like is like killing your favorite children. You can get

rid of your least favorite children, but, you know —

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] It is extraordinary when one takes into account the sheer number of not pieces, but designs that are in your studio right now.

MR. LANE: Guess so. [They laugh.] No, but then I always have things in the works, always, you know, and I don't think of them as seasonal.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. LANE: No, jewelry isn't seasonal really. Okay, white beads, yes, but that's about it.

MS. RIEDEL: We've talked about —

MR. LANE: We have to eat something.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you like to take a break?

MR. LANE: Do you like — well, yeah, take a break, and then we can talk until it comes —

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: What do you see as similarities and differences between your early work and your current work?

MR. LANE: Well, I've learned a lot. When I started, I knew very, very little about — manufacturing. And for instance, in enameling — [laughs] — I — my first enamels were done, but with — were nothing more than kind of paint. It wasn't the kind of the enamel that's — jewelers' enamel, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. LANE: And I had — there's a man who'd specialized in that, in doing it. But I mean, this wasn't — they didn't have — that kind of enamel was very rare, the kind of enamel I use now, you know. Jewelers' —

MS. RIEDEL: What kind do you use?

MR. LANE: — oh, it was just paint then. Now it's — now it's — I don't know what it's made of, you know. It's — but it's —

MS. RIEDEL: Trade secret?

MR. LANE: No, I just don't know, but it's made for enameling jewelry, same sort of enamel that's used in precious jewelry. And it sticks, you know; it doesn't chip.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. LANE: And what was funny is that, in these big auctions that came up, like Duchess of Windsor's particularly, there was a bracelet that sold for \$15,000 or something that I still was making, except the one that was sold from her collection was in such terrible condition, the enamel was so chipped and so cracked because it was early, you know. So I've learned; you see what I mean? Things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's permanently — [inaudible] —

MR. LANE: Instead of — that's — I eventually learned; I sort of invented the using — you've seen this in a lot of these bracelets a spring — a steel spring —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — instead of a regular hinge. So the things, you know, really fit well. And you know, then I realized that certain bracelets should be oval rather than round. So that they didn't turn on the wrist. Then certain kinds of clasps didn't hold — hold up. You know, so after years, I stopped using certain kinds of mechanisms. You know, I learned a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds like — technical and quality adjustments.

MR. LANE: I should have hoped so — yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: What about design-wise?

MR. LANE: Well, I — suppose I've seen more now than I did — had then. So I have a greater dictionary to go to —

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. LANE: — or greater encyclopedia of design knowledge, if you like.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you always come out with a certain number of pieces a year?

MR. LANE: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: How does — how does it work production-wise?

MR. LANE: No, I just keep doing it, and when some — one time, but — a sample is finished, I like it, it goes in the collection. If I don't like it, it never goes in. Sometimes I've worked on things that have never gone in.

MS. RIEDEL: Are you still designing?

MR. LANE: Of course.

MS. RIEDEL: What's that working process like? Are you drawing? Are you using actual materials? How do you design your pieces?

MR. LANE: Well, I can sketch, but I don't do — I don't do finished sketches; I don't do renderings. I take things, shapes that I already have, and then do things to them — [laughs] — I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you talk about something you're working on now or something that you've worked on recently to give us a sense of how that works?

MR. LANE: Well, okay, I've taken — I'm taking it — a shape to a bracelet that I liked particularly, and I'm covering it, not completely but — and just having them set in rather than on the outside rather than a bezel setting.

Some of these interesting new shaped stones that Swarovski makes now that are very abstract,

and that's been in work for a long time. Another thing that's been in work for ages, for several years, is what you call Tooty Fruity, you know, from the old arcade thing —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. LANE: — that I've had made. Long time ago I had made the leaves of emerald, then sapphire, ruby, you know, et cetera and so on. But then to get it all together, and I've rejected so many tries at it.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that like the necklace in the book that's the sum of all those tiny little leaves are almost oval shapes? No?

MR. LANE: No, no, no. Tooty Fruity is — you see it in auction catalogs. It's those rubies, emeralds —

MS. RIEDEL: Sapphires —

MR. LANE: — sapphires, diamonds, black enamel — very often bracelets —

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: — or pendants. And hopefully this one will turn out.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's been the problem?

MR. LANE: Just never turned out right somehow; you know what I mean. Then —

MS. RIEDEL: So you've come up with a design, but then the fabrication just doesn't come up to —

MR. LANE: Yeah, it just isn't right. Something's wrong. I'm very critical.

MS. RIEDEL: What would you like to work on next? Is there something you haven't done that you're interested in doing?

MR. LANE: I'll know when I think of it. You know — [laughs] — what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] When you — when you come up with a new design, do you work on an entire series or just work a single piece at a time?

MR. LANE: Oh, very often in a series.

I mean, certain things are difficult. They're used to be a man in Brooklyn —

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. LANE: — who made marvelous pearls and shaded pearls, and I used to — used to even go there and fiddle. But he went out of business a long time ago. So, you know, a lot of things are more difficult today. For instance, the soldering, I think I told you there was a shop nearby where I could go and have it tomorrow, tiaras made, and things for Diana Vreeland for their shows. There was, you know, things that I could actually work with the solderers, but then, you know —

MS. RIEDEL: But they're gone.

MR. LANE: They're gone, yeah. You know, then I'd take things sometimes like coins, and I just take a

hammer and sort of — distress them myself, you know what I mean. There's a — outside of the castle in the harbor of Bodrum [Turkey], years ago they used to sell — there was a guy selling copies of ancient coins. Copy language they were very cheap, and then I'd buy them, and then I'd hammer them myself — [laughs] — and, you know, made from — the more used, and — but I still have all these models, you see?

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. LANE: So I put things together, even the thousands and thousands and thousands of models that I have.

MS. RIEDEL: Where are the models?

MR. LANE: They're at the factory.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. In Providence?

MR. LANE: Yeah. Or I'd — I have a room back there. I'll open it for you; I'll show you.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that where you'll compose —

MR. LANE: No, that's where I just have stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. [Laughs.] Where will you work on compositions? Do you work on them here? Do you have a space at home?

MR. LANE: No, here. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: And then you just — raw materials around that you can pull from and start to work?

MR. LANE: Yeah, and copying machine and scissors and Scotch tape. I take a bit of this and a bit of that, and all of sudden it becomes something else.

MS. RIEDEL: And that — has that been consistent throughout your career?

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: That was the way you work?

MR. LANE: Yeah. I work in a very haphazard way, but it works.

MS. RIEDEL: Could you describe that a little bit when you say "a haphazard way"?

MR. LANE: H-A-P —

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. [They laugh.]

MR. LANE: No, I can't. It just — it speaks for itself, I think. You know what I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: So you throw the net broad and wide and what comes in, comes in.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. LANE: Yeah, it's a little bit like God creating flowers. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: That is interesting. Well, when I do think about your sources of inspiration, what you pull from — and we mentioned this yesterday — it is extraordinarily diverse, from souvenir shops that you like in Venice to historical collections, to your own travels, to 20th-century jewelry.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Nature is something we really haven't talked about at all.

MR. LANE: Well, I mean, you can see it everywhere: coral; I use wood, I loved using wood, wood and stones together; all sorts of sea creatures; we do lots of starfish, which I love; sea anemones, you know, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Octopi, I've seen out there.

MR. LANE: Yeah, all kinds — all that stuff. "Lions, tigers, and bears." No bears — [inaudible] —

MS. RIEDEL: Have you spent much time out in the wilds?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: I didn't think so.

MR. LANE: Well, I mean, jungles, yes, I mean.

MS. RIEDEL: You mentioned the Bronx Zoo at one point as a source of inspiration.

MR. LANE: Not a source really, no.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, for idea — well, there's a little black enameled hippo, perhaps?

MR. LANE: Yeah, but I've seen hippos more in films than —

MS. RIEDEL: The zoo.

MR. LANE: — in the zoo. I don't think — you don't want to get too close to a hippo.

MS. RIEDEL: I would think not.

MR. LANE: Well, because hippos have a way of defecating, and they have a tail that goes — it sort of sprays this — [inaudible] — getting too close to a hippo.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I'll scratch the Bronx Zoo.

MR. LANE: No, but I mean, of course, nature, leaves, everything from nature.

MS. RIEDEL: Has technology had much impact on your work? The computer?

MR. LANE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Not at all?

MR. LANE: In business, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But not on the work at all?

MR. LANE: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: What about the evolution of new materials?

MR. LANE: Well, as I was saying, the casting of resins, and they're better and better. Fewer and fewer people do it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: People who one's used for years to cast resin and, all of sudden, go out of business; you have to find new ones; you know, that sort of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: But no great technological innovations that have changed the way the work is made?

MR. LANE: No, no, no.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk about your very first shop on East 38th Street, what that was like. Did you design it? How long was it open?

MR. LANE: No, no, no, no, it wasn't a shop.

MS. RIEDEL: No?

MR. LANE: No, it was an office.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, it was an office. I thought you had a shop.

MR. LANE: No, no, the only shop I ever had myself was in Trump Tower.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: And it was really hot for a while and, you know, and I mean, he was — I don't think it was any bigger than this office, you know, all the — the whole thing, and I — because I'm a nuthead, I put it in — on the — second floor or first floor, one up, around the corner from the Harry Winston shop. And I had it made to look — the inside to look like the outside of the Harry Winston building on Fifth Avenue, which wasn't very practical, and my architect went crazy in the middle. When the counters arrived, they had wooden tops instead of glass.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh dear.

MR. LANE: And but then, we — that was fixed. And the first two years, we did an amazing business.

MS. RIEDEL: This was in — recently, yes? Two thousand six?

MR. LANE: This was — this was — no, eight or was it? Eighty —

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, '80s.

MR. LANE: Yeah, in the '80s, when Trump Tower first opened.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: 'Ninety — I can't remember what year — '80 something. And then I hired a girl who was very nice who used to — had been the buyer at Bendel's for jewelry; couldn't be nicer, a lady; she gets very bored. So — you know, it was too small to have a big staff, so it was one and a half people. And more often than not the phone was ring-ring-ring-ring, and nobody'd pick up. But, yeah, it's tough running a shop. But you have many shops or a big shop, then —

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: — you know, you have backup. But — so it became a nightmare, but I kept it for ten years.

And then I allowed — then I formed a company with somebody from Wall Street, who — it didn't end well, and we sold that — those shops to another — a company that had my — named Kenneth Lane shops in Europe — Paris and England.

MS. RIEDEL: So you have Kenneth Lane shops in Europe?

MR. LANE: Well, there were. And then that company went bankrupt. So I'd rather just sell everybody. You know, I mean, it always used to be the idea of having a shop and having a wonderful display of my stuff on Madison Avenue or something. But I think the headache is more — is — outshines the pleasure it might give me.

MS. RIEDEL: So primarily, then, your work's been available through large department stores from the beginning.

MR. LANE: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: All of the major ones.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah, of course that's changed too, because so many of the major stores don't exist any longer: Hudson's in Detroit; Marshall Field's in old Chicago is now a Macy's; Rich's in Atlanta doesn't exist; none of the Lazarus stores in Ohio. There was one in every major city in Ohio. They weren't called Lazarus; they had different names. But then they're just all gone.

MS. RIEDEL: And still Neiman Marcus is around.

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah —

MS. RIEDEL: Saks, Bloomingdale's —

MR. LANE: — no, I mean, Neiman Marcus has gotten bigger. Saks —

MS. RIEDEL: Bendel's —

MR. LANE: — my biggest account.

MS. RIEDEL: Neiman Marcus is your biggest account.

MR. LANE: No, no, Saks is.

MS. RIEDEL: Saks is.

MR. LANE: But what's very, very big now are the dot-com, you know, the net-à-porter, Neiman's

Direct. We do much more with Neiman's Direct than we do with — in the stores, you know. They buy bigger quantities.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. LANE: Oh, no, that's a whole new world. And then the world's opened up. There's China, and Japan still, which I thought Japan business was going to fall apart after the tsunami. We immediately got orders.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. LANE: Very surprising, and nice big ones. And the Middle East, even now, you know, in — [inaudible] to Dubai, every bit. There's Saks in Dubai, Harvey Nichols in Dubai. It's, you know — Turkey.

MS. RIEDEL: So —

MR. LANE: Not India, it's the only place not —

MS. RIEDEL: So it seems —

MR. LANE: — yet.

MS. RIEDEL: — the way that it's changed primarily is through the online business, and then you're —

MR. LANE: Well, that's — yeah, that's a huge change.

MS. RIEDEL: And also in more locations worldwide?

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah, because the world's gotten smaller. And the Middle East really didn't have — it wasn't a market, nor was Turkey 10 — what, 15 years ago. It — and China wasn't a market.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. LANE: Southeast Asia really — you know. It all comes out of China.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's the only —

MR. LANE: They're all Chinese companies. Japan, yes — over there we've been selling Japan for a long, long time, even practically since the beginning.

MS. RIEDEL: So it sounds like business is —

MR. LANE: [Close ?], yes.

MS. RIEDEL: — booming?

MR. LANE: It's okay; it is. You know, we're down a tiny bit after the, you know, the crunch — [inaudible] — lunch is here.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: Will you tell Chris?

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: How do you think the market for jewelry has changed in your lifetime, in particular American jewelry?

MR. LANE: When I started, fashionable women did not buy costume jewelry, really. It was — there were some big companies, who are no longer in business much, like Monet, Trafari, several pearl companies, Richelieu, Marvella. And they made very simple things for the average ladies to put on their coat to wear to church.

I guess I kind of brought costume jewelry to become wearable fashion. I'll take credit for that, partially because of the ladies who wore my jewelry in the magazines. So that has been a great change, you know, because the middle of the road is this beard [ph].

And there are a lot of newcomers. For instance, today, practically every fashion designer has a lot of costume jewelry. They find it easier, in a way.

MS. RIEDEL: What about your jewelry made women who wouldn't normally want to wear costume jewelry back when you started, interested in wearing your work?

MR. LANE: The women I know — the last holdout was — Judy Peabody, who had a lot of pressure to her from her mother. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: You think it was partly the era? Women were interested in something that was fake intentionally, was plastic, as chic, as —

MR. LANE: Well, the Duchess of Windsor who had a huge collection of pieces of

jewelry — who wore my jewelry. Made her — made her feel more with it, younger — a lot of women who had great jewelry.

Even royals in England — Princess Margaret, who wore not a lot of my jewelry, but some, you know, particularly traveling.

You know, Babe Paley once, at her house, had an armload of bracelets that she bought for a dollar each at — it was something — she told me, at Alexander's. You know, but on Babe Paley, it looked great.

So that's a change.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

Do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition or a tradition that's particularly American?

MR. LANE: It's international. They love costume jewelry in Italy. And they love vintage in Italy. You see, now, I'm vintage.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. LANE: Yep. Yep.

It's international.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It seems that way.

MR. LANE: But look where we sell. I mean, Korea, China.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And certainly, the work that you've pulled from has been international as well. Your sources of inspiration are very international.

MR. LANE: Oh, sure. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: I think we've done a very good job of covering most of these questions. I just have a few summary questions at this point.

MR. LANE: All right.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you discuss briefly your thoughts on the importance of jewelry as a means of expression, what are its strengths, what are its weaknesses, and what it does better than anything else?

MR. LANE: Well, all right. As expression, it's — women of confidence have fun with jewelry. They're not afraid of it. But then you take somebody — it can be jewelry per se, not necessarily costume. It can be mixed. Helena Rubinstein, who is very short, very square, had a huge collection of jewelry. And what was funny is that, in a lot of her pearl necklaces, there'd be a sort of half-fake, half-real —

You know, it can be an expression. I mean, this woman who we were talking about — there was an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of her stuff — what's her name?

MS. RIEDEL: Right. We were just talking about her at lunch. I can't think of her —

MR. LANE: Bah, bah, bah, bah, bah. Chris will know — remember. I know her. She's perfectly nice with big glasses. And she's in — [inaudible] — I've seen pictures of her house, which is quite eccentric, full of stuff, stuff, I mean, stuff.

And she's made herself into an icon by piling it on. Accessorizing — over-accessorizing.

So, I mean, it *is* an expression of personality. Not in all cases, but can be.

MS. RIEDEL: What is the essence of it that appeals to you?

MR. LANE: Like anything that is attractive, you know, it's a way of a woman expressing her — not looking like the woman sitting next to her, too. It's a way — an identification.

I mean, there — you know, it's — in a way, is part of — it's a part of fable, the treasure chest, Ali Baba; the queen's necklace, Marie — you know, the saga of the French Revolution, there was the *collier de la reine*.

In films, taking — there was actually — it was quite funny — I made — and the inspiration was from a film — a jabot pin — you know, jabot, which goes into itself, which was worn in a film with Joan Bennett. And she was shot and killed at the end by this sniper across the — in Germany, they — he'd gotten out to Switzerland and this diamond or dimonique — whatever — arrow was in her hat. And they saw it.

And Joan Bennett came here one day with her daughter, who's a very good friend of mine, Shelley Wanger. And this was a long ago. I mean, this — more than 20 years ago. She's been dead for a long time. And I went and I rummaged through and found that — one of those arrow pins and gave it to her, and she was very amused.

MS. RIEDEL: So it sounds as if it is a way to engage in imagination on a daily basis —

MR. LANE: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: — and engage in fantasy on a daily basis.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Cinderella. I mean, you know —

MS. RIEDEL: Indulge that a little bit daily.

MR. LANE: Even if a woman doesn't go out very much, she can put it on at home and look at herself in the mirror. Like, kids love putting on their mother's jewelry — you know, getting dressed up. Number one is the jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: That's true.

MR. LANE: Because the clothes don't fit. Maybe a hat or a piece of fur or something they can play with.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you ever hear any interest in doing more with film or with theater?

MR. LANE: No, I do. We do a lot of plays.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you?

MR. LANE: Yeah. We have a lot of stuff now in *Anything Goes*.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really?

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah. Lot of — lot of — a lot of plays.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. We haven't talked — we haven't talked about that at all.

MR. LANE: They're always coming up here and getting stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. Interesting. Do you design specifically for them, or they come here looking for things?

MR. LANE: No, no. They just come up here looking for things.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Interesting.

How has your work been received over the past five decades? Are there ebbs and flows? Has it been fairly consistent?

MR. LANE: Well, the only time it really was bad, it was — it — [inaudible] — was bad everybody in my — this industry — was when gold went up to \$800 — no, \$80 an ounce, \$80 an ounce. And Saks Fifth Avenue, for instance, half of their costume jewelry — half of it was made with gold chains. It's

that sort of thing, you know, very small gold stuff.

And then, of course, gold, then — I have — I was having lunch with people who should have really know, Jane Engelhard and somebody else, you know, Engelhard's precious metals. He was sure was going to up to a thousand dollars. Oh — no, what is it now? What is it now?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know.

MR. LANE: It's —

MS. RIEDEL: It's high now.

MR. LANE: Yeah. It's — well, it's going to go to a hundred dollars an ounce. Did I say 80 [dollars] or 800 [dollars]?

MS. RIEDEL: You said both. Eighty [dollars] seems very low.

MR. LANE: Yeah, 800 [dollars]. It must have been 800 [dollars]. I remember when gold was \$32 an ounce.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Wow.

MR. LANE: Standards, yeah. No, it's — yeah. Check it out. It's almost \$1,500 now.

MS. RIEDEL: That would be my — yeah, I would think so.

MR. LANE: And — then it was going to go a thousand. Immediately, it started going down. And now it's crazy again.

What was the question again?

MS. RIEDEL: It was how your work has been received over time. So there was only one really bad time?

MR. LANE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: It was when gold was very low.

MR. LANE: Yeah. Now, my gold things have gotten more expensive because we're charging much more for good plating. You want good plating so it doesn't wear off.

No, that was the only problem — timing. The real problem was timing.

MS. RIEDEL: Other than that, it's been fairly constant the whole time?

MR. LANE: Yeah, pretty much. Maybe a little bit — the '70s, when I went very, very native, ethnic — lots of leather cords and that sort of thing — those things don't last very long.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there particular pieces that you feel are signature pieces that stand out in your mind as ones —

MR. LANE: Well, certainly —

MS. RIEDEL: — looking back on 50 years —

MR. LANE: I mean, you know, the pearl — my pearls are very signature because they were so publicized by, say, Barbara Bush. And they're in the Smithsonian with her inaugural dress and her Scaasi dress and her Judith Lieber bag. The Jackie necklace — I mean, you know, things that were publicized because who wore them, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: But are there pieces that you think are wonderful that didn't necessarily get that level of attention?

MR. LANE: Oh, many. Many.

MS. RIEDEL: What comes to mind?

MR. LANE: Oh, so many, you know what I mean, over the years.

Oh, some of the Renaissance things, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] The brooches and the — [inaudible].

MR. LANE: Yeah, brooches.

MS. RIEDEL: The brooches.

MR. LANE: Of course, so much depends. Women love brooches, but if the stores don't — stores are very, very much run by fashion directors today. I mean, you know, which is newish. There was always a fashion director, but they didn't have very much power. Today, they sort of do. And they have to come up with new ideas. And new ideas sometimes push classics out of — out of the — out of the way, like brooches.

I mean, some best possible gift you can give a woman is a brooch, because there's no size problem here. You don't have to know what's her — if she went — if she's pierced ears or not, what's her ring size or her wrist size, you know. And they're fun. I loved producing — I loved making brooches.

And we still sell them. But, you know, not as well as we should.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And that is, you think, partly due to these fashion designers in department stores?

MR. LANE: Not designers; fashion directors —

MS. RIEDEL: Fashion directors.

MR. LANE: When brooches were very big about seven years ago, they got too big, so they bought and bought and bought and bought and bought. And they accessorized by putting 12 brooches that had nothing to do with each other on a coat — it got silly. You know, it's overdo, it's overdo, over — gone over the top.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. LANE: What — what is — it's happened, which is fairly new, it's the idea of vintage. And the jewelry is collectible. Of course, everybody collects everything today. I wish I had my collection of cigar bands that I had when I was a kid. They're probably worth a fortune, you know, on eBay.

[Inaudible] — everything.

But jewelry, as a collectible, will become a work of art. And probably there'll be many exhibitions of costume jewelry, not only mine, along with precious jewelry. I mean, not — you know, different exhibitions. And there are now exhibitions of precious jewelry, Van Cleef and Arpels now at, you know, Cooper Hewitt Museum [Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, New York City, NY] at the Carnegie house.

MS. RIEDEL: And you've just had two significant exhibitions — retrospectives.

MR. LANE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: RISD in 2008.

MR. LANE: But — yeah, but I think they're going to become parts of permanent collections of museums. I mean, I've talked to the Metropolitan. They do not have a collection of costume jewelry in their Costume Institute. So I'm probably going to give them a lot, because they're redoing the Costume Institute thing, so they'll — there'll be — there has to be space for those things, exhibition space. Just to sit in boxes for ever and ever and ever, there is no point.

But I think it — they — it will be — you know, if you want to go into the future, say, 50 years from now, you know, I'm quite sure there will be exhibitions of costume jewelry of the 20th century, and probably what's current today too. I don't know, you know.

Of course, so much of the ideas 50 years ago is still fine.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's one thing that's clear as we look at this large collection of your work here, is how much of it was first designed 40, 50 ago.

MR. LANE: Yeah. I don't — I don't try to be super trendy. I just do what I consider — and we was talking about Tiffany still — happens — selling so well, Elsa Peretti — and they probably will for another 50 years, I guess, or a hundred years, who — you know.

So the jewelry made in the 19th century is still — is still beautiful and still fashionable —

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. LANE: — and still wearable and still exhibitable.

MS. RIEDEL: So much of it has a timeless quality.

MR. LANE: Look at — look at Fabergé.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you see your career in terms of episodes? Or do you see a thread of continuity running through?

MR. LANE: No, a continuity, really, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: What about it in particular matters to you?

MR. LANE: What in particular matters to me? Friendship. Reasonably good health so that one can travel. Appetite, still. [Laughs.] You know, sense of taste. Sight — very, very important. Those are the things that really matter.

MS. RIEDEL: And as you look back on your career, it does seem like friendships are a theme that run through the work. Anything else in particular that comes to mind?

Innovation I think of as well.

MR. LANE: Well, well, and everyone, I think, eventually thinks of immortality in some way or other. [Inaudible] — people think of it through their children. And I think of it through my collections that I'm going to be giving to the Metropolitan Museum, you know.

One thinks about, naturally, providing for the one you leave — for them one is going to leave behind, who have been important in one's life, whether it's family or friends or people who have taken good care of one, you know. These are the things one thinks about. You don't think about it as much when you're 30 or 40, but you do start thinking about it when you reach maturity or near-maturity. And I'm getting close to maturity.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, thank you very much.

MR. LANE: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]